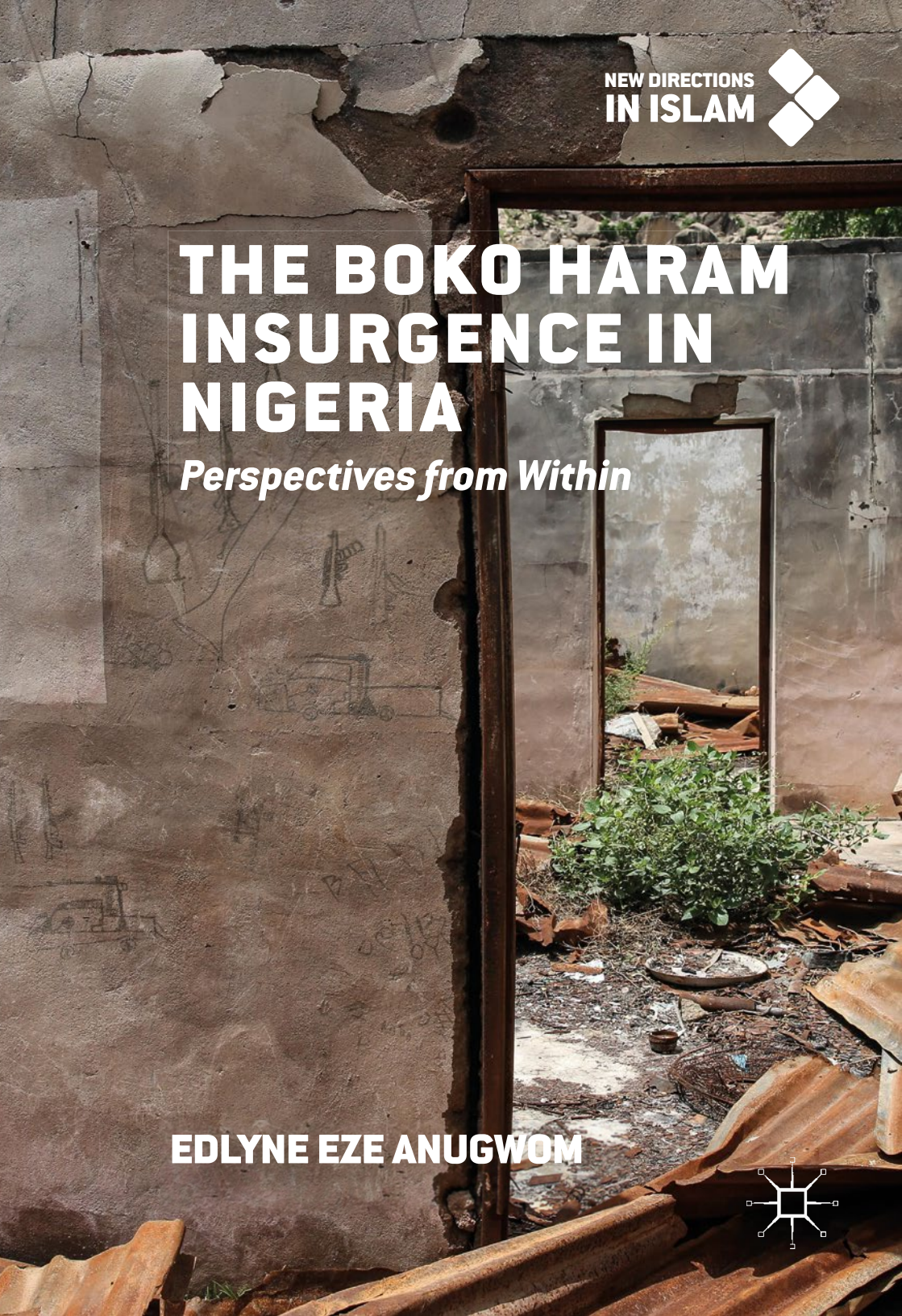
NEW DIRECTIONS IN ISLAM

THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCE IN NIGERIA

Perspectives from Within



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New Directions in Islam

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Edlyne Eze Anugwom

The Boko Haram Insurgence In Nigeria

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Kene and Chinuru—friends, believers and ardent supporters and the boys

Foreword

In the last decade, Nigeria has witnessed an upsurge of conflict and violence, partly occasioned by the Boko Haram insurrection and indiscriminate mayhem, perhaps one of the largest terrorist groups in Africa. In 2011 alone, sporadic bombings orchestrated by Boko Haram militants included the May 29 bombings in Abuja and Bauchi, the June 16 bombing of the Nigerian Police Headquarters, the August 26 bombings of the United Nations building in Abuja, the attacks in Damaturu on November 4 and the clashes between the Nigerian security operatives and Boko Haram militants in Maiduguri and Damaturu. In April 2014, the scandalous kidnapping of over 250 Chibok female students was a vivid testimony to the fact that the Boko Haram insurgency was far from abating. In 2018, there has been a remarkable de-escalation of bombings, wanton killings and kidnappings, while their activities have been drastically truncated owing to the combined action of local and external security agencies. While it is hard at this point to claim that the nation has grasped fully the motivations, intentionality and consequences of the Boko Haram carnage or gotten over the dire impact and social trauma that followed this crisis, Nigeria has again been drawn to yet another crisis by the Fulani herdsmen unleashing a new wave of brazen attacks and gruesome killings across the country.

The proliferation of conflicts and violence poses crucial security threats and tremendous challenges to the local-global community because of

their national, international and transnational scope. The pace of public bemoaning and international censure of these violent conflicts is hardly matched by a deficiency of rigorous scholarly research towards unpacking the motivations, nature, texture and resilience of terrorist groups and acts, such as the Boko Haram in Nigeria and the West African sub-region, but also counter-terrorist efforts and mechanisms. Conventional explanations of conflict and violence remain incomplete if they separately emphasize different yet related phenomena of conflict and violence, without much effort to provide for a holistic, comprehensive explanation or framework that encompasses the full range of interpersonal, institutional, structural and symbolic conflict or violence. A proper grasp and analysis requires a critical interrogation of holistic factors—remote and immediate causes, the complex role of stakeholders, the exogenous and endogenous dynamics—the specific religious, social and cultural contexts within which Boko Haram have been operating, but also global factors. As the author aptly notes: "*any thorough-going analysis of the Boko Haram must appreciate the antecedent and immediate nature of the Northeast cum Northern Nigerian society; nature of the state and governance in Nigeria viz.-a-viz. response to the needs of citizens; the undeniable amenability of the environment to sectarianism; varying interpretations of both the Qur'an and Hadiths even within mainstream Islam; and the Messiah complex.*"

This book provides fresh, critical, yet illuminating insights on the impasse in Nigeria drawing upon extensive field ethnographic experiences and data gathered in 2016 in Borno State, a context that has served as the major hotbed of the conflict. The author carefully weaves together a rich tapestry of religious conflicts in Nigeria, critically assessing the contemporary political context and trends conducive to the emergence and growth of Boko Haram on the one hand; but most importantly, exploring perceptions, narratives of "lived-experiences of people affected by the insurgence, and even what may be called a first-hand insider view of the Boko Haram by 'suspected' Boko Haram members and sympathisers." The author calls attention to the limitations of a mono-causal explanation of the insurgence and contends that Boko Haram should be treated not merely as a form of terrorism since this would misrepresent reality and compound perceived solutions. This book, according to the author, "*is also driven by the desire to inform policies and actions (programmes)*

at targeting the eradication of extremism in Nigeria. The book aims at offering a nuanced and evidence-based understanding of the dynamics of religious extremism in Nigeria and how the ideology (or avowed principles) of extremist sects like the Boko Haram feed into socio-economic marginalization, political exclusion and corruption very prevalent in Nigeria."

This book is therefore a must-read by all those who abhor any forms of conflict/violence, whether religiously, politically, ethnically or economically induced or motivated. Africanists and scholars with interest in social conflicts and religion; terrorism and development in Africa will find this book invaluable. I warmly commend it!

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Afe Adogame

Preface

The book provides new insights on the Boko Haram insurgence which has emerged in the last decade as the most daunting development and security challenge in Nigeria. Despite a range of state-driven responses and involvement of the international community in recent times, the insurgence has persevered albeit in diminished capacity. Thus, in spite of significant progress in the war against Boko Haram, incessant suicide attacks, armed conflict and kidnapping create the impression that the sect is a complex phenomenon driven by centrifugal forces, fundamentalist religiousity and socio-political challenges. While a growing body of work has focused on this subject in the last five years, perhaps none has been anchored on a thorough-going empirical study. This is what separates the present effort from most of the other publications on the subject. As the title suggests, it provides perspectives from within not only in the sense of being written by a Nigerian but more critically in the sense of real engagement with those affected and 'infected' with the Boko Haram bug.

The extensive survey of Boko Haram in Northeast Nigeria evidenced herein has no doubt provided unique insights and information which interrogate a good number of orthodox narratives regarding the sect. The book is non-judgmental and anchored on a deep socio-political history of Northern Nigeria and colonial heritage considered influential in the making of Boko Haram and other previous Islamic fundamentalist sects

in the North of Nigeria. It also establishes the contemporary political context and Islamic trends in Nigeria conducive to both emergence and growth of Boko Haram. It calls attention to the limitations of a monocausal explanation of the insurgence and argues that the insurgence can be explained by a constellation of factors.

Therefore, the book drawing information from an empirical study of the insurgence unravels the nature, growth trajectories and driving forces behind Boko Haram. It is divided into ten chapters which, apart from providing information on origin, growth and nature of the sect, also examine socio-political drivers of the insurgence, organization and ideology of the sect, as well as the nature of response of the state to the insurgence, internal splits within the group and the connection between the sect and global jihadism among others. Probably, one of the greatest contributions of the book is the conclusion that Boko Haram should not be treated as merely a form of terrorism since this would misrepresent reality and compound perceived solutions. In other words, while Boko Haram apparently resonates the growing menace of terrorism globally, it is a domestically focused phenomenon which embodies imaginations of peculiar religiousity and structural challenges of the Nigerian nation. The book while admitting the tenuous connection between the sect and international terrorist groups as well as the influence of global jihad on Boko Haram, also debunks to a large extent the convenient assumption of significant nexus between Boko Haram and international jihadi groups like the ISIS and al-Qaeda.

Nsukka, Nigeria — Edlyne Eze Anugwom

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I would want to acknowledge the support of a good number of colleagues and friends who made the book a reality. I must first thank Prof. Afe Adogame for taking time off his usually tight-schedule to write the foreword to the book. I also appreciate the role of Prof. Francis Nyamnjoh of the University of Cape Town who was the research director of the project within which the study for the book was carried out. He provided both guidance and support all through the project. Mwenda Ntarangwi of Theological Book Network has been very supportive. The good fellows at the Nagel Institute of Calvin College are fondly remembered not only for managing the project but for equally providing me with opportunity for disseminating the initial findings of the study. In this regard, I thank Joel Carpenter and Nellie Kooistra for being such wonderful people. I also acknowledge the multiple roles of Prof. Asonzeh Ukah of the University of Cape Town who has been a friend, vitriolic critic and supporter.

I would also put on record the enthusiasm of the people at the CRCNA: World Missions Africa, Grand Rapids who responded to my seminar in very enthusiastic manner and urged me to put down my findings in the form of a book. I must also thank my dogged research assistants especially Zekeri Yahaya, local FGD facilitators, security personnel and the good people of Maiduguri and Gwoza particularly those who talked to us during the field work in spite of literarily putting their safety in jeopardy.

Finally I acknowledge the financial support of the John Templeton Foundation which made the study possible through a generous grant in 2016 (Grant ID: 2016—SS 135) under its *Religious Innovation and Competition: Their Impact in Contemporary Africa* research project.

Prologue: Aminu Danbaba's Réminiscences

It was the morning of 21 January 2012 and Aminu Danbaba was in front of his ramshackle tin house in the outskirts of Maiduguri listening to the 7 am news when it was broadcast that suspected members of an Islamic sect had unleashed mayhem in Kano the day before, leading to the death of 185 people. Danbaba believed that for the radio to say 185 it must have been many more than this number. But his mind flashed back to his first encounter with the founder of the now troublesome sect which operates in Maiduguri and his brief encounter with the group.

Sometime in April 2008, Aminu Danbaba, a tall lean man in his early thirties who earned a living for his family (a wife and three little children) as an 'achapa' driver (commercial motorcyclist), stood among the motley crowd in a popular mosque in the city of Maiduguri immersed and totally captivated by the preaching of the young baby-faced and energetic man who held the whole crowd spell-bound with his passionate and fiery preaching. The young man called Yusuf by other renowned scholars and clerics in the town was really in his elements and showed so much conviction and baffling knowledge of the scriptures and tenets of Islam. He had such a refreshing new take on both the Qur'an and the Hadiths and how believers could live a life worthy of the ways of the Prophet Muhammad.

This was on a not-so-busy day in April and Danbaba had gone to listen to the sermon by the fiery young man who had acquired something of cult followership, especially among young men in the city, at the invitation

of a friend, another *achapa* driver and close confidante. Aminu was particularly impressed by the outburst of the young preacher against the elites and political corruption. He was also impressed by the young man's vast knowledge of Islam and the ways of the prophets of old but was at the same time wary of the fire that seemed to burn through the eyes of the preacher. Despite the impressive oration being witnessed by Aminu and others in the crowd, Aminu was not totally sure of what the preacher really wanted from them (the listeners) or needed them to do but he was clearly calling for action. He wanted an overthrow of the current system. The new preacher went on and on about the need to go back to the original Islam, the ways of the Prophet Muhammad as he saw it. The preacher seemed particular about the lack of justice in the society and oppression of the poor contrary to the tenets of the Qur'an and the Hadiths. He admonished believers to pray always even at night and read nothing but the Qur'an at all times. Aminu made a mental note to seek more guidance about the young new preacher and his tirades from his local imam.

Fast-forward to April 2013 and Aminu found himself again amongst a motley crowd that had gathered in the aftermath of yet another bombing incident in Maiduguri; it was now becoming a common occurrence. As he starred at the rubbles, deep gorge and lifeless limbless bodies of some innocent people mowed down by yet another bomb blast in the city by alleged members of the sect established by the young preacher of a few years ago, he remembered the counsel of his imam five years earlier about the likelihood that the new preacher though vibrant and young may be in the vanguard of what the Prophet Muhammad had warned believers about. It was the Prophet's exhortation about the rise of false prophets and preachers.

As he stood shocked and aghast at the violence before him, Danbaba reflected that the new sect might even herald the appearance of '*Yajuj*' and '*Majuj*' and may be signalling the coming of the 'Mahdi' and the eventual end of this corrupt world. But he paused and slowly ruminated over his knowledge of the scriptures boosted not really by scholarly devotion or reading but steadfast attendance at the house of Allah and keeping as much as possible to the five pillars of the faith including alms giving; it may also be possible that the new sect has the blessing of Allah. He sighed, shook his head and still had the benumbing feeling that something was out of sync with the new sect.

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1

Introduction

Rationale and Justification

As at the last count, before the better coordinated onslaught of the military beginning in 2015, Boko Haram[1] in addition to the well-known presence in Maiduguri and Gwoza in Borno state had made inroads into several local government areas (LGAs) in the state such as Magumeri, Gubio, Abadam, Monguno, Nganzai, Kaza, Marte, Kukawa and Mobbar. In other words, until the better coordinated response of the Nigerian armed forces starting from mid-2015, Boko Haram had spread its tentacles across a large area of Borno and swathes of territory in other areas of the Northeast and beyond, including massive presence in Yobe, Adamawa and Bauchi states and significant tentacles in Gombe, Kaduna and Kano states. Boko Haram, apart from over 20,000 estimated deaths and far-reaching humanitarian crisis approximating that occasioned by the Nigerian civil war, has become the most daunting challenge to Nigeria's nationhood and development in the last decade. However, Nigeria is not in any sense a stranger to the mayhem of religious fundamentalist sects especially in the predominantly Muslim North of the country.

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Nigeria has been confronted by other Islamic fundamentalist sects including the Maitatsine, the Izala Movement and even the Shia-inspired Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN). While Izala has limited its fundamentalism to interpretation and practice of the religion, the other two, especially the Maitatsine, had unleashed violence as a tool of propagating its beliefs. Boko Haram, while resembling earlier sects, also embodies new dimensions and trajectories in Islamic fundamentalism in modern-day Nigeria. Thus, Boko Haram deserves a thoroughgoing examination both as a radical or fundamentalist sect and perhaps as an organization embodying the aspirational frustrations of the younger generations of Nigerians in the Northeast. To this end, the sect portends something new and innovative.

In this book, I proceed with the assumption that Boko Haram typifies an innovative approach to Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria and argue that the ultimate transformation of the sect into a terrorist group after 2009 was engendered mainly by two factors, namely, the state's initial high-handed and extra-judicial approach and the increasing misery of the populace in the Northeast that called forth the need for a counter-narrative and imagery of the state in Nigeria. The approach of the government and its agencies in dealing with the perceived threat of Boko Haram in 2009 laid the groundwork for the emergence of the sect from the rubrics as a terrorist group. In addition, while socio-economic deprivation may not sufficiently explain the emergence and growth of Boko Haram, there is no gainsaying the fact that the increasing misery among the populace especially young people created the objective condition for the popularity of Boko Haram in the Northeast. A popularity that eventually waned not by the might of the state but by the recourse of Boko Haram to internal implosion of the Islamic population through its principle of '*takfarism*' starting from 2013 to 2014.

Boko Haram is a complex organization with shadowy credentials that have privileged many credible narratives in the last five years. Even with the discounting of some of the obviously frivolous, romanticist and imponderable discourse of the sect, there is still a wide difference in the narratives that have considerable traction. While the differences in narratives can be related to both divergence in interpretations and variance in understanding the background factors behind the insurgence, there is

also the glaring inability to separate rumours and popular side stories from the facts.

However, any thoroughgoing analysis of Boko Haram must appreciate the influence of such factors as the antecedent and immediate nature of the Northeast society, nature of the state and governance in Nigeria, the undeniable amenability of the environment to sectarianism, varying interpretations of both the Qur'an and Hadiths even within mainstream Islam and the Messiah complex (which can be generalized for all Nigerians irrespective of faith) in the making of Boko Haram. Therefore, as has been argued, in examining the sect one must look not only beyond its immediate emergence or formation, "but also at the complex history of Nigeria, Islam in West Africa and the deep corruption that has robbed the continent's biggest oil producer, largest economy and most populous nation of even basic development, keeping the majority of its people agonizingly poor" (Smith 2016: 3). Boko Haram may reflect something more than mere radical pursuit of religious edification. Thus, "the fight against Boko Haram is not just a fight between jihadi militants and the military. It is a conflict over Nigeria's very identity. At question is this: is Nigeria a secular state, governed by what we recognize as the aged principles of the rule of law, or has Boko Haram exposed it as something else?" (Walker 2016: 219).

There is no gainsaying that a lot of what has been written about Boko Haram has been overtly laced with old stereotypes regarding Nigeria and an overwhelming statist approach. While some of these accounts provide useful insights and those from official US organs even profit from an acknowledged long engagement with terrorism, they are really broad sweeping approaches to the issue. For instance, while one identifies with the influence of economic privation and state corruption in the insurgence, these are general characteristics of the Nigerian society and can be validly framed as impediments faced by both old and young people in all corners of Nigeria. Therefore, these are critical intervening variables but are not fundamental to the Boko Haram problem. Socio-economic factors are really crucial mainly in terms of explaining how and why groups like Boko Haram can attract and perhaps retain followers, but they do not satisfactorily explain why Nigeria is conducive to the production of the likes of Maitatsine, Yusuf, Shekau, al-Barnawi and so on.

Apart from a burning desire to contribute to the academic debate on extremism and Islamic fundamentalism, this book is also driven by the need to inform policies and actions at targeting the eradication of extremism in Nigeria. The book aims at offering a nuanced and evidence-based understanding of the dynamics of religious extremism in Nigeria and how the ideology of extremist sects like Boko Haram feed into socio-economic marginalization, political exclusion and corruption prevalent in Nigeria.

The information for the book, apart from extant literature and documentary data, was derived from a survey conducted between March and August 2016 in Borno state. The lull in Boko Haram activities between late 2015 and 2016 as a result of reinforced and more coordinated military action made it possible for a survey in the Boko Haram main theatre of Borno state. It was possible to be physically present in Gwoza and Maiduguri for long periods to conduct surveys—interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The above provided profound insights into the perception and lived experiences of people affected by the insurgence and first-hand insider view of Boko Haram by "suspected" Boko Haram members[2] and sympathizers.[3]

Brief on Methodology

Sample and Sampling Method

The study depended on information gathered from a total of 92 respondents (i.e. 48 from Gwoza and 44 from Maiduguri including 12 FGD participants in each of these two LGAs in the state). The respondents were selected using a combination of the snowball and purposive methods. While the snowball approach was used in selecting respondents for interviews, the purposive sampling method was utilized in selecting respondents for the FGDs based on the criteria of willingness to participate, knowledge and exposure to Boko Haram activities and over five years of residence in the concerned LGA. It is important to point out here that the FGDs would have been impossible without the help of local facilitators who were recruited in the field in addition to the research

Table 1.1 Distribution of respondents covered by category by number by LGA

Category	Gwoza	Maiduguri	Total
Gate keepers	10	10	20
Boko Haram elements	6	4	10
Comm. members	20	18	38
FGD (males)	6	6	12
FGD (females)	6	6	12
Total	**48**	**44**	**92**

Source: Field work records, 2016

team. This was the only way to ensure that the respondents felt secure and free enough to air their opinions on what is undoubtedly a very sensitive subject. There were two FGD sessions made up of 6 participants per session (male-only and female-only sessions) in each LGA and 12 respondents (split equally between the Boko Haram members/ardent sympathizers[4] and socio-cultural/religious gatekeepers in each LGA) were selected for the key persons' interviews (KPIs) (Table 1.1).

Methods of Data Collection

As obvious from the foregoing, the study utilized three methods in gathering data. These were the documentary sources of data (use of the copious published, unpublished and grey literature on Boko Haram and Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria), KPIs and the FGDs. The data gathered from these three sources were robust and generated adequate information for the book.

Ethical Issues

There is no gainsaying the fact that the study put to test my ability to rise above my own religious convictions and interact with no presumptions whatsoever with those who share different and radical beliefs. Reflexivity as a reliable tool of the social scientist enabled me to check and ensure that my own religious background did not interfere with my role as a researcher in the field. While good ethics would have required a thoroughgoing full disclosure and even gone a step to aspire towards the

co-production of knowledge with research subjects, I had to find some innovative ways through these, given the sensitive nature of the investigation. In the first case, the respondents were fully aware of the general objective of the study, that is, broadly conceived as to directly determine the truth and facts about the insurgence from the subjects (we had to repeatedly assure them that we are not aspiring towards making judgements or rationalizing anything). Boko Haram sympathizers were equally informed that the study was meant and driven by the need to enable them tell their stories rather than depending on second-hand sources, news media speculations and narratives from the government and other perceived 'enemies' of the sect. However, the only full disclosure not given was the true identity and careers of the research team. In this case, knowing the predilection of insurgent groups for media attention and their need for sources other than theirs to tell their stories and even empathize with them, we adopted the moniker of freelance journalists.

Ethnographic Overview of the Areas of Study

The present Borno state is historically linked to an old caliphate which at one point in pre-colonial history was part of the famous Kanem-Bornu Empire. However, in spite of the jihad of dan Fodiyo and the more contemporary quest for pure Islam, the Borno Caliphate located on the western shores of Lake Chad is of very old lineage and had adopted Islam as a religion by the time of the Norman conquest of England. Even though Sokoto is now the capital of Islam in Nigeria and home of the spiritual leader of Muslims in Nigeria, the *Sultan* was historically and comparatively a much later Caliphate located hundreds of miles from Borno. However, while the Sokoto Caliphate, probably because of the boost of the jihad and its establishment as the political and spiritual capital of the new version of pure Islam championed by dan Fodiyo, persevered and was still in existence and strong by the time of the colonial contact, Bornu Empire had totally crumpled, though not by external conquest.

The old Bornu Empire collapsed in 1893 due largely to internal implosion and power struggle. Thus, in 1893 the Funj warlord Rabih Fadlallah seized power and moved the capital of the Empire to Dikwa. Fadlallah lost his hold on power when he was killed by the French in 1900. The French installed Shehu Sanda Kura in his stead. However, the romance between Kura and the French was short-lived since he was replaced a year later by his brother, Umar Abubakar Gabai, the ancestor of the present al-Kanemi dynasty. The dynasty took off from the ascension to the throne of Mohammad al-Kanemi in the nineteenth century. The al-Kanemis had displaced the Sayfawa dynasty that held sway between 1000 and 1300 AD. Gabai moved from Dikwa to Maiduguri as Shehu of the British controlled Borno, while Dikwa remained under the French and autonomous for a few more years.

Given the improbability of covering the entire Borno state, the study purposively selected two LGAs, namely, Maiduguri and Gwoza, as the study locations. The choice of these two LGAs was premised on the concentration of Boko Haram activities in these areas. As at the time of the fieldwork in 2016, the areas were beginning to reclaim their former existence, with the Nigerian military having pursued the insurgents out of these areas and established a high and often overbearing security presence in these towns as it were. The ethnographic details of the two locations are presented below.

Gwoza Town

Gwoza is a town, an emirate and headquarters of one of the 27 LGAs in Borno state in the Northeast of Nigeria. The state under the traditional political arrangement has eight emirate councils, namely, Askira, Bama, Biu, Borno, Dikwa, Shani, Uba and Gwoza emirates (Borno State Government 2016). Traditional rulers of these emirates are known as Emirs, and they advise the LGAs and the state government on traditional/cultural matters and constitute the Borno state traditional council with the Shehu of Borno as the Chairman. As is consistent with the practice across Northern Nigeria, Borno traditional council is subject to the lead-

ership of and adheres to the ideals of the Sokoto (*Usmaniyya*) Caliphate, which has the Sultan of Sokoto as the head and the *Amir al mu'minin*, that is, defender of the Islamic faithful and leader of Nigerian Muslim communities (Maishanu and Isa 1999).

Gwoza is a border town between Nigeria and Cameroon and lies about 135 km southeast of Maiduguri, the Borno state capital (Marama 2014). According to the most recent National Census, it has an area of 2883 km^2 and a population of 276,312 (National Population Commission 2006).[5] The area is characterized and marked by rocky and hilly terrains, with a height of about 1300 m above sea level. It is also made up of a range of mountains known as the *Mandara Mountains* which ordinarily provides natural covers. These mountains form a natural barrier between Nigeria and Cameroon, starting from Pulka. The mountains overlook the Sambisa game reserves by meandering towards Mubi and beyond into the neighbouring Adamawa state (Marama 2014). The dominant climate in Gwoza is the tropical savanna type with well-marked wet and dry seasons. Rainfall is between 750 and 1000 mm per annum with moderate temperature of 32 °C (see Allumma and Tada 2012). The town known as Gwoza is one of the most unique LGAs in Borno state with an amalgam of 15 distinct ethnic groups, including Kanuri, Hausa, Fulani, Marghi, Waha, Agibua and Ngoshe. Central Kanuri and Hausa languages are the major spoken languages by the inhabitants, while agriculture and trading are their main occupations.

Shortly after the 2009 face-off between the government and Boko Haram, Gwoza became a notorious hideout for the Boko Haram insurgents, who arrived in the area in 2009 from Maiduguri (see Abdullah 2014). The area suffered considerable violence as a result of the Islamist insurgence, and, in 2014, it witnessed an influx of Boko Haram fighters fleeing from the Sambisa Forest from the onslaught of the Nigerian army. However, things took a turn for the worse on 30 May 2014 when the traditional ruler of Gwoza (Emir), Idrissa Timta, was killed after he was kidnapped by the sect (Ola 2014). The group later captured Gwoza, and on 24 August 2014, Boko Haram through its leader Abubakar Shekau claimed that it had established an Islamic caliphate with Gwoza town as its capital. This new caliphate lasted for some months till the Nigerian military recaptured the town in early 2015.

Investigations by Marama (2014) indicate that there are many reasons insurgents find it easy to operate with ease in Gwoza and other communities in Borno state. The natural topography and surrounding *Mandara Mountains* as well as the porous borders with Cameroon, Chad and Niger republics make it easy for both movement of and proliferation of arms and ammunitions in Nigeria. The physical feature of the area is another reason since the long and seemingly daunting mountain range provides escape route for insurgents and even defensive walls against attacks. The military found it very difficult to penetrate these terrains with their vehicles, while members of the sect conversant with the area use bicycles and motorcycles and sometimes operate on foot.

Maiduguri

Maiduguri, also called 'Yerwa', or 'Yerwa-Maiduguri', is the capital and largest city in Borno state, northeastern Nigeria. The ancient and bustling town of Maiduguri sits along the seasonal Ngadda River which disappears into the Firki swamps in the area around Lake Chad. According to Ikusemoran and Jimme (2014), the city is historically made up of two cities: 'Yerwa' to the West and 'Old Maiduguri' to the east. Interestingly, while old Maiduguri was selected by the British as their military headquarters; Yerwa was selected at approximately the same time by Shehu Abubakar Garbai of Borno to replace Kukawa as the new traditional capital of the Kanuri people. The Maiduguri urban area, which was the main area of this study, is the capital of Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) and Jere LGA. In typical urban sprawl, parts of Konduga and Mafa LGAs are now also considered to be part of the city. However, the following residential areas constituted the primary study areas: Madimagari, Jere, Musari, Baga Road, Bulumkutu, Ngomari, Hausari and Shehuri.

Maiduguri, which is the headquarters of the Borno Emirate Council (one of the eight traditional Emirate Councils in the state), is headed by the Shehu of Borno who doubles as the chairman of the state traditional council. Historically, the Shehu of Borno is a powerful traditional ruler

not only in Borno state but in Northern Nigeria as a whole. He is generally taken in most conservative Northern quarters as second only to the Sultan of Sokoto who heads the Sokoto Caliphate.

According to the 2006 Population Census, the total population of Maiduguri urban area (MMC and Jere LGA) was 749,123 (National Population Commission 2006). Its residents are mostly Muslims with a considerable Christian population before the onslaught of Boko Haram. Indigenous ethnic groups in Maiduguri include the Kanuri (which constitute the majority), Hausa, Shuwa, Bura, Marghi and Fulani. Maiduguri is the principal trading hub for Northeast Nigeria and perhaps second only to Kano in commercial significance in Northern Nigeria. Its economy is largely based on services and commodities trade, with an insignificant share of manufacturing. The city has one of the best-equipped universities (University of Maiduguri also called UNI-MAID) in Nigeria. Other tertiary educational institutions located in the city include the Ramat Polytechnic, Kashim Ibrahim College of Education and El-kanemi College of Islamic Theology, among others.

Maiduguri is considered to be at the heart of the Boko Haram insurgency. As a result, between 26 and 29 July 2009 nearly 1000 people were killed in clashes between Boko Haram militants and Nigerian security forces in the city, which heralded the subsequent era of violent Boko Haram Islamist insurgence in Nigeria. Boko Haram's activities assumed overriding national prominence when on 14 May 2013, former President of Nigeria Goodluck Ebele Jonathan declared the first state of emergency, which lasted for several months in the Northeast states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe state due to the violent activities of Boko Haram.

Why the Choice of Maiduguri by Boko Haram?

One of the unresolved puzzles of Boko Haram is why Maiduguri was chosen as the ideal location (headquarters) of these later day jihadists and Islamists. The answer to the question lies in the history of Maiduguri (Bornu), its economic system, spatial location (with access to three

neighbouring countries, which offers opportunity of extensive market, supply routes and possible exploitation of the different regimes of excise on such goods as cigarettes, textiles and agricultural products), a long history of radicalism and political cunning, as evidently demonstrated in the way its leaders cleverly averted the rampaging soldiers of dan Fodiyo and reconsolidated the old Bornu Empire, which made it one of the few Empires not ravaged by the jihad of dan Fodiyo.

Apart from the fact that both Yusuf and Shekau are of Borno extraction and thus quite familiar with Maiduguri, the city was also a natural choice given its history as a great trading centre, a kind of entrepot city where traders and dealers in all forms of produce (including the ever-growing smuggling racket boosted by the proximity of Maiduguri to three international boundaries) congregated and sought to exploit the commercial opportunities offered by the city. It was also a favourite destination of youth migration in the whole of the Northeast zone and even beyond. Products such as diesel, petrol (which are smuggled over the borders and sold exorbitantly at a great profit), fish, beans, oil and pepper are popular, and a thriving night market upped the commercial potentials of the city.

Thus, Maiduguri is the most developed town in Borno state with an ever-increasing population, given the booming economic activities and the natural drift of young men to the city in search of greener pastures. The large number of youth in Maiduguri provided a robust recruitment pool for Boko Haram. The main traders in Maiduguri are the indigenous Kanuri speakers who constitute the largest ethnic and linguistic group in the state. There is also the significant presence of people from other ethnic groups including the Igbo of the Southeast.

The preaching of Mohammed Yusuf found huge traction among rich traders and merchants in Maiduguri. These men easily heeded the call of Yusuf to put their wealth and resources as believers into the jihad of Boko Haram. The largely informal sector business in Maiduguri produced men of resources who acquired influence as their wealth grew. Their influence was especially critical since the economy of Borno state, like many other states in Nigeria, depended largely on this informal sector, which with the exception of the government is the largest source of employment in

the state. These men of wealth had always perceived the need to make heaven and live a life worthy of the faith while on earth. So even before the emergence of Boko Haram, some of them had belonged to various sects and brotherhoods including the Izala. However, the strong personality of Yusuf and his fiery preaching drew a good number of them to Boko Haram. Thus, while the sect was largely populated by young socio-economically marginal members of the society, it also attracted a number of influential and rich people to its fold. These men were the ladders through which Yusuf and his Boko Haram lieutenants climbed to all strata of the Maiduguri society, and this was one of the reasons why even the political class led by a former governor found it expedient to court the leaders of the sect before 2009 (see Walker 2016).

Notes

1. The Boko Haram as used here is mainly generic and covers both the original sect led by Abubakar Shekau and the nascent splinter group (since 2016), which functions as the West Africa affiliate of the IS known as *Wilayat al Sudan al-Gharbi* (Wilayat in West Africa) and led by Musab al-Barnawi (its governor), son of late Boko Haram founder, Yusuf Mohammed. Therefore, one is aware of the split in the original sect but is convinced that this has changed neither the dynamics of the situation to any significant degree nor the degree of security challenge posed by the sect(s). Also, Boko Haram as an alias that has existed over decades now is a much more visible and recognizable label especially as the Shekau faction, which was the main focus of the empirical study undertaken for this book, is still recognized with and referred to by that name.
2. Passionate and vocal supporters of the group even though in most cases neither claiming membership nor denying membership of the sect.
3. It would be helpful at this point to explain the concept of sympathizer as I have used in this book. Boko Haram sympathizers are those who are members of the general public but who all the same have what may be considered a high level of empathy for the group and its goals. These are not really members of the public who are critical of the government's response to the insurgence and who are openly dissatisfied with the

socio-economic and political situations in the northeast. On the contrary, these are people who are going by their passionate defence of Boko Haram, their overwhelming or wholesome acceptance of the goals of the sect (even though they may not approve of the methods of Boko Haram) and are overtly critical of the government and the state at large may be seen as held "captive" by the ideology of the sect. In the main, such people were discovered through the interviews though I must point out that the above means of detecting a Boko Haram sympathizer is neither rocket science nor fool proof.

4. Used here as euphemism since our initial field experience shows that in the wake of the onslaught of the Nigerian military, people are wary of describing themselves directly as members of the group.
5. Given an estimated 3% population increase for Nigeria, the population of Gwoza would be over 350,000 by 2016.

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2

Global Islamic Fundamentalist Influence and Theoretical Explanation of the Insurgence

Global Islamic Fundamentalist Influence in Nigeria

Nature and Roots of the Concept of Islamic Fundamentalism

The use of the word 'fundamentalism'[1] as a designation or description applied to Islam differs significantly from its original usage in the Protestant world. Therefore, while fundamentalism in the protestant world refers to a subset or even a sub-group within the protestant fold, fundamentalism applied to Islam refers to those who tenaciously hold onto or insist (even violently) for a return to the fundamentals of the faith or belief system. In most cases, these fundamentalists cannot be described as a subset of the main group and chart an entirely new and often radical course. However, both senses of fundamentalism imply a longing for the original beliefs of the faith and a distaste for innovation or modernism. Also, critical is that the protestant fundamentalism which arose in North America in the 1920s was focused on returning the faith to some critical

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principles of the faith like Biblical inerrancy and adherence to the strict literal meaning of some key passages in the Bible like the resurrection.

Moreover, these fundamentalists did not advocate violence and did not see breaking away from the mother body as the way to go. But Islamic fundamentalists (and the so-called global fundamentalism[2] including among Christianity, Judaism, etc.) are not content only with a return to the fundamental principles and practices of the faith but advocate the necessary use of force or violence to do this (often embodied in the just war notion) as well as frequently breaking away from the main fold (also labelled sectarianism). Also, while Protestant fundamentalism defines modernity in terms of new interpretations and practices of the religion inspired by the desire of the church to keep pace with modern trends or the demands of an increasing youth demographic, Islamic fundamentalists stretch this imagination of modernity to include a total rejection of Western ideas (civilization, education, government, etc.) and in the process define Westernization not only as anti-Islam but equally in contest with Islam over the souls of believers. In this instance, fundamentalism invariably transcends religion and is in some sense a contest over power in human society in which Islam and Westernization become subterfuges for a long drawn duel of superiority.

In the views of Wood (2014: 125), "fundamentalism as a global rather than merely a Protestant phenomenon has been a controversial topic for at least three decades…Yet one point acknowledged by most scholars who write about fundamentalism is that the concept is-or has been-somewhat vague." The problem with the concept is not that it refers to essentially nothing, obscures reality, is too vague as some of its virulent critics would argue (see Abrahamian 1993; Marranci 2009; Harding 2000; Harris 1994; Mahmood 1994; Varisco 2007; Watt 2008; Wood 2011) or is not a description Muslims apply to themselves. The real issue is that it is considered pejorative and may be used in labelling all sorts of opposition to the status quo within a given religion as well as imbued with the usual inferiority of the 'other'.

However, it is important to understand that as concepts go in the social sciences, they are not always obedient to the wish of people being described. In other words, concepts and their embodiments are hardly coproduced with those being described. For instance, the concept

'developing world or society' (a supposedly none pejorative term in place of 'under-developed world'), which is generously applied to some parts of the world using development criteria or indicators established by the West, was not the product of consensus among the people from these parts of the world that they want to be so labelled. Therefore, the notion of self-description tenable especially in terms of maintaining critical research ethics of objectivity and non-bias has not eliminated the need for an other-generated description and critically the obvious 'first-to-name' syndrome which has characterized human civilization till date.

A good number of African countries still go by the name with which the colonial masters first identified them because they (colonizers) were the first to name them (even if one concedes that in most of these cases, the colonizers were the ones responsible for bringing these different communities together in order to form a nation state) and crucially, nobody has bothered to find out if the peoples concerned like these names; whether the names are pejorative/derogatory or even merely reflective of the imagination of the colonized as barbaric and backward. Perhaps, the flurry of change of the names of cities in the case of South Africa since the demise of both colonialism and apartheid shows that a lot of these names were never the outcome of the consensus of the people or their desire.

Apart from the popular Fundamentalism Project, which involved a large community of scholars from a wide range of disciplines which sought the deconstruction of the nature of the concept by adopting a comparative view of 'family resemblance' among militants in all major faiths globally—Islam to Judaism, Hinduism and Christianity, which produced five thick volumes on the subject—further elaborations have been provided by the contribution entitled "Fundamentalism: Genus and Species" by Gabriel Almond, Emmanuel Sivan and R. Scott Appleby (1995). Equally instrumental in further enhancing the visibility and acceptance of fundamentalism as an analytical category is the masterful condensation of the five volumes of the project in the text, "Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World" by Gabriel Almond, R. Scott Appleby and Emmanuel Sivan (2003). This latter text spelled out what may be considered the key family resemblances or common features of fundamentalism, namely, a dualistic black and white enclave culture, reification, selective retrieval and fortification of religious

traditions, the fervent upholding and idealization of perceived 'sacred' past and a belief in scriptural inerrancy (also referred to as fundamentalist literalism or scripturalism[3]).

While cognizant of the Western provenance of the word fundamentalism, writers have found it expedient to make a distinction between 'global' and the original 'historical' fundamentalisms (see Wood and Watt 2014). Therefore, while historical fundamentalism makes reference to the Protestant version of the concept, global fundamentalism is in reference to the application of the concept to other religions or faiths like Islam and other world religions. However, one of the perceived weaknesses of the analytical value of the concept of fundamentalism when applied to Islam is that it is a concept that has been unearthed or transplanted from its original American Protestant context to refer to other religions and contexts, especially Islam. This is in spite of the fact that the meanings in both cases are not strictly or totally the same.

Be that as it may, I find the distinction of fundamentalism into three main waves made by Clarke (2014) very insightful in understanding the Boko Haram phenomenon in Nigeria. The first wave refers to mass-based organizations that operate at state levels through taking political action like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the second wave refers to utopian schemes like that of the Indo-Pakistani Mawdudi and the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb and the third wave "consists of clandestine groups that turn to spectacular violence to overthrow local governments and eliminate Western influences with the aim of establishing a true Islam worldwide" (Clarke 2014: 163). Clarke goes to see the al-Qaeda as a typical example of this third wave in contemporary world development. I find Boko Haram much like the al-Qaeda as belonging to the third wave of Islamic fundamentalism. Therefore, it sees the usage of spectacular and often senseless violence as a way of overthrowing the modern state and eliminating Western influences seen as either undermining Islam or the root of the rot in the society.

Boko Haram, much like any other third-wave Islamic fundamentalist group, was and is led by young men who are not recognized religious leaders and who have little or no formal religious education, but seek to rival traditional and conventional scholars of the faith. Whatever these new men lack in learning, they are driven to over-compensate in fervour,

single-minded devotion to fancied interpretations of the scripture, stubborn insistence on the sacredness of both the text and traditional practices associated with the prophet, violent extremism and demonstrated will to do anything for the faith. Adopting a largely violent enclave mentality, they set upon themselves the task of destroying those who either oppose them or are dissimilar to them in addition to their avowed war with the state and Western civilization.

While I acknowledge some of the pitfalls or weaknesses of the concept of fundamentalism, I still see it as usable in especially describing the activities and the so-called beliefs of Boko Haram which go largely against the grains of moderate Salafism and Sufism. Even though the concept seems like a catchall term with undeniable Western roots and reminiscent of colonial divide-and-rule strategy, it suffices technically in describing a group of perceived believers, a sectarian sect that believes in the ostentatious quest for pure Islam and the re-enthronement of the first order of believers as well as indulge in acts which are either considered anathema (by mainstream believers) or at least as mimicry of the love and peace preached elaborately in the Qur'an.

Islam and Fundamentalism

In order to properly understand and situate Islamic fundamentalism in modern times including the activities of Boko Haram, it may be fruitful to have a broad stroke overview of the core nature of Islam as a religion. Islam as a concept comes from the Arabic word for submission and peace (*salaam*), which means that Islam can be described from its root meaning as a religion of peace. By 2009, a Pew Forum survey showed there were nearly 1.57 billion Muslims in the world (Pew Forum 2009). Indonesia has the world's largest number of Muslims (about 203 million) followed by Pakistan (174 million), India (161 million) and Bangladesh (145 million). However, there is sufficient population of Muslims in Europe (over 30 million) and the USA (over 2 million). Given this spread and number of believers, Islam is diversified in terms of ethnic, linguistic, regional and national identities of the believers. All Muslims believe in the sovereign and merciful God of the entire universe who revealed himself to the

Prophet Muhammad. The revelation to the Prophet Muhammad in spite of God having revealed himself to other prophets like Adam and Jesus was the final, supreme and perfect revelation. The basis of the belief and practice of Islam is located in the Holy Book, Qur'an and the Hadiths (a chronicle of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad).

In general, Muslims believe in the *oneness of God*, *the power of angels*, *the importance of the Jewish and Christian prophets*, *the holy books* and *God's ultimate and final judgement and sovereignty over the whole universe*. All the above make up the five pillars of belief in Sunni Islam (Sunni Islam comprises about 90% of all Muslims, while Shiite Islam takes up the remaining 10%). Though the five pillars of Islam are related to the above beliefs, they are all the same distinct and comprises (a) *public confession of faith*, which ideally initiates one into Islam (*Shahada*); (b) *commitment to five prayers daily* (*salat*); (c) *annual offering of 2.5% of a person's assets to the Mosque or a Muslim charity* (*zakat*); (d) *fasting* (*sawm*) within the daylight hours of the period of Ramadan and (e) *pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in the person's lifetime if the person is able* (*hajj*).

As a matter of analytical convenience, adherents may be categorized into four groups, namely, the violence endorsing Islamists, liberal Islam, secular Islam and possibly what can be called floating 'middlers' (see Armajani 2012). Violent Islamists are in the mode of the Taliban, al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and others that believe in and espouse the notion of revolutionary Islam. Their interpretation and peculiar understanding of the Qur'an and the Hadiths justify violent actions or attacks especially against the West and symbols of the West in order to achieve the aim of establishing a true Islamic state. However, liberal Islam offers a counter interpretation of Islam. So while also taking serious the important foundations of Islam, that is, the Qur'an, life of the Prophet, Shari'a and even the exemplary lives of the early Muslims, it still seeks accommodation with modernity. Muslims in this category reaffirm the value and significance of these foundations for modern life. In the main, they point out the Qur'an's restrictions on slavery, limitations on the right to private/personal vengeance, enhancement of the status of women and its prescriptions for justice, equality, liberty and social solidarity. For them, Islam remains a sophisticated belief system that offers value to modern life in different ramifications instead of a belief that is either artificial or in unending contention with modernity.

However, those that may be called secular Muslims or secularists take the accommodation between modernity and Islam further and argue essentially that an individual's religion or even non-religious affiliation should bear no political ramification or consequence. Therefore, any citizen should be free to hold any political office in the state and there should be the legal equality of all citizens in the state. It recognizes that the right to legislate in the modern state rests with the people and/or their representatives. Crucially, the secularists while accepting Shari'a believe that the Shari'a is shaped by human beings and that the Shari'a is subject to the dynamics of socio-economic, religious and political situations in the society. Finally, the middlers while proud of the religious, literary and even cultural achievements of Islam through time still believe in the relevance of Islam's legacy to the contemporary world. Even though they loath having to live under the rule of Islamist government, they ironically often identify with the grievances of Islamists or Islamic fundamentalists.

One interesting revelation from the survey of the roots and foundations of Islam is the fact that it is a religion that underscores the value of peace in the society. For mainstream Muslims, humans are expected to live with a spirit of full submission to God, peace and respect for human life. The above tenet of Islam is captured in the Holy Book on chapter 6 verse 54, thus: "peace be upon you. Your Lord has decreed mercy. If anyone among you commits evil through ignorance and then repents and mends his ways, he will find God forgiving and merciful" (Qur'an, 6: 54). So one continually wonders about the basis of the violent approach adopted by many contemporary Islamic movements all over the world. In other words, groups like Boko Haram which advocate, sponsor and support violence may be going against the grain of Islam as a religion of peace and submission to the will of God.

Towards a Theoretical Explanation

A critical challenge in the studies of insurgent organizations, especially long-lasting ones like Boko Haram, is to explain both their emergence and resilience within the body of existing social theories. While it would appear convenient to point towards social pathology, structural deficiency

and even the emotional baggage of religion especially in developing societies in typical cases, groups like Boko Haram which go against the grain of reality of even insurgence in Nigeria present peculiar challenges. The fact that Boko Haram is doctrinally opposed to commonly held and supported views of Islam in Nigeria but yet enjoyed massive support for some time (even among the so-called mainstream Muslims) entails that theoretical explanations must be robust enough to capture what is orthodox about the sect but much more importantly capture what is innovative and peculiar about it. Quite a good number of theoretical explanations could be seen as appropriate in this situation. Some of these theories are examined here especially with regard to how they adequately explain the Boko Haram insurgence.

Merton's Theory of Anomie

This viewpoint could be useful in understanding the Boko Haram episode in Nigeria, especially as a phenomenon which negates the social norms of the society. The sociologist Robert Merton had proposed the theory of anomie in the bid to explain deviant behaviour among members of the society, that is, in simple parlance, behaviour considered within the prevalent norms of the society as significantly digressive, rebellious or refuting of goals and/or means approved by society. The main kernels of the theory are that every society has goals and means which structure and guide the actions of members and relations in the society concerned. The goals are the ultimate ends that are defined by the society as desirable and lofty, while the means are the specified and society-approved routes towards achieving these approved ends. The theory seeks to relate normlessness and disorder to the relative acceptance, rejection and outright bid for overthrow of goals and/or means approved by the society.

The theory of anomie denotes four main forms of response to means and goals, namely, conformation, innovation, retreat and rebellion. Each of these signifies either acceptance or rejection of either or both the means and goals as well as the total rejection of both and the active efforts towards innovating on either of them. In conformation, the individual member of the society takes the means and goals set by the society as given and models his/her actions and relations on them; in innovation,

the individual accepts the goals set by the society but rejects the means, that is, actively engages in the process of modifying or changing the means; in the case of retreat, the individual member of the society engages in some form of withdrawal as a response to both the goals and means—he/she actively avoids the goals or refuse to approach behaviour that is consistent to achieving the goals. In the situation of rebellion, the individual or individuals reject both the means and goals of the society and consider them either as outrightly inferior or unedifying.

They engage in activities or actions not only to subvert but to establish a new social system in which their preferred values and beliefs generate both acceptable goals and means of achieving these goals. In the case of Boko Haram, the main goal may be seen as making paradise or heaven through the creation of a society anchored on pure or unadulterated Islam modelled after the first community of believers. The means for this desired paradise would be through the strict observance of the Shari'a and the use of jihad to wipe out vestiges of the decadent unacceptable social system. The rejection of Western education and all its accoutrements also fit into this rejection of the means of development and growth established by the society.

Equally instructive in one's understanding of Boko Haram within the paradigm of the anomie theory of Merton is to appreciate Merton's argument that deviant behaviour primarily arises from the imbalance between the goals established by the society and the approved means for achieving these goals. Implied here is that the social structure is often the source of disconnect between goals and means. In other words, society often fails to create the environment or objective conditions for attaining the goals. In the case of Boko Haram, therefore, pervasive poverty, social dislocation and marginalization which face the ordinary citizens may generate conditions in which the goals and means established by the Nigerian state are seen as no longer reflective of the aspirations of the people.

Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative deprivation offers the opportunity of understanding the driving force behind youth involvement in the Boko Haram conflict in the Northeast of Nigeria. In this sense, insurgence is framed as not just a

response to the challenges of the socio-political system in Nigeria but relative (comparative) marginalization and exclusion foisted on young people and commoners from this zone. Anchored on classical functionalist perspective, relative deprivation sees deprivation as facilitating social action in the event where one or a group perceives its benefit, vis-à-vis its contribution and in relationship to the significant other as inadequate.

Restiveness and dissatisfaction over a group's position in a plural or heterogeneous society derives from a rational comparison of a group's shares and benefits with those of significant others. However, in this process of comparison, a negative balance between both perceived contribution and benefit or between the group's share and that of another group is seen as contributing same or less breed psychological dissonance, which easily generates conflict. Deprivation apart from being instructive in studying individual action has been found useful in explaining the emergence and persistence of social movements (see Anugwom 2017; Igbo and Anugwom 2002).

The youth in the Northeast of Nigeria that feel short-changed in relation to others in the same society (in this case significant political others and other geo-political zones in Nigeria) may engage in actions to address this deprivation. The deprivation theory puts forward the notion that people who feel deprived of some goods or resources are more likely than others to engage in political/social actions to address the deprivation. There is of course no gainsaying the fact that socio-economic conditions in the Northeast of Nigeria have worsened over time and the structure of opportunity seems non-existent and grossly stifling of youth aspirations.

However, the explanatory power of the theory in the context of Boko Haram is undermined by the fact that it fails to explain why relative deprivation does not generate social action in all groups. In other words, why is it that there is a greater number of young people who even though similarly affected by the extant socio-political and economic situations in the Northeast have not taken to insurgence than those who have taken the path of Boko Haram. In this sense, the theory hardly poses a direct relationship between deprivation and socio-political consciousness. In fact, while the relative deprivation theory may serve well in the articulation of ethno-national grievance, it seems too tenuous an explanation of an extremely radical social action as insurgence which can neither be generalized for a given social group nor seen as commonly shared attributes of mainstream believers in the religion.

Borum's Four Steps and Other Explanations

Apart from the above two sociological theories, there has been a good number of theoretical explanations of the phenomena of terrorism and extremism in the last decade (see Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010; Sinai 2012; Borum 2003; Schmid 2013). These explanations have largely sought to explain the process of radicalization in Islam which is seen as the hallway to engagement in terrorist activities. One of the first models was put forward by Randy Borum in 2003 and posits four steps in the radicalization process, namely, recognition by the individual or group that a given event or condition is wrong (the idea of it's not right); a period of framing of the said event or condition which is seen as selectively unjust (the notion of it's not fair); the third occurs when the 'unjustly' treated individual or group holds others responsible or accountable for the injustice (the idea of it's your fault); and the final or fourth step is the demonization of the 'other' (or the notion you're evil) (Borum 2003).

Other theoretical models include that from Wiktorowicz (2005) on the cognitive opening, which seek to apprehend the psychological nature of radicalization. Perhaps, Wiktorowicz's main finding which resonates with the study of Boko Haram and even the so-called lone wolf terrorism is the fact that those who have only a superficial religious background are more vulnerable to radicalization than the most knowledgeable in Islamic theology. Another prominent model in the explanation of radicalization came from Joshua Sinai (2012), who identified three main distinct phases, namely, radicalization, mobilization, that is, active engagement or involvement, and actual action (involvement in acts of terrorism) in the movement towards commitment of terrorist acts. Each of these phases is further broken down into spheres or stages.

The Staircase to Terrorism Model

Perhaps the most pertinent explanation especially from the perspective of studying jihadist terrorism or the Salafist-jihadism of the type of Boko Haram comes from Fathali Moghadam who put forward the staircase model. According to Moghadam (2009), radicalization can be seen in the form of narrowing staircase which leads step by step to the very top epitomized by

acts of terrorism. The staircase model is like a building which has, in his unique metaphor five main floors, namely, the ground floor (occupied literally by the over 1 billion Muslims in the world and which refers to the cognitive apprehension of the structural circumstances of the individual, i.e. I am a Muslim and there are others who are not in the world and I share a distinct set of beliefs from these others); the first floor (occupied by those who are seeking to remedy or set right the circumstances perceived as unjust); some of those on the first floor eventually move up to the second floor, where they are directed towards external targets—this involves the process of radicalization in a number of places including mosques; third floor, which involves both a disengagement from the society and a moral engagement with the terrorist organization—values are constructed here and are geared towards rationalizing violence and debunking the moral authority of the state or incumbent regime; some of those here soon move upward again to the fourth floor, where there is the strong acceptance of the legitimacy of the terrorist organization. In the views of Moghadam (2009), at this stage the predominant attitude is you are either with us or you are against us. At the fourth floor, the individual is also incorporated into the organization and its values and structures. Some of those here are then recruited into the fifth or final step on the staircase, which involves the actual committing of terrorist acts.

In spite of the fact that the above model arose largely in response to global terrorism and worries with radicalization, it can be used in explaining the Boko Haram episode to a large extent. In the first instance, the members of the group can be seen as reflective of Islam neither in Nigeria nor in the Northeast of Nigeria. Thus, radicalization and engagement in violence are options taken by a few people who strongly feel the need to take matters into their hands in order to address perceived injustice. The model also responds to the fact that one can make a genuine distinction between the rank and file members of Boko Haram and the leadership cadre who are those who have got up to the fourth floor in the model. But critically important here is that the model recognizes the fact that terrorism and insurgence do not simply arise because one is a Muslim or because the individual recognizes his/her situation vis-à-vis significant others. Thus, becoming a committed member of Boko Haram and other insurgent sects goes beyond mere membership of Islam but involves a systematic process of radicalization, leading the individual to the point of violent action or terrorism.

Notes

1. First used by a Baptist journalist Curtis Lee Laws in 1920 to designate an emerging movement within American Protestantism, which became evident in that year's annual meeting of the Northern Baptist Convention.
2. Global fundamentalism is used as a means of distinguishing fundamentalism that arose from the protestant dissension in the 1920s Northern America from the fundamentalism that has become almost fashionable in referring to strident and frequently violent religious revivalism especially in Islam, which debuted most prominently in the wake of the Islamic Revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. Perhaps, Khomeini has the distinction of being the first globally recognized fundamentalist in the Islamic world.
3. A good understanding of the idea is provided by Ellis Goldberg, who sees a profound similarity between Sunni (Islam) attitudes towards the Qur'an and that of the Protestant Christians. Thus, "both early Protestantism and the (Sunni) Islamist movement seek to force believers to confront directly the authority of the basic texts of revelation and to read them directly rather than through the intervening medium of received authority. Both believe that Scripture is a transparent medium for anyone who cares to confront it" (Goldberg 1991: 4).

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3

Historical Antecedents and Context of the Boko Haram Insurgence

The Historical Context of Islam in Nigeria: Origin, Growth and Influences

A good knowledge of the nature of Islam in Nigeria would readily show that Sunni is the main brand of Islam. In this sense, Muslim identity and aspirations in the country derive largely from the Sufi (Sunni) brotherhoods of both Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya. This is often seen as a reflection of the influence of both Usman dan Fodiyo (the Sokoto Caliphate dominance) and the Kanem Bornu kingdom in shaping the nature and establishing the foundation of modern Islam in Nigeria. There is no gainsaying the fact that the history of Islam in Nigeria can hardly be told without mentioning the pioneering role of Usman dan Fodiyo and the influence of the colonial experience in shaping and embedding Islam in Nigeria.

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Life and Times of dan Fodiyo as a Pioneer Islamic Leader in Nigeria

The pioneer dan Fodiyo was named in accordance with Fulani naming convention as the son of the learned one, that is, dan Fodiyo (Fodiyo or Fodiye, which meant the learned one in Fulfulde, the language of the Fulani of West Africa). Several accounts in the literature (see Last 2014; Last 1967; Trimmingham 1959; Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966; Hiskett 1973; Walker 2016) have been helpful in getting a broad stroke of the life and activities of dan Fodiyo, the traditional Hausa-Fulani society and the origins of both dissent and insurgence in the Islamic North of Nigeria. Evident in most of these accounts is the role of dan Fodiyo, his jihad and notions of pure Islam in setting an immutable background to contemporary Islam in Nigeria. dan Fodiyo hails from the Toronkawa clan of the Fulani, a renowned nomadic ethnic group that originally was located only in Senegal. The group migrated to Hausa land in the 1400s. It was in this place of migration that dan Fodiyo was born in 1754 in Gobir, then considered the most prominent of the original seven Hausa states. dan Fodiyo is linked to the Qadiriyya Brotherhood (he is reputed as the first leader of the Brotherhood), which is a part and parcel of Sufism in Islam.

Gobir was one of the seven original Hausa city-states or kingdoms. The most popular and often quoted folklore about the origin of the Hausa kingdoms is that of the Arab prince Bayajjida, who, story has it, travelled from Baghdad to the Sahel. When he arrived at Daura, Bayajjida was said to have killed a monstrous snake that was oppressing the people of the town and in appreciation he was given the queen in marriage. Before this marriage, the queen had six sons already and begot another with Bayajjida. Each of these sons eventually ruled one of the seven Hausa city-states, namely, Biram, Daura, Gobir, Katsina, Kano, Rano and Zaria. However, these kingdoms were often together referred to as Daura since it was in Daura that Bayajjida killed the snake and founded the Hausa people. There is also the plausibility that the Hausa kingdoms may have been founded by Berber migrants from the North of the Sahel, who are reputed for their itinerant lifestyle and commerce. For most of their

history, the Hausa were largely polytheists and Islam was only introduced there around the eleventh century and even after this, it was still mainly the norm to fuse traditional practices into Islam. A practice that continued until the time of dan Fodiyo, who saw this as unacceptable.

The capital of Gobir kingdom, as at the time of the dan Fodiyo jihad, was a walled city called Alakawa. At the time of the jihad, Gobir was under the tyrannous rule of a young despotic ruler called Yunfa, who took over from his uncle as the Sarkin Gobir. The jihad was at the behest of a well-known Islamic scholar called Shehu (equivalent of Sheikh) by his followers. The Shehu generally saw the rest of Gobir society, especially the aristocracy, as a band of heathens and subsequently withdrew from the village of Degel with his followers to establish a new world where the pursuit of Islam was the goal. In other words, he rejected the idea of living among heathens which was how he saw those he felt were not practicing Islamic purity. The Shehu, apart from living a devout life, was a fiery speaker who won converts even among traditional Hausa heathens who welcomed his reformist ideas, especially in the light of the despotism of the ruling autocracy. One manifestation of this despotism and high-handed rule was the levying of heavy and arbitrary taxes on cows and the disregard of the ruling Gobir autocracy of the centuries-old axiom that a Muslim cannot take slaves from another Muslim community or treat fellow Muslims as slaves.

In the bid to escape from heathen-infested Gobir, Shehu fled with his followers to a place called Gudu. A movement often interpreted as similar in Islam to the 'Hijra', that is, the flight of the Prophet Muhammad from the corruption of the city of Mecca to set up a religious community in Medina, all in present-day Saudi Arabia. Thus, "the Shehu headed away from Degel on 21 February 1804. Two months later, in the sweltering heat of April when it can reach 40 degrees Celsius at midday, people were still arriving at the new camp. It was at a place called Gudu, thirty miles from Degel as the crow flies" (Walker 2016: 5).

It must be mentioned that realizing the growing number of the followers of Shehu and his increasing popularity, Yunfa made repeated efforts at making Shehu return. On one occasion he sent his Waziri to Shehu with the promise of amnesty. However, knowing the greed and temperament of Yunfa, Shehu gave two difficult conditions, namely, that Yunfa should

make serious efforts to purify the Islamic faith and return all relatives and property of Muslims seized/enslaved by Gobir. Given these apparently impossible conditions and the advice of court Mallams (learned and devout scholars of Islam) that Yunfa was right and Shehu was wrong, the stage was set for a confrontation.

The jihad of Shehu, given his life as an itinerant preacher of the scripture and pious believer with enormous empathy for the ordinary citizens, was more or less a popular mass revolt. The Shehu's father, Mohammed was a travelling Fulani preacher and an acknowledged Islamic scholar. Shehu, like his father, built his community among Fulani herdsmen, Hausa peasants and even former Maguzawas (pagan Hausas) he had converted.

dan Fodiyo, as the accounts show, was an expert in the Maliki school of Shari'a or the Islamic law. According to Walker (2016), of all the four schools derived from the Hadith, this was the first to reach sub-Saharan West Africa. dan Fodiyo was equally born into the Sufi brotherhood (known as 'tariqa' which believes in the notions of saints, spirits and prayer rituals known as 'dhikr' whereby a congregation of faithful are whipped into frenzy by reciting prayers in unison. It is believed that this can induce a form of trance. Brotherhoods in Islam are therefore devoted to Saints and inspire members to live the lives of Saints). But what is very critical in appreciating both dan Fodiyo's religious principles and Boko Haram that aspires towards these same principles, albeit in a more heinous manner, is that these brotherhoods abhor sins like drinking alcohol, smoking, fornication and lying and see themselves as Islamic purists. In spite of dan Fodiyo's acknowledged religiousity, he could not perform the Hajj to Mecca considered as the pinnacle of post-Muhammad Islamic practice. As Hiskett (1973) reports, his only attempt was aborted halfway because he set out without his father's permission.

There is some disagreement in the accounts on whether dan Fodiyo was a believer in the Wahhabi approach (the followers of the eighteenth-century Islamic purist, Mohammad ibn Abd-al Wahhab who forbade any innovation in the religion and are committed to return Islam to the basic principles and way of life of the Prophet Muhammad and the original community of believers called the pious predecessors or 'al salaf al-salih').

However, dan Fodiyo's likely Wahhabi credentials are muted by the fact that he was not without principled compromise. Thus, because of his Qadiriyya brotherhood (a Sufi sect just like the later Tijaniyya, renowned for building a bridge between political and spiritual powers) origins, he believed that the inner self deserves pity rather than outright punishment.

But contemporary Salafists who lay claim to dan Fodiyo dispute this and argue that with time dan Fodiyo became conscious of the need to reject the Sufi Brotherhood and adopted the Wahhabi principles of the 'Salaf'. But the history of dan Fodiyo and his activities would rather show that he hovered between the two competing traditions and being true to his cultural background where mysticism held sway accepted the reality of spirits. However, in true pious fashion he saw that the reliable way to deal with deleterious effects of spirits or 'djinns' was through total and unquestioning dedication to Islam.

In spite of the voluminous and extensive deeds ascribed to him either directly or indirectly, dan Fodiyo's sermons can be captured as dealing with five subjects or the five canons of dan Fodiyo's theology, namely, how to correctly and perfectly follow the Shari'a (which are the immutable laws of God); the overriding importance of the 'Sunnah' or the way of God; need to refrain from being too demanding of a teacher; how to prevent evil, avoid and guard against evil custom which also included how to perform ablution correctly and stay clean; and the belief that disasters would befall believers that eschewed the Shari'a (see Bello and Arnett 1922).

Apart from his fiery preaching, knowledge of the scripture and devout lifestyle, dan Fodiyo drew followers equally from a belief in his supernatural powers and divine ordination as a reformer. Thus, his followers believed that he was the fulfilment of the prophecy that told of the coming of *Mujaddid* or the reformer that would arise from the 'lands of the blacks' (*bilad al-sudan*). Reinforcing the above is the fact that even dan Fodiyo saw himself as the *Mujaddid* (reformer) sent before the *Mahdi* (a sort of forerunner). In addition to these qualities, dan Fodiyo also connected with the ordinary people. The fact that he made a living from preaching and spinning rope—seen as symbolic of his humility (see Hiskett 1969)—endeared him to many of his followers.

It was against the forgoing that dan Fodiyo declared war on Gobir in 1804; a war against those he called the *habe* or 'those who are not us', indirect reference to his belief that they were heathen Muslims (practitioners of adulterated Islam). Shehu's forces eventually captured the walled Gobir capital, Alakawa in 1808. Even though Shehu (dan Fodiyo), probably on account of old age, never entered the battlefield, he had loyal men and spiritually oversaw the war. After the fall of Alakawa, the jihadists marched on with intention to conquer Bornu, where the Mai of Bornu, who hitherto claimed the title of leader of the Muslims, fled into exile. In spite of the split from Kanem following a civil war, the besieged Mai called Kanem for help with the jihadists. The help from Kanem was in the form of an acknowledged warrior and accomplished theological mind named Sheikh Aminu al-Kanemi, who was canny enough to disavow war but resorted to a test of will and wit with Shehu through a series of communication (letters) questioning the *modus operandi* of the jihad and cleverly not the overriding motive. He expressed support for the Shehu if Shehu was for the truth.

Probably on account of dan Fodiyo not having the resources to reengage in a war against Bornu and perhaps the witticism of al-Kanemi and the increasing extensive reach and wars of the jihad, it was possible for al-Kanemi to consolidate Bornu and reinstall the Mai who now ruled under his oversight. Interestingly, Bornu was the only contiguous territory to Gobir (contiguous defined extensively and broadly to refer to the whole of what is known as Northern Nigeria today), where a flag signifying the overlordship of Shehu was never handed over to a captain of the jihad (Emir). In spite of a historically enchanting life and undeniable politico-spiritual prowess, it was doubtful if dan Fodiyo completely and logically achieved his twin aspirations of the jihad, namely, to repair (reform) the faith and to throw away the yoke of oppression of the heathen (practitioners of impure Islam in the saddle of political power).

It is important to realize that the beliefs of the adherents of Islam especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were influenced by a tradition of beliefs and myths regarding the potency of ghosts and competing spirits (*bori*), dead ancestors, evil eyes, wizards and the ever presence and influence of one's enemies who could bring him bad luck,

sickness, death and so on. Therefore, these beliefs which predated the arrival of monotheistic religions like Islam and Christianity generated a cultural belief in the efficacy of charms as protection and a thriving commercial space for trade in charms, amulets and ritual objects and mediums as well as the human agents who mediated between the individual and these malevolent forces.

A good example of this human agent is *bokayes*, who were like the opposite of wizards and were adept at handling the spirit (*bori*). It was the *bokayes* who looked after the *Gidan Tsafi* (house of spirits). While all these were traditional practices and belief of the heathen/pagan Hausa (*Maguzawa*), they also influenced the adoption and practice of Islam. Hence, such rituals as drinking water distilled with pages of the Qur'an, sewing verses of the Qur'an into fabrics won by believers, sewing of such verses into leather packets worn on the body and so on are still common practices among Muslims in the North of Nigeria.

dan Fodiyo's concrete discontentment with the Gobir political system just before the jihad included the high and unrealistic level of taxation (especially cattle tax which affected mainly the Fulani who are known cattle herders) and the adulteration of Islam with traditional practices, especially the practice of cults and a largely permissive social environment which allowed the consumption of alcohol and even the non-wearing of veil by the women. The strong and expansive Caliphate established by dan Fodiyo and his descendants could not last more than three centuries before it came under pressure from other sources either not aligned to it or not altogether bought over by the claims of overriding spiritual purity on which the Caliphate rested. Some of these pressures came from the large number of Hausa pagan army, the Gobirawa or the pagan Maguzawa who were not totally conquered by the jihad and thus roamed and unleashed terror in the vast expanse between Kano and Sokoto. Even amongst those who were ostensibly aligned to the Caliphate, like the troublesome Emir of Hadejia and the remnants of the old Kanem and Bornu Empires, there were varying levels of dissension and the bid to re-establish independent sovereignty (see Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966; Hogendorn and Lovejoy 1979; Barth 1890 in Walker 2016; Last 1967 for detailed examination of socio-political growth and development in Northern Nigeria at this point).

What emerges from the above accounts is the fractious and factitious nature of the Northern Nigerian society even before the colonial contact as well as the extent to which the quest for Islamic purity has been a defining factor in that area. Even before the constellation of different social groups into a Nigerian nation at the behest of Lord Lugard, the foundation of a seemingly unending search for purity and extreme spiritual edification has been laid. The contestations and conflicts over these spiritual issues were as heated in the Northern society before the influx of Christians following colonial rule as they are nowadays.

It must be understood that immediately after dan Fodiyo and especially now, those who have aspired to recreate his spiritual calling and teaching have always fallen short. Even though dan Fodiyo was driven by the dream of creating a dynasty of spiritual leaders and a purified Islamic faith, his successors never totally committed to these. Therefore, they were motivated and thrilled by the fact that they have established a thriving earthly kingdom—the Caliphate which gave them wealth and made them exceedingly powerful.

While the suggestion that Boko Haram may share similar goals with the dan Fodiyo-led jihad in Northern Nigeria in the nineteenth century may offend some Muslims who despise and condemn the sect, there is no denying the fact that the sect ostensibly aspires to achieve the establishment of Islamic rule all over Nigeria and the triumph of Shari'a within the same region. Both goals were similar to the objective behind the jihad of the nineteenth century and the wide-ranging conquest and establishment of the empire that dan Fodiyo embarked upon. Even more telling is that the leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, regularly invokes the memory of Usman dan Fodiyo.

For instance, dan Fodiyo showed an unhidden preference for the Shari'a and discontentment with the practice of Islam without Shari'a. The evidence of this belief is best captured in his book, *Tanbih al-ikhwan 'ala ahwal al-Sudan* ("Concerning the Government of our Country and Neighbouring Countries in Sudan") in which he wrote:

> The government of a country is the government of its king without question. If the king is Muslim, his land is Muslim; if he is an unbeliever, his land is a land of unbelievers. In these circumstances it is obligatory for anyone to leave it for another country.[1]

A thoroughgoing observation of Boko Haram would show that the sect has a tendency in some ways to replicate the spatial footprints of the jihad of the nineteenth century. In spite of the fact that Boko Haram has launched attacks against Cameroon, Chad and Niger, and there has even been speculation that its members have been active in collaboration with the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali, the group's attacks and activities beyond Nigeria have been confined mainly to the area that may be defined as part and parcel of or under influence of the old Bornu Caliphate. In other words, much like the old jihad, it initially saw the imperative for extensive political kingdoms as sine qua non for spiritual growth and edification.[2] This is another link of the group to the prior ambitions of the jihad of dan Fodiyo.

Lugard, British Colonial Enterprise and Islam in Northern Nigeria

In spite of an inspired and dogged determination to carve out a united sphere of colonial rule in the areas now called Nigeria, Fredrick Lugard (pioneer colonial administrator and originator of British political authority in Nigeria) was a controversial and maverick personality who incidentally did not see the Africans he met as equally on the same human plane as Europeans. Lugard was a former captain in the British army and had inglorious stints in other areas of Africa. He was initially a career soldier and a veteran of British military exploits and incursions in such places as Afghanistan, India and Burma. He was in his mid-thirties before he sought to market his considerable skills as the vanguard of colonial expansionist interests in Africa first for the British East Africa Company, then for George Goldie's British Niger Company and ultimately for the colonial office.

While Lugard showed a commitment to prevent the continued enslavement of Christian converts (would be converts in most cases) by either African or Arabian Muslims, he still saw the Hausa-Fulani and the extensive political system of fiefdom they had established over time as superior to whatever obtained in the now Southern areas of Nigeria that he saw as the habitation of barbaric and uncouth tribes. Moreover, the aristocratic

and largely autocratic system in the North was seen as ideal for the indirect rule system of government pioneered by Lugard in West Africa. In addition to the need to minimize the cost of governance and reduce white mortality from tropical diseases like malaria (Lugard had often projected his determination not to totally displace the traditional systems of the colonized. This belief captured in the 'dual mandate' notion in which he sought to protect and project the best interest of the British while ensuring the progress and minimum dislocation of the local cultures and traditions except those considered too barbaric and anti-humanity like slavery), the indirect rule system ensured the maximum exploitation of the colonies while retaining formidable social distance between the colonizers and the colonized, which often projected a façade of the colonizer as benign.

An uncanny insight into the personality and guiding principle of Lugard can be glimpsed from his own description of his maxim. Thus, while reacting to the horrible massacre of East Africans (Ugandans) in an altercation over the control of the rich Bugunda kingdom of Central Africa orchestrated by his obstinacy, he wrote, "my maxim is do not go to war and shoot down natives if it can possible be avoided, but if you do start, give them a lesson they will never forget" (Perham and Bull 1959: 388). Predictably, Lugard's dual mandate principle and his open admiration of the existing extensive system of governance in the North of Nigeria, which ran on both religion and a patron-client system where the Emir was more or less a demi-god, made him oblivious to the need to seek reasonable conviviality between the two cultures.

Therefore, while the formal sphere of administration was based on the British model overseen by a few colonial white administrators, the traditional system led by the Emir kept the subjects in check and ensured obedience, and more critically, an already existing taxation system was modified to suit the British interest. In this situation, the colonial Northern society waxed strong in both undisturbed pursuit of Islamic knowledge and way of life while side by side with an overriding Western structure. It was thus no surprise that even before the departure of the British in 1960, the tension that had been building over the years between trado-religious Northern system and the supposed superior Western system was on the verge of eruption.

One critical error of the colonial administration blinded by both economic exploitation and the consolidation of power assured by a pliable Northern population was the unexamined approval of Shari'a law by the Lugard administration. Thus, while the colonial government conditioned Shari'a on the criteria of non-repugnance to natural law and deployment only in personal and traditional affairs, it was either naïve in assuming the non-evolvement of the Shari'a (to erode political and civil spheres) in a highly Islamised society over time or was simply focused on the short-term goals of colonialism as an exploitative and economically emasculating enterprise. This ambivalence in the role of Shari'a in public life has endured over time to now regularly haunt both Nigeria's secular state ambition and sustainable peace in the North.

Further Antecedents to the Insurgence

It must have been the recognition of linkage between Boko Haram and other Islamic fundamentalist groups before it that led Simons (2015) to argue that the group's antecedents can be traced to the era of Islamic fundamentalism in the 1980s in Northern Nigeria. While this opens up the issue of the historical antecedents of Boko Haram, it is in order to understand that radical Islamism in Northern Nigeria can be located further down. In an insightful account of Boko Haram, Walker (2016) traced persistence of radicalism in Northern Nigeria to the origins of the modern Northern society as a fractious, aristocratic, spiritual and ghost myth-infused society characterized by shifting loyalties and alignment of power among the aristocracy, ever-present expectation of the Messiah (Mahdi) and the traditional system of political patronage. The influence of the jihad was simply to modify rather than eliminate these strong proclivities in the society.

Besides the more popular and well-respected jihad of dan Fodiyo, there was the influential Maitatsine movement which wrecked its own havoc across most of the Northern states of Nigeria in the 1980s. Until Boko Haram, the Maitatsine was the most widespread and violent Islamic fundamentalist sect in the post-independence history of Nigeria. The sect led by the erratic and self-styled Mohammed Marwa espoused both radical

Islamic fundamentalism and peculiar interpretations of both the belief and practices of Islam that even showed scant regard and respect for the acknowledged progenitors of Islam. As Isichei (1987) reports, Marwa and his followers even denigrated Prophet Muhammad and had the popular (among his followers) phrase, "may Allah curse those who disagree with this (our) version." To say the least, Marwa was both unpredictable and maverick and made his followers indulge in hourly prayer sessions both day and night. He saw the existing Sufi Sheikhs and wealthy Muslims in and around his Kano base as heathens and slaves to Western allurements and contrivances.

The greatest strength of the Maitatsine movement was located in the fact that it drew membership mainly from the 'talakawas', that is, ordinary people who are commonly poor and marginal to the socio-political spheres of the society. In fact, the bulk of the 'Yan Tatsine' could be described a la Elizabeth Isichei as the 'disinherited'. In addition, Maitatsine and his followers were purveyors of heretical ideas derived from Maitatsine's peculiar interpretations of the Qur'an. Some of these heretical ideas were the non-acceptance of Muhammad and Isa as prophets and the rejection of both the Hadith and Sunnah which they saw as illegitimate. They were more engrossed with Qur'anic verses which suited their goals as a millenarian sect. Hence, they emphasized the need for steadfastness and martyrdom, condemned usury and the impiety of rich men as well as called attention to the belief that the end of the world was near and that a redeemer would soon emerge to lead the forces of God in war against evil.

In terms of the exclusionist definition of infidel in Islam, Boko Haram draws some parallel with the Maitatsine though the latter did not embark on massive slaughter of other Muslims in the North on this basis. Maitatsine built a cult-like and mystic aura around himself and offered a very strange, albeit radical, interpretation of the Qur'an and even offered new doctrines in place of those he felt were not tenable in the Qur'an. As Danjibo (2009: 6) avers, Marwa "rebelled against many popular opinions in Kano Islamic circles, denouncing certain parts of the Holy Qur'an and even criticizing Prophet Muhammed." In adopting the above extreme fundamentalist approach to the religion, Marwa and his followers saw mainstream Muslims as infidels and saw no restraint towards killing them. In fact, they believe that killing 'Arnas' (infidels) who they saw as

non-believers in Allah was a sure route to heaven. It must be stated that in spite of the above, Maitatsine and his followers never engaged in any systematic or widespread killing of these perceived Muslim unbelievers unlike Boko Haram. Also, before the advent of Boko Haram and in spite of the Maitatsine episode, the word infidel was used mainly on those who were not professed Muslims in Nigeria.

Before Boko Haram, the active radical groups in Nigeria included the Iran-sponsored and -funded Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), a Shiites group led by Ibrahim Zakzaky (who claims to have been inspired by the Iranian Revolution), and the Saudi Arabia-sponsored Izala movement, which had the late Gumi as its most respected and vocal proponent. These are in opposition to the popular Sufi-inspired and largely moderate Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya brotherhoods in Nigeria's Islam. However, Boko Haram's connection to these groups is tangential apart from the Izala, which is seen as having provided an early platform for Yusuf, who ultimately fell out with the group over doctrinal differences.

Notes

1. British Encyclopaedia Online, Usman dan Fodio. 2013. Accessed 17 May 17 from http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/620352/Usman-dan-Fodio.html.
2. The declaration of the short-lived Islamic Caliphate of Gwoza by the sect bears testimony to this motive. However, the now largely accepted non-inclination to hold territory by Boko Haram may have resulted from apparent incapacity to do so and not as a matter of principle.

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4

Origin, Growth and Ideology of Boko Haram

Origin and Growth of Boko Haram

According to Roelofs (2015: 132), "accounts of how the Boko Haram developed are so profoundly different as to indicate a general lack of clarity and knowledge about the group, rather than a range of interpretations of agreed facts." Even though I have tried as best as possible depending on literature, anecdotal evidence and sentiments of my respondents to piece together the history of the sect, there is no doubt that "evidence about Boko Haram's early history is mixed and contradictory" (Higazi et al. 2018: 207). Thus, piecing together the precise origins of the group is not by any means a straightforward exercise. It is often the contention in some accounts that Boko Haram originated from Kanamma in Yobe state. This is improbable since the group that emerged in Kanamma was a splinter faction of Boko Haram which broke away from the Maiduguri headquarters. This faction was led by a zealous former lieutenant of Yusuf known as Muhammad Alih, who apparently felt Yusuf was too slow in ushering in the righteous era of Islam. The Kanamma faction, which broke off in 2003, raided police stations, intimidated the local population and invaded government buildings in a clear bid to attract attention

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as a revolutionary group. The group also dubbed itself 'the Nigerian Taliban' even though it had no link whatsoever with the Taliban and could not last long enough to even aspire to such linkage. The group was soon enough totally wiped out by the military.

Mohammed Yusuf apparently had nothing to do with the activities of this group even though he took off to Saudi Arabia in the heat of the crackdown on this group and resurfaced in Nigeria in 2005. It was on this trip that it is believed the renowned Islamic scholar Ja'afar Adam brokered peace between the then Borno state governor, Ali Modu Sherif, and Yusuf. Reported outcomes of the truce included Yusuf's guarantee of peace in the city and the government's tacit support of Boko Haram and its leadership. Also, often pointed out as the outcome of this deal was the appointment of a known Yusuf loyalist, Buji Boi, into the state religious affairs ministry. Boi was one of those killed in the aftermath of the 2009 face-off (a popular YouTube film captured his execution). Also, unconfirmed speculation has it that Yusuf received some fund from Saudi Arabian sources for the Islamic learning centre/school in his headquarters in the old Railway quarters in Maiduguri.

Another strand of narrative in the discourse on the origin of Boko Haram saw the group as having origins in a Muslim youth organization formed in 1995 known as Shabaab (Simons 2015). At the beginning, the group was said to have been led by one Abubakar Lawal, who later left to further his education and handed over to Mohammed Yusuf, who skilfully turned the organization into a political organization. Yusuf's oratory skills and apparent fervent love of Islam and zeal to Islamize Nigeria easily won him large following and even support from notable members of the society.

The stories of the Kanamma uprising by Mohammed (2015) and Cook (2011), which see the group led by Ali in Yobe state as the antecedent of Boko Haram, differ from that given by some other sources, especially Walker (2016). Thus, there is a suggestion to the effect that the Kanamma Yobe incident in 2003 was not a Boko Haram effort even though in the larger scheme of things connections and exchanges between one radical sect and another within contiguous territory cannot be totally written off. However, I think that the overwhelming anecdotal evidence

debunks the former position and rather see Kanamma to some extent as an autonomous development from Boko Haram.

In the views of Onuoha (2010: 55), Boko Haram started in 1995 under the leadership of Abubakar Lawan (this group was then known as the *Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra* or the Muslim Youth Organization) and later changed names severally from '*Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra*' to the 'Nigerian Taliban'; '*Yusufiyya* sect' and ultimately to '*Boko Haram*'. Despite providing some insights into the evolvement of the movement through time, the above account, which relied incidentally on information from Nigerian Defence sources, is riddled with some obvious contradictions. For instance, the group commonly referred to as Boko Haram does not and has never referred to itself as Boko Haram.

It would seem that the name Boko Haram appeared from 2005 in response to the frequent decrying of *boko* in Yusuf's copious sermons (Roelofs 2015). In addition, even though Yusuf was a member of the youth group of the Izala[1] society led by Lawan and even assumed leadership of the group at some point, this group was not historically the genesis of Boko Haram in as much as one can point to it as antecedent to Yusuf's emergence as a revolutionary jihadi leader. As the most consistent accounts show, Boko Haram took off between 2001 and 2002 as the *Yusufiyya* sect (see Cook 2011; Danjibo 2009). It would appear that by 2001 Yusuf started honing his independent skills away from other prominent influences and within a year (circa 2002) the group clearly albeit informally crystallized into the Yusufiyya sect. The name Boko Haram came later as obvious from the foregoing discussion and was coined mainly by journalists covering the activities of the group as a result of the consistent and constant usage of that expression by Yusuf in his sermons and debates. Therefore, Boko Haram was the description of the group by outsiders that started in late 2005 and early 2006.

As expected, the growing popularity and now notoriety of Boko Haram have given rise to a number of accounts regarding the origin of the group. However, one of the most credible of these accounts links its ascendancy (with reference to its founder Yusuf Mohammed) to its initial association with the Izala society, one of the most respected Islamic groups in the North of the country. The Izala society has been active in Nigeria since the late 1970s acting as mainly a religious pressure group

devoted to a return to the fundamentals of Islam and curtailing the erosion of Islam by the military government then in the saddle of power in Nigeria. Izala, however, is seen as a moderate Islamic group unlike the Muslim Brothers that debuted in Nigeria in the 1980s and the very violent Maitatsine sect.[2] The followers of Maitatsine much like Boko Haram were mainly young people and those marginal to the socio-economic spheres of the society.

It is now largely agreed that Yusuf honed his oratory skill as a fiery Islamic preacher in the mosques of the Izala society in Maiduguri. In addition, Yusuf, who had little formal education, had too much revolutionary zeal and enjoyed stints of radical Koranic indoctrination in neighbouring Chad and Niger. As a leader, Yusuf worried about the dilution of orthodox Islam, especially under the influence of politics and economic patronage. He couched his worry and disdain for modern Nigerian politics and economic system in strong and defiant sermons in many mosques and gatherings. Perhaps, out of a sense of frustration with the decadent society or in a strategy akin to that of dan Fodiyo; Yusuf withdrew from mainstream society to build more followership and probably strategize on how best to confront the society outside there.

Even though the group because of its disdain for Western education was initially referred to as Boko Haram (essentially 'western education is forbidden'), it preferred to be known and called by its formal name, *Jamaa'at Ahlus-Sunnah lid-Da'wati wa' l-Jihad* ('Group of the People of Sunnah committed to Preaching and the Jihad). It would be interesting to note that the group called Boko Haram today did not have an ominous sounding name apart from being seen as the *Yusufiyya* until 2005/2006 and prominently after the 2009 face-off with the government. As ICG (2010) and Adamu (2012) contend, the preferred name of the group *Jamaa'at Ahlus-Sunnah lid-Da'wati wa' l-Jihad* came up in the aftermath of the September 2010 Bauchi prison break staged by the sect to free its members incarcerated by the government.

While a lot of the above narratives were gathered from anecdotal accounts (see Rivers 2015; Perry 2014), they were to a large extent confirmed by my own field work in both Gwoza and Maiduguri in Borno State. There are salient incontestable facts in these accounts: Yusuf had overflowing revolutionary zeal; had stints learning the Qur'an in

neighbouring Chad and Niger; honed his fiery preaching skills initially in Izala mosques in Maiduguri and was even put forward as representing the future of Islam in Nigeria; initially withdrew with his followers from mainstream society into a gated community in the old railway quarters in Maiduguri; he also believed in the overriding need for undiluted Islam and advocated for resentment with and total rejection of modernity.

What is however not clear is whether Yusuf saw himself as the *Mahdi*, that is, the saviour who is to come to rid the world of evil and set the stage for paradise. However, he was a believer in 'reversionism' which was largely epitomized in the complete rejection of Western education and the symbols of modernity. It was Yusuf's desire to supplant Western education that led him to establish an Islamic educational centre within the quarters occupied initially by his group. In this sense, Yusuf's main remit became to direct radical elements towards Boko Haram idealism and quest for modern jihad; and to radicalize the discontented youth and point them towards some form of Eldorado represented by Boko Haram. So, Yusuf appealed to throngs of young people most of who were marginal to the existing political and socio-economic spheres of society.

Such appeal was no doubt helped by the willingness of Boko Haram to offer socio-economic goodies on a short time (Qur'anic education; free accommodation in Boko Haram compound in Maiduguri; free meals and even money later to those who join the fighting forces of the group). In effect, Yusuf's messages appealed to two main critical groups in the Northeast society, namely, the radical elements of the Islamic order and young people who were more or less frustrated within the modern Nigerian state. As one respondent apprehended it, "Boko Haram started here in Maiduguri as one of the various Islamic sects. It was founded by late Sheikh Muhammad Yusuf who was himself a member of the Izala sect until he founded Boko Haram in early 2000. The group was initially peaceful and more appealing to young people probably because of their inadequate understanding of Islam."[3]

Probably, the ever-evolving nature of Boko Haram added to the confusion regarding its origin and growth. As Mohammed (2015: 5) argues, "Boko Haram emerges as an amoebic group, continuously shaping and remodelling itself and its message to changing local and international

developments." Thus, it would not be out of place to envision that the sect changed its *modus operandi* as it encountered the larger Nigerian society, especially in the form of the state. In this sense,

> Boko Haram started as an Islamic religious sect and was initially led by Muhammed Yusuf before he was killed by the Nigeria Police. Like most Islamic sects we have in the Northeast, Boko Haram was based on the Glorious Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Yusuf was the leader and supported by people mostly youth who took after his doctrine. They were peaceful and respected constituted authority until they first had issues with the federal road safety commission (FRSC) over the mandatory helmet policy. They rejected the wearing of helmet by their members particularly the female ones and that marked the beginning of their confrontation with the authority.[4]

In order to properly grasp the nature of Boko Haram and the ever-evolving nature of ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria, one needs to apprehend the complex nature of the Nigerian state and religious conflict as an overriding and consistent feature of political cum social life in the North of the country. Therefore, "religious violence in Northern Nigeria has evolved over time to include elements that now are as much socio-economic and political as they are denominational. It is today an armed struggle arguably directed as much against the state, and even Islamic establishment to some degree, as it is against other faiths (or non-aligned, rival strains within Islam)" (Comolli 2015: 12). While one is hard put to imagine Boko Haram, in spite of its boisterous and bloody search for sacred Islam as a genuine denomination in every sense of the word, the usage of the word 'denomination' is much more reflective of the 'other' description than otherwise.

The word 'sect' is much more of Islamic provenance than denomination. Boko Haram resembles a novel sect within Islam but with ultra-radical and Salafi-jihadi inspired version of the goals of the religion. All the same, there is no arguing the fact that religious conflict in the North of Nigeria has evolved from the usual spontaneous actions of zealots and fanatics, systematic onslaught against perceived enemies and the state to conflict now anchored on and driven largely by leadership, and quasi-ideology.

Ideology and Goals of Boko Haram

Understanding the Basis of Boko Haram's Islamic Theology or Ideas

While not engaging in any in-depth expose of the apocalyptic leanings of Islamic Jihadism or even pretending to have the capacity for such an undertaking, I want to briefly sketch the global apocalyptic rendition of Islam, which drives modern-day jihadism including the Boko Haram variant. The ideology of the sect is unsurprisingly embedded within this apocalyptic framework.

Islamic apocalyptic narrative is dominated by the advent of warlords and warriors who would lead the faithful in the tumultuous and warring phase leading to the arrival of *Isa*, who will lead the faithful in the last triumph over the devil or the Antichrist and lead the righteous to paradise. Thus, Islamic eschatology is clear on the series of events that would herald the end of time and the coming of paradise. Particularly crucial here is the proclamation of the coming of time that would be dominated by the forces of chaos and corruption (the reign of *Yajuj* and *Majuj*). These forces are painted in glaring evil colours of flaming fires and as grotesque generals of hell. The antidote to these forces of evil is said to be the Shari'a. Hence, the barrier that holds back these forces in the Qur'an is the Shari'a, that is, the righteous way of life and once Shari'a is gone these forces of chaos would create a dark period within which God's approved order is torpedoed. The Shari'a, which prescribes a disciplined and righteous lifestyle in accordance with both the Qur'an and Hadiths, holds *Yajuj* and *Majuj* at bay.

In other words, the Shari'a is captured as necessary in the bid to rein in the forces of evil. This may explain why Salafist groups like Boko Haram see the practice of pure Shari'a as *sine qua non* to modern-day Islam since modernity to these sects is synonymous with both chaos and corruption. Also, the chaos and corruption will eventually free the *Mahdi* or the 'rightly guided one' who resembling the Prophet Muhammad will bring about a golden era marked by peace like the one enjoyed by the early Muslim community at the time of Muhammad. The role of 'Yajuj' and

'Majuj' is to roam the earth reaping lost souls and creating unbelievers who have abandoned the ideal way of Allah.

The reign of *Yajuj* and *Majuj* (in Hebrew *Gog* and *Magog*) will also coincide with the coming of the ultimate deceiver (the Antichrist) that would have the word 'Kafir' branded on his forehead (the equivalent of the Antichrist of Christianity with the numerical '666' on the forehead). The Antichrist or *al-Masid al-Dajjal* will lead a period of chaos and corruption that would give rise to the proliferation of perverted spirituality (the idea of adulterated Islam), where there would be no clear separation between the pure and the impure and unholy, where false spirituality and doctrinal imperfections would exist and even be taken as the mainstream. The reign of evil would be brought to an end eventually with the re-emergence of *Isa* (*Jesus*) who will subsequently engage the Antichrist in a mortal battle of supremacy in which *Isa* and the believers would triumph and *Isa* would lead the faithful and righteous to paradise. However, interceding the eventual confrontation between Isa and the Antichrist is the arrival of the *Mahdi*, who is like the forerunner to *Isa*. In spite of the existence of varied accounts, the *Mahdi* is usually portrayed as a religious warlord who leads the revolution against the forces of darkness and evil. Thus, the *Mahdi* is the general commander of the jihad of the righteous against forces of evil. The *Mahdi* is seen as arriving at the height of the prevalence of corruption and chaos. So Mahdism as a critical apocalyptic belief in Islam privileges the existence of a revolutionary vanguard that engages in war and struggles with the forces of evil before the arrival of *Isa*.

Jihadist sects believe that the contemporary world order signifies the height of chaos and corruption as well as the triumph of perverted spirituality and no clear distinction between what is pure and what is impure. For these believers, perverted spirituality is manifested in adulterated Islam (for instance the Shia) as well as those Sunni Muslims who refuse to subscribe to the need for holy war or jihad. These people are categorized together with unbelievers or infidels (Christians, Jews and others). In typical sense, these Salafist sects see themselves as foot-soldiers or members of the *Mahdi* army and believe that the time for the much-anticipated clash between evil and good is now. The belief in the *Mahdi* and the series of events that would characterize the period before his arrival as well as afterwards are common fare in the history of Islam in Nigeria and have occasioned or coloured the response of Muslims over

time to both secular and spiritual matters (see Hogendorn and Lovejoy 1979; Hiskett 1984).

What is common in the various threads of narratives on the *Mahdi* is that he would be a spiritual reformer and purist who would arrive in the midst of prevalence of chaos, corruption and poor governance. It is the period of temporal anarchy and extreme religious impurity before the commencement of events that would end the world. Familiarity with the ideology or the values of Boko Haram, especially as clearly enunciated by Mohammed Yusuf, would unequivocally establish the veracity of the thinking about widespread evil and corruption in Nigeria and the undoubted fact that Muslims are now called to wage a war against these. However, the nexus between the thinking and framing of the above apocalyptic narrative and reference to the emergence of the *Mahdi* is not clear in Boko Haram. In other words, Boko Haram does not offer much with regards to the connection between its activities or beliefs and the emergence (or existence) of the *Mahdi* and it would be really too far-fetched to believe that any of the leaders of the sect approximates the *Mahdi*. However, it stridently voiced the existence of chaos and corruption and saw the jihad as long overdue.

In line with the ideals of genuine preparation for jihad, especially towing the paths of dan Fodiyo and even the Holy Prophet, the members of the Yusufiyya sect sought from the beginning to seclude themselves from society ostensibly in order to avoid the corruption and contamination in the larger society and to prepare spiritually for the task ahead. As Isa (2010: 333) argues, in the early days the group "strove for self-exclusion of its members from the mainstream corrupt society by living in areas outside or far away from society in order to intellectualise and radicalize the revolutionary process that would ultimately lead to violent overthrow of the Nigerian state."

The Immediacy Notion and Redefining 'Unbelievers'

At the heart of the above apocalyptic doctrine is the urgent need to take action in order to avert the end of Islam as it were, without correspondence to the end of the world as correctly detailed in both the Qur'an and by the Prophet Muhammad. In other words, the apocalyptic message

sponsored by the jihadists convey both the need to capture the gospel image of the end of times that would be heralded by the emergence of warrior leaders of the faith and the need at the same time to halt what is perceived as the systematic attempt by infidels from progressing in their designs to undermine both Islam and Muslims in the world. And for sects like Boko Haram, which subscribes to the peculiar meaning of the 'Taifa', these enemies include even other professed Muslims who are seen as in cohort with or anyhow influenced by the West as well as those who refuse to take part in the jihad seen as a necessary step towards increasing the scope of the religion and hastening the end of time. In other words, sects like Boko Haram are ultra-salafist in orientation. Thus, they subscribe to an interpretation of the religion and faith that goes back to the beginning of Islam in the seventh century CE. These sects maintain that the only true form of Islam is that practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and the first three generations of believers.

Therefore, any other interpretation or addition is condemned as 'Bida'a', that is, unacceptable and dangerous innovation that embodies a deviation from the true path. But these sects go on to establish death as the punishment for innovation. Other Islamic sects like the Shia, the Sufi and Ahmadis are totally denounced as corruptions. They also even kill other fellow Sunnis who do not subscribe to their warlordism.[5] Mainly singled out for contradicting of the pure or authentic path of Islam by the jihadists is the Shia who they see as the 'rafidah', that is, those who have rejected or innovated Islam. The major difference is that the Shia trace their inspiration to Ali, who they see as the true successor to Prophet Muhammad in reference to his blood link to the Prophet. Therefore, unlike the Sunni they do not recognize the leadership of Abu Bakr, the first Caliph who was chosen by consensus among believers. Also, while both groups believe in both the Qur'an and Hadiths, the Shia have some practices and rituals that are different from those of the Sunni.

Apart from the grouse with the Shia, other Sunni who do not accept the idea of immediacy of jihad (the lesser jihad) are seen as equally guilty of 'taifa'. Jihadists or Islamic extremists are also intolerant of other believers outside of Islam. They hold tenaciously to the injunction that there is no other religion but Islam but overlook the equally weighty injunction in the Qur'an, where a verse states, "There is no compulsion in religion".

At their most generous best, these jihadist sects give other believers like Christians and Jews or the so-called people of the book (ahl al-kitab) (in reference to the fact that all three faiths are rooted in the prophetic tradition), three options derived also from the Qur'an: convert to Islam, pay the head tax (jiyza, which signifies allegiance to Islamic leadership) or die. Incidentally, ultra-Salafist sects like Boko Haram seem to recognize only the option of conversion and give no room whatsoever either in their actions or practice to the other options. For them, conversion to their own peculiar form of Islam is both sacrosanct and non-negotiable.

Therefore, the ideology of Boko Haram, especially as it relates to other Muslims who are neither members nor supporters, is not only anchored on an extreme form of Salafism but is driven by a core belief in the principle of *takfir*. According to this principle, all non-practicing Muslims (defined within the purvey of Boko Haram as the so-called moderate Muslims) should be seen as 'kafirs' or the equivalent of infidels and it is thus the primary obligation of the faithful to abandon polluted or impure Muslim societies, seek new habitation and more crucially fight all Muslim infidels who deserve nothing but death in order to further the goals of the jihad.

Yusuf and the Making of the Boko Haram Ideology

There has been a lot of effort exerted on ascertaining whether Boko Haram has any consistent ideology or not; and what such ideology if it exists embodies. For a lot of observers and even writers Boko Haram has nothing that can be called an ideology or sound principles which guide its activities. In other words, the group has largely been seen as both inarticulate and fuzzy about its ideology. It is also perceived as burdened by a wrong interpretation of the Hadiths and overtly radical views of Islam. In the opinion of a respondent,

> Yusuf and his members were initially members of the Izala sect but left the sect in early 2000 due to their radical views and approaches to issues. They were going about peacefully in spite of their radical Islamic ideologies until 2009 and were structured around Yusuf. The group was anchored on a bad interpretation of not the Qur'an but the Hadiths and that is why we are in crisis today.[6]

In spite of the widely accepted narrative that Boko Haram has no obvious or clearly articulated ideological leaning, there seems to be some contradiction of this both in the discourse of the goals of the sect by Yusuf and even the activities of the group. Thus, I see the claim of no ideology as largely tenuous and dependent on the conceptualization of ideology adopted. Generally, ideology refers to a system of doctrine, philosophy or body of beliefs/principles to which a given social or political group subscribes. In other words, the ideology of a group embodies its goals and aspirations and even in some cases the accepted means of achieving these aspirations and goals. However, often times scholars and analysts point out that ideology should consist of coherent system of ideas and that ideologies refer to normatively imbued ideas and concepts, a set of ideas that are internally logical or ideas characteristic of a given group (see Eagleton 1991; Tucker 1978; Bell 2000; James and Manfred Steger 2010; Blatteberg 2009).

Therefore, at a basic and rudimentary level, Boko Haram possesses an ideology. This ideology is neither as systematized nor as complex as the norm with other political and religious ideologies. Boko Haram's ideology is simply anchored on its consistent motivational propaganda, recruitment messages and its overriding strategic and organizational structure all of which espouse the total rejection of Western influences and the ultimate desire to enthrone a society built on undiluted core tenets and values of Islam. In this regard, despite a lack of sophistication and complexity, Boko Haram has shown a consistent pursuit of the above.

A good way to assess the validity of the above summation is to examine the contention of the founder of the sect Mohammed Yusuf on the motives behind the sect. Yusuf did outline what could pass well as a form of the ideology in response to the allegations of the Izala movement that it was a group manifestly resonating the warning of the Prophet that towards the end times false prophets and preachers and purveyors of the scripture would arise (the *al-khawarij*). Therefore, the faithful should be cautious of this development and remain committed to the real principles of Islam. In response, Yusuf contended,

> when I saw some people talking about us and our call attempting to relate us to some beliefs—which Allah knows we are innocent of—such as al-Khawarij, Shi'ite, Quraniyun or some secret groups…I set out to explain

> our belief and method of call/propagation because this is what explains the way for us and for anyone who wants fairness for himself and for others…I explained that we are together with Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'a in the principles of belief and method of worship and conduct and Shariah. This is social justice: that a person expresses himself and his belief, conduct and method of his predecessors. (Yusuf, 2006a: 10 cf. Mohammed 2015: 14)

Yusuf went on to point out that the unexamined characterization of Boko Haram as purveyors of fake doctrines was a classic case of injustice which runs against the grains of Islam.

In his views, what Boko Haram stands for is clearly spelt out in the Shari'a. In other words, the group is engaged in pursuit of Islam in accordance with the Shari'a and in the recorded conduct of the first community of believers who were there with the Prophet Muhammad. In fact, one of the respondents in this study largely agreed, "Boko Haram criticize all other sects that exists in Nigeria for what they called Bid'ah that is innovations and practices that are alien and un-Islamic. In most cases, these other sects are wrong which I blame on lack of knowledge or wrong interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadiths on their part. I wouldn't go into details of that for want of time."[7] In agreement, another averred,

> *Jama'atu Ahlus Sunna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad* now referred to as Boko Haram was a group of Muslims who came together under the leadership of late Sheik Muhammad Yusuf here in Maiduguri for the practice and propagation of Islam in its original form. The sect was peaceful before it was attacked by the Nigerian authorities and hijacked by the criminals. The intention of the founders was clearly to propagate Islam based on original interpretation of the doctrines of Islam and that was why the sect attracted large number of people to her processions and lectures in those good days.[8]

While one appreciates to an extent the quest for pure Islam or a return to the Muhammadian era, it must be remembered that like any other world religion Islam shares some fundamental features with the culture from which it originated. Hence, the sayings and ways (activities) of the Prophet Muhammad, which cover all matters ranging from ablutions before praying, prayer position, giving of alms to inheritance, were influenced by Arabic traditions. In spite of this, Yusuf aimed at a replication

of the first community of believers on his own terms. However, he won both the sympathy and hearts of even those outside the sect who saw the sect as focused on an ideological rather than violent jihad. Thus,

> Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad commonly referred to as Boko Haram was founded by a group of Islamic scholars led by late Muhammed Yusuf for a noble course of propagating Islam and Jihad. The Jihad they intended was not a violent one but ideological one targeted at unnecessary innovations in the practice of Islam in Nigeria but unfortunately in 2009, the Nigerian security forces waged an unwarranted war against the sect which led to the killing of the sect members and their leader Muhammed Yusuf. As an undergraduate then in Maiduguri, I must confess that I felt sympathetic to the calamity that befell the group but I wasn't a member of the group and never intend joining them. The sect split from Izala, structured around their leader who was then Yusuf and now Abubakar Shekau and was anchored on Islamic doctrines.[9]

Even though Boko Haram's appetite for benumbing and senseless violence belies its claims to being a genuine religious millenarian group, its style of operation often portrays a classical reading of the injunctions of the Qur'an on the jihad, which stipulates that the holy warriors should inform their enemies of their arrival, the time of battle and even their strength. This was in order to ensure that if victory was theirs, the jihadis would know that their victory was down to Allah's will. Everything is predestined, and a man cannot change his fate. However, the tendency towards full-blown violence, especially the killing of fellow Muslims, undermined the Islamic ideological claims of Boko Haram. To this end, it was argued, "there are inherent violent ideologies in Islam, but Boko Haram seems to be more evil than Islamic. Many Muslims and mosques as well as Christians and churches have been lost to the sect. I don't think it will be fair of me to solely blame Islam because it will amount to blaming all Muslims. Such a mind-set and unjust conclusion will not bring about the much needed peace in the state."[10]

In spite of the seeming odious nature of what emerges as Boko Haram's way of operationalizing its beliefs, Yusuf was largely successful in spreading his beliefs as it were. According to Mohammed (2015: 9), "the main narratives of the sect as outlined by Yusuf's sermons, were distributed

widely throughout northern Nigeria via the Islamist media of choice (audio tapes) and through open-air sermons. The rejection of secularism, democracy, western education, and westernization were the major planks of the narratives." However, some respondents saw the worry with the ideology of Boko Haram in the larger society as having to do with its outright condemnation of corruption. As one opined, "the traditional and political leaders of the state were not comfortable with this noble course majorly because the ideology of the sect is against their greed and corrupt lifestyles and therefore question their status and the status quo."[11]

External Sources of Boko Haram Ideology

While there may still be some ambivalence regarding the operational linkage of Boko Haram to other global Islamic terrorist groups like the ISIS and the AQIM, there is no doubting the fact that the guiding principles or ideology of Boko Haram approximates those of these other groups and Islamist organizations elsewhere. In this context, what may be regarded as the ideology of Boko Haram regarding the role of Islam in modern society; the decadence of democracy and the overriding need for Shari'a find semblance is the idea of Sayyad Abu'l a' la Mawdudi, who can be regarded as the founding father of modern Islamism in Pakistan. A lot of the notions and beliefs of Boko Haram regarding the role of Islam in the modern state bear striking resemblance to the ideas of Mawdudi. A Sunni Muslim intellectual, Mawdudi (1903–79) was one of the most influential modern figures of Islam in Pakistan and even Afghanistan (Taliban).

My examination of the ideas of Mawdudi here benefits from the contributions of such scholars as Armajani (2012); Nasr (1996); Hassan (1984); Mawdudi (1971); Sikand (2002); Bahadur (1977, 1998); Gilani (1984). Mawdudi even though popular as the leader of Islamism in Pakistan was born in Aurangabad India on 25 September 1903. He was a member of a family with strong ties to Sufism and he saw this linage as a valid claim to religious authority and leadership. Quite a lot has been written about Mawdudi in the extant literature on Islam and even some of his own personal writings. However, what is important to me here is

to point out how global Islamism, especially the brand espoused by Mawdudi, influenced Boko Haram. Agreed that some of these beliefs equally influence other Islamic fundamentalist groups elsewhere else in the world; they all the same help us further tease out the veracity or otherwise of the generally agreed lack of clear ideology attributed to Boko Haram. Mawdudi disavowed the modern democratic state and had a contrary vision of an Islamic state. He, therefore, de-emphasized free elections (in the form of democracy) and argued for the usage of popular acclamation. For him, God has unquestioned absolute sovereignty in a Muslim polity and the Emir (the equivalent of both a formal state president and religious leader) becomes God's vice-regent and ensures the enforcement of undiluted Shari'a.

The Emir exercises sweeping powers and even though the envisioned Islamic state would have both a judiciary and legislature, these would only act in advisory capacity to the Emir. The Emir himself would not be elected but selected through what he called public acclamation (even though he did not explain this process in precise details and how far it differs from free elections which he rejected). In his own argument the process of selection of the Emir even though, "divorced from a free electoral process would provide a democratic state whose continuity would be guaranteed by a sacrosanct code of law which by definition was just and therefore required obedience" (Nasr 1996: 91). But critically in tune with the desires of Boko Haram is that Mawdudi advocated for what can be called the undiluted implementation of the Shari'a or in its most complete form (see Armajani 2012) and this can be achieved by investing the Emir with great and sweeping powers as well as not allowing electioneering as part of the process to elect the emir. In like manner, one of the most salient reasons advanced by Boko Haram for its atrocities is a total dissatisfaction with the Shari'a being operated in Nigeria and the need to bring back even if forcefully pure Islam and unfettered Shari'a.

Boko Haram sees the Shari'a in existence in some states in Nigeria (12 states in the North currently practice Shari'a) as nothing other than caricatures and tool of oppression used by the political and economic elites against the ordinary citizens (a position that finds support in the fact that since these states adopted Shari'a, the people who have so far been publicly punished are entirely those from the lowest socio-economic strata of

the society). Mawdudi in both his beliefs and activities was pro-authoritarian (in the assumed good of Islam) and anti-democratic.

Much like the leaders of Boko Haram, especially Shekau, Mawdudi likened his situation and that of Islam in modern Pakistan to what confronted the Prophet Muhammad, who was rejected and faced enemies all around. He saw the situation of Muslims in the modern world as in most respects similar to the opposition and enmity Muhammad faced in the seventh century. Mawdudi interestingly justified his pro-authoritarian posture on the model of the prophet. Thus, he was of the belief that "the prophet Muhammad ruled the early Islamic community in a manner that was fair yet authoritarian. He maintains that while Muhammad was just, the Quran and hadith convey the idea that Muhammad was the absolute and final arbiter and that during the prophet's time there was no precedent for an appeal to a democratic process" (Armajani 2012: 168).

One other resemblance between Boko Haram and Mawdudi's Islamism is the belief in the utilization of force and for Islamic revolution (in the case of Boko Haram even though it supports and sponsors violence, it has not come out with any systematic revolutionary framework). The revolution is necessary as a tool to destroy the enemies of Islam and Muslims. For Mawdudi, "modern enemies of Islam espouse notions of the ideal state which involve principles related to fascism, nationalism, democracy, Marxism, communism, socialism, totalitarianism, and secularism" (Armajani 2012: 169); and these enemies seek to convince Muslims of the superiority of these notions over those of the Muslims. Specifically, he talked about the usage of ideologies (perhaps the doctrines and principles of democracy, free press and Western education) by these enemies to oppress Muslims and hinder the creation of the true Islamic state. Boko Haram similarly disavows all the main principles of the modern Nigeria state and saw modern education and democracy as contradictory to and opposed to the quest to achieve true Islam.

Proper Perspective: Of Islam and Jihad

In order to balance the core doctrines of the faith of Islam, it is necessary to state that the notion of jihad which propels groups or sects like Boko Haram is in reality what can be called lesser jihad which is now put over

and above the greater jihad (which focuses on the necessity for the believer to engage in the inner struggle to overcome negative aspects of the self and selfish cravings of the human person) by Islamic fundamentalist sects. It goes largely without saying that modern-day jihadists like Boko Haram and their supporters are motivated by and rationalize their actions on the basis of the second form of 'jihad' or the lesser jihad in the Qur'an which connotes physically struggling against oppression and persecution from others. In the Qur'an, this is referred to as '*qital*', which literally means 'fighting'. Even this type of Jihadi obligation only permits one to fight against those who fight him (defensive). It goes ahead to caution against transgressing limits.

It is crucial to appreciate that Islamic fundamentalists go beyond mere interpretational and semantic slanting of the prescriptions of God, they are also enamoured of the popular verse of the sword often put forward as justifying or driving violence by forces proclaiming Islam. The verse in question is Surah (Chapter 9) also known as 'Ayat al-Sayf' (verse of the sword), which states, "But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful" (Surah, 9: 5). But the over-reliance on this verse privileges glossing over of the larger context of this statement and the fact that the Qur'an warns against religious compulsion. In this case, jihad as interpreted by later-day fanatics can be seen as contrary to the prescriptions of the Holy Qur'an. In this case, the Holy Book clearly states that believers or Muslims have no power or authority to impose Islam on non-Muslims or unbelievers. For instance, the second Surah of the Qur'an states, "there is no compulsion in religion" (Al-Bakarah 2: 256). Therefore, while it is expected that believers must proselytize or try to win converts to the faith, such exercise should be through voluntary means such as good works, exemplary piety and the triumph of dialogue or logic as the case may be.

The lesser jihad as it were has been given prominence by the activities and ideologies of global Islamic fundamentalist movements, especially since the events of September 2001 in the USA. In broad sense, "it has been linked with an ongoing campaign by certain segments of the Muslim world to declare war on Western lifestyle in general, especially where

secularization and consumer capitalism impact on Muslim societies through globalization" (Greaves 2005: 165). Incidentally, Boko Haram fits the above bill and in more ways than one epitomizes both an apocalyptic reading of contemporary events in Nigeria and the obvious misrepresentation of the lesser jihad as the core of Islamic aspirations.

Notes

1. Full name—Izalatul Bidi'a wa Ikhamatis Sunnah or People Committed to the Removal of Innovation in Islam.
2. Literally in Hausa, he who curses in reference to his usage of overdose of invectives on political and religious leaders of the time.
3. Personal interview with Umar Modibo (Maiduguri, 21 July 2016).
4. Personal interview with Alhaji Abubakar (Gwoza, 18 April 2016).
5. Even though Salafism is in the broad scheme Sunni in origin, there is still a distinction between those who subscribe to the jihad of war and those who do not.
6. Personal interview with Alhaji Maitokobi, All Progressive Congress (APC), Chairman (Gwoza, 21 April 2016).
7. Personal interview with 38-year-old Alih Ibn Mustafa, official of a Juma'at (Mosque) (Gwoza, 20 April 2016).
8. Personal interview with Aliyu Gambo (Maiduguri, 25 July 2016).
9. Personal interview with Sumaila Musa, 29-year-old unemployed graduate of Economics (Gwoza, 26 April 2016).
10. Personal interview with Pastor Nanpak, Pastor of a Christian church (Maiduguri, 13 July 2016).
11. Personal interview with Umar (Gwoza, 20 April 2016).

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5

Contemporary Trends and Factors in the Making of Boko Haram

The Sharia Dilemma in Nigeria

The Shari'a as a potent public discourse with a tendency towards stirring up centrifugal impulses is not a new entrant into Nigeria's political and religious spheres. One of the earliest modern-day inhuman stories of Shari'a in the North of Nigeria was that of Safiya Husaini, a woman who hails from Sokoto state. Safiya was sentenced to death by stoning for adultery in 2001. She was found guilty of committing adultery with her neighbour; she was guilty by virtue of becoming pregnant outside marriage though she identified the father of the unborn baby who at first accepted responsibility but later recounted. In spite of her insistence that she was the victim of repeated rape by the man concerned, the Shari'a court found no evidence to convict the man who was then in denial.

This case drew a lot of international attention and condemnation, especially since the man with who Safiya committed the offence was never brought to book. The international attention and subsequent condemnation this Shari'a verdict attracted eventually led to Safiya being pardoned. She would have become the first female victim to be stoned to death for adultery in modern Nigeria. A related case to the above was that

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of the cow thief Buba Jangebe, who had his arm amputated for stealing a cow in 2000. Jangebe, who was the first victim of the Shari'a law in Zamfara state, was popularly known as 'Kare Garka' (ranch raider). He was arrested and tried through the Shari'a law for stealing a cow belonging to his neighbour and found guilty by the Shari'a court. The penalty was the amputation of his right arm.

Beyond the question of human rights and natural justice which the Shari'a raises, it has over time been a divisive factor in Nigeria. Shari'a, which is a divine principle for deriving acceptable behaviour within Islamic jurisprudence, has become the most divisive issue in modern Nigeria (see Walker 2016). As at the last count, 12 states have adopted the Shari'a[1]—an improved or extended version over the constitutionally defined limit of Shari'a to traditional/personal matters to now include both civil and criminal matters. The new Shari'a includes the 'Hudud', which stipulates harsh penalties ranging from mutilation to death by stoning for offences like adultery and theft. Incidentally, the Shari'a in these states, as the above instances show, has more or less targeted members of the lower socio-economic status or those marginal to the socio-economic and political processes. This is one of the main reasons why Boko Haram denounces this form of Shari'a and insists that Shari'a from the perception of pure Islam has not berthed anywhere in Nigeria. Boko Haram would rather see the Shari'a in these states as not only contaminated but a manipulative tool in the hands of the political class and an unconscionable mimicry of real Shari'a.

In other words, the Shari'a project championed by the political class starting from the October 1999 promulgation of Shari'a law in Zamfara state was seen as nothing but farce by Boko Haram. This view, while giving some vitality to the activities of the sect in that it saw it as its goal to ensure the emergence of authentic Shari'a in the North, would also resonate with the views of other well-meaning and discerning members of the public given that the Shari'a introduced by the political class was nowhere close to what it was envisaged and expected to be by the public.

The politicians more or less used Shari'a as a route to acquire some veneer of religious piety necessary to garnering electoral support and after getting elected continued in their profligate ways seen as destructive of the aspirations of the ordinary members of the society towards genuine

spiritualism and even economic well-being. The above sentiments are captured in the view that,

> Boko Haram's militancy is, in part, a reaction to the cynical game of politicians who mobilized religious sentiments in the interests of their political ambitions. By posing as campaigners of an Islamic renewal, they have discredited themselves. To make matters worse, by declaring that their state must be run according to divine laws, they have empowered religious experts who can speak more competently about the will of God. (Harnischfeger 2015: 37)

Thus, the political class was the one that took the initial ride on the back of the tiger by pretending to abide by a level of Islamic religious precept well above their capacity and the ingrained ways of life of typical politicians in contemporary Nigeria. The door opened in 1999 by the political class has been held slightly open since then by radical Islamic clerics who have seen it as the opportunity to launch a much needed moral rectitude in the larger society on the fundamental principles of Islamic jurisprudence.

This longing incidentally finds support among the throngs of believers in the street who hold onto the hope that the declining state and rot in public institutions could be averted within the context of a committed Shari'a regime. This hope, in turn, would most likely usher in socio-economic improvement and eliminate corruption and distributional inequality in the society. In more ways than one, Boko Haram came bearing the gifts of these promises and displayed a level of religious suave above and beyond even that of the known clerics in the society. Yusuf came not only with astounding knowledge of the religion, keenness to debate its principles, fiery oratory but equally acted as economic mediator and provider for his teeming followers. Therefore, in him the people could see a credible subterfuge and a beacon of hope in a morally eroded society.

The Sufi-Salafi Divide in Nigeria's Islam

At the heart of the Boko Haram insurgence is the perennial fundamental distinction and difference in theological ideology or principles between the Sufi and the Salafi in Nigeria's Islam. While the adherents to the Sufi

were more moderate and sought to build a bridge between political power and spiritualism, much like the case of dan Fodiyo, the Salafists crave for a pure unadulterated practice of Islam modelled on how the Prophet Muhammad and the first community of believers did. In addition, the Sufi in Nigeria is more of an adaptation of Islam to traditional Hausa society. In this case, apart from using religion in establishing political linkages and power, the use of charms, amulets, sewing of the Qur'an into garments, using potent verses of the Qur'an to make pouches worn on the body and even drinking water distilled from strong verses of the Qur'an were seen as alright and as having the ability to protect one from the evil eyes or ward off evil.

Equally instructive is that Sufi theology is seen traditionally as largely the bastion of the aristocracy and elites of the society while the Salafi appealed to ordinary people including the middle class and poor members of the society. So in classical street-level notion, the Sufi sought one way or the other to protect the privileges of the elites, especially in both allowing the influence of socio-cultural beliefs on Islam and advocating the conviviality of Islam to the state (in fact, in this sense, Sufism while remaining largely spiritual can be harnessed in building networks and alliances that allow the adherents access to economic opportunities and to acquire power within the formal state sphere. Thus, it sees no fundamental disconnect between Islam and the state). On the other hand, Salafism represents a counter-narrative that seeks to radically alter the society along the lines of pure Islam; it sees the state as corrupt and largely irrelevant in the quest for pure Islam.

The perceived radical differences between Salafi and Sufi Muslim Brotherhoods in Nigeria are often treated as hardly consequential. But the difference in both beliefs and methods of worship seems really prominent. Thus, while the adherents of Sufi persuasion are more moderate and seek to build a bridge between political power and spirituality; the Salafists crave for a pure unadulterated practice of Islam. In addition, the Sufi is much like the adaptation of Islam to tradition and existing social norms, especially with regard to spirituality, relationship or connection between the living and the dead, mysticism and so on. Equally critical in the difference between the two sects is that the Sufi is acknowledged in the North of Nigeria as the version of Islam favoured by the aristocracy.

On the other hand, the Salafi draws its members from the middle class, ordinary working people and the *talakawas* (commoners). It is in some sense a religious disputation of the privileges of class and projects the equality of all citizens in the sight of Allah.

Historically, the emergent aristocracy starting from the jihad of dan Fodiyo had always treasured Sufism, which is at ease with the state project and the unquestioned privilege of taxation of the peasants bestowed on the elites. In other words, leaders can be high-handed and autocratic and still lay claims to spiritual edification. However, Salafi questions the whole idea and prerogative of the modern secular state, which it sees as being both a source and promoter of the rot in society. Salafism is anti-statist and encourages the denunciation of the modern state and its institutions seen as not in keeping with pure Islam and the precepts of the Prophet Muhammad.

Boko Haram is largely a Salafist Jihadist sect and like all radical Salafist influenced Islamic movements over time and globally perceive violent conversion and quest for reversion as sacrosanct. In spite of the above general characterization, a very penetrating insight into the nature of the Salafi movement in contemporary Islam is provided in the use of the distinction between the so-called scholarly Salafis or the *Salafiyya 'ilmiyya* and the fighting Salafis or the *Salafiyya jihadiyya*. Thus, it follows that there is some form of division of labour between the Salafis in the sense that one group focuses on the intellectual and scholarly growth and domination of the sect while another focuses on 'forceful' or violent proselytization (jihad). However, it is important to appreciate that, "many Salafis are quite radical in their calls for a return to an authentic original form of Muslim practice without being at all oriented towards political activity, whether peaceful or violent" (European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalization 2008: 6).

In spite of the above, one finds a very insightful view in the contention of Denoeux and Carter (2009: 86) that,

> *Salafi jihadi* groups are motivated by a mix of religious and political objectives: they embrace a strict, literal interpretation of Islam, and combine it with an emphasis on *jihad*, understood here as holy war. They view *jihad* as the primary instrument through which their *Salafi* desire to 'return' to the

> original message of Islam will become reality… They form an amorphous, transnational movement, and disseminate an ideology that is fundamentally hostile to modernity, to the secular, democratic nation-state, to the logic of globalization, and to peaceful coexistence of different cultures and religions.

The Impact of the Izala Movement

A prominent Islamic organization with wide-ranging influence in Northern Nigeria is the Izala Movement. Even though Malam Isma'ila Idris is usually identified as the founder of the Izala in Nigeria, the fact remains that Abubakar Gumi was the brain behind the movement. Thus, Idris is more like a protégé of Gumi and is rather what Loimeier (1997) calls its organizer and nominal leader. However, very important in the narratives of Islamic fundamentalism in Northern Nigeria is that the Izala represents what may be regarded as the creation of a new religious movement in Nigeria (it was neither a splinter nor transformation of an existing association). But equally interesting is that the formation of the Izala was also the first time in the history of Islam in Nigeria that a leader (Gumi) had turned clearly albeit radically from and against Sufism and the 'turuq' (see Loimeier 1997). In the opinion of most people, the Izala given the extensive links of Gumi to Saudi Arabian scholars and the funding the group received from that country was clearly from the onset Salafist in orientation (with some Wahhabi influence).

The radical Salafist bend of the Izala and Gumi's customary excoriation of established authorities in Nigeria may explain why the founder of Boko Haram, Yusuf sought fellowship in it at the early beginning of his career. The romance, of course, did not last long given Yusuf's disposition towards ultra-radical Salafism and his questioning of some of the practices of the Izala. According to a respondent,

> Boko Haram is an Islamic sect known as the Yusufiyya before the current crisis started about seven years ago. The sect was founded by Muhammad Yusuf in the capital of Borno state and flourished as it enjoyed the patronages of Borno state government under the then governor Alih Modu Sheriff. Boko Haram members were initially members of the Izala sect

from where Yusuf was trained but later split from the Izala due to ideological differences and remained peaceful before trouble started.[2]

Some 'irreconcilable' differences between Yusuf's notion of Islam and what he saw as the real practices of the Izala led to the split between him and that movement that is often seen as crucial in equipping him with good knowledge of the religion. Thus, "the relationship was normal. The sect shares a lot of ideologies with the Izala sect but differs when it comes to innovation primarily aimed at enforcing the hegemony of corrupt traditional and political leaders we have around us."[3] Corroborating this, another respondent opined, "Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad was formed in Maiduguri and headed by Mohammed Yusuf who was also its spiritual head till his death in 2009. The sect split from the Izala sect in 2002 due to what I call ideological deviance which led them astray to wrong interpretation and understanding of the glorious Qur'an and Hadiths."[4]

While both Izala and Boko Haram loath the modern state as would be expected of Salafist movements, they differ on how to engage the state or the ideal relationship with the state. In this case, the Izala adopts a much more literal interpretation of the holy texts than Boko Haram and in this situation does not see violence and attacks on the state as the best mode of engagement. It rather strives for engagement through a process of take-over of the apparatus of the state. It simply argues that the take-over of the state or the significant involvement of Muslims in the state project offers a unique opportunity for Muslims to push for reforms and gradually turn the state towards the desired model, especially in relation to the Shari'a.

Though the Izala society was instrumental in the spiritual growth of Yusuf and provided his preaching platforms in the beginning, Yusuf eventually saw the tenets and methods of the Izala as not Salafist enough and broke away from the group. Thereafter, he labelled the Izala heretics who are held hostage by the infidel modern state. The Izala also disowned Yusuf and his brand of Islam condemning his sect as *khawarij*, which means misguided extremist faction of Islam that the Prophet Muhammad foresaw would emerge after his death. In spite of the obvious mud-slinging between the two groups, the major contest was about two critical issues, namely, method to be used in accomplishing the desired pure

Islam and relationship with the modern secular state. Thus, while the Izala abhorred the wanton use of force by young people, especially in the form of unfettered recourse to violence and killing of perceived infidels and heretics, Boko Haram saw violence and mass killing as necessary in the course of jihad. Also, Izala, while condemning many of the corrupt practices and tendencies of the state and is actually repulsed by the secular state, does not, all the same, see it as totally irrelevant and ruinous of Islam, Boko Haram sees the modern state as both anti-Islam and the source of rot and putrefaction of the Nigerian society.

Insightful in appreciating the above sentiments is the apprehension of what Yusuf saw as the core thrust of the doctrine of Boko Haram revealed in a book entitled "This is our doctrine and our method in proselytization" said to have been published in early 2009 (see Higazi in Walker 2016). This book, which was obtained through personal connections by Higazi, was conceived as a response to a similar text by the Izala arrowhead Sheikh Abubakar Gumi titled, "The Right Faith According to the Sharia." However, the book by Yusuf has been dismissed as unoriginal and mainly an uncritical reproduction of the ideas and writings of some hard-line Saudi clerics who were very active between 2003 and 2004 when Yusuf was sojourning there. Be that as it may, the book had portions that revealed the thinking and working of Yusuf's mind as he groomed and whipped-up the frenzy of Boko Haram members against the state, Christians and other Muslims.

Boko Haram also provided a unique opportunity for levelling of the social distance or difference among believers, especially as those who were not educated and were not from the popular rich families were often looked down upon and had their access to the goods of society severely limited. Thus, while radical groups like the Izala held some promises for ardent believers, it was however largely inaccessible since its noted proclivity towards literacy and engagement with the exegesis of the holy texts were way beyond the capacity of a lot of ordinary people who were either of the *almajirai* stock or from other less privileged segments of the society. But Boko Haram levelled this barrier by constantly emphasizing the irrelevance of modern education not only for life in general but especially for spiritual aspirations.

In other words, by thoroughly casting Western education as corrupt, it offered itself as not only the antidote but a heaven of sorts for members of the public, especially young people without education and even other skills. It became a place where the dignity of these less privileged members of the society could be restored. Perhaps, the background of Yusuf himself as *almajirai* made it possible for him to show empathy that shone and embark on establishing a pedestal that provided a great opportunity for those who would have remained either unseen or unheard in the society.

Almajarai: Catalyst to Violence or Scapegoating the Vulnerable?

A prominent thread in the explanation of the growth of Boko Haram and similar groups before it in the North is the massive number of very young people under Islamic tutelage or the *almajarai* system outside their homes. These young ones are given as apprentices or students to known local Mallams, who expose them to the Qur'an and Arabic largely through recitation and informal learning processes. These children are also exposed to harsh realities in the streets where they depend on alms for survival. Awofeso, Ritchie and Degeling (2003: 189) have isolated four critical or core characteristics which may make the Almajarai seem like the cradle of exploitation by Islamic fundamentalists in the North of Nigeria. These characteristics are:

> First, it involves children being relocated or separated from their family and friends to the guardianship of Mallams in towns [often over hundreds of kilometers of separation]. Second, it is restricted almost exclusively to boys. Third, the curriculum of the schools [loosely defined since these set-up are far from being structured] is concerned primarily with teaching the sixty chapters of the Koran by rote memorization. Fourth, each school serves 25 to 500, from ages 6 to 25. These schools are largely autonomous from government oversight [the Mallams are trusted to provide guardianship in line with Islamic principles and precepts].

In addition to the above, there is the role of piety and physical deprivation as critical elements of this tutelage. Therefore, time out from memorization is used in begging for food and alms in the streets by these children who are typically tattered, shabby and dirty. The above suggests both physical deprivation and hunger which can be easily exploited and manipulated given the young age of these adherents.

As the above indicates the religious institution of the *almajirai* which is popular in Islam in Northern Nigeria features prominently in the discourse on Islamic fundamentalism in Northern Nigeria. In a lot of these instances, the *almajarai* is largely vilified as a systematic production of street urchins amenable to fundamentalist radicalization and subsequent deployment as Islamic fundamentalist fighters. The main thesis is that both the Maitatsine movement and the current Boko Haram benefitted immensely from this system which allows for a large army of itinerant young men in the urban cities of Northern Nigeria in the name of religious edification and learning.

In sharing this view, Danjibo (2009) argues that the *almajirai's* role is really obvious in radical movements in the North of Nigeria, especially in the case of the Maitatsine movement. He sought to establish a nexus between the socio-economic privations inherent in the *almajirai* system and the tendency of these young people to be easily recruited by fundamentalist networks. He went ahead to label the *almajirai* "large army of unemployed vagabonds" (Danjibo 2009: 6) who are vulnerable to both social vices and able to act as readymade army that can be recruited to unleash violence and mayhem. On a similar take, Isichei (1987) in assessing the Maitatsine episode saw militant Islam as the enabling factor behind the insurgence. However, she goes on to argue that the movement, "was greatly aided by the almajiri system" (Isichei 1987: 202) in the North.

In spite of the above contentions, there is a need for a more nuanced and religiously contextualized view on the *almajirai*. Therefore the following points are worth considering:

1. The *almajirai* was created and portrayed by believers as a noble religious institution that offers the opportunity for religious edification and knowledge acquisition by young people (children and young

adults) under the tutelage of renowned Islamic scholars, that is, it is a form of religious apprenticeship seen as enabling the religious socialization of young members of the population. In fact, the name *almajirai* is in reference to the fact that these young people (aged mainly from 4 to 20 years) have migrated from their localities to another environment in search of Islamic knowledge (see Mohammed 2010). In other words, the religion recognizes these young people mainly as pilgrims of the faith. And just like religious pilgrims in any other religion, these young people are driven by both devotion to and hunger for the faith. Thus, the noted itinerancy of the *almajirai* is a form of religious discipline and the requisite begging for survival (on the streets) sources of both humility (for the *almajirai* students) and avenue for fulfilment of the need for alms giving (for other members of the public) which is a critical pillar of Islam.

2. Need to separate the *almajirai* from other groups or forms of migratory and itinerant activities in the North of Nigeria. Therefore, apart from the *almajirai*, which refers to those who are preoccupied with the study of the Qur'an, there are also other young men who are lured to the urban areas in order to escape dire economic situations in the rural enclaves. These economic opportunists are often called the 'yan-cirani' in Hausa; there are equally the regular young men who grew up in these urban areas and have as young adults taken to hustling in order to survive (a category also obviously available in any urban town elsewhere and who are as much amenable to radicalization as any other group especially as hustling often goes with cutting corners, wheeling and dealing and crime in general).

Therefore, there is a need to rigorously and critically assess the role of these other two categories vis-à-vis Islamic fundamentalism in the North alongside the examination of the *almajirai*. In fact, to use Danjibo's expression, the last category of young people are much more like "ready-made army that can be recruited to perpetrate violence" (Danjibo 2009: 6) than the *almajirai*. In the opinion of one respondent, "poverty, illiteracy and unemployment are very high in this part of Nigeria. The government needs to arrest the situation very urgently. Also, the government should ban all the almajirai schools. Most of them engage children in

child labour and prevent them from going to school and therefore becomes nuisance."[5] Interestingly, almost all those interviewed did not see the *almajirai* as really the nucleus of either Boko Haram or even other such sects before it. In the consensus of male-only FGD participants in Maiduguri, "the almajirai is really a religious phenomenon which enables the children to acquire the foundational knowledge of Islam and even piety and self-denial necessary to good devotion in Islam."[6]

In view of the foregoing, there is as Hoechner (2013) makes clear the need to produce supporting evidence of how the almajirai can be so closely linked to violence and thuggery in the North of Nigeria. Without being circumspect in the appraisal of the role of the Almajirai system in Islamic fundamentalist uprising in Nigeria one runs the risk of settling for convenient explanations and generating largely untenable cause and effect scenarios. It also exposes one to the risk of stereotyping the age-old traditions of Islamic learning in Nigeria.

Relating Boko Haram to Similar Islamic Fundamentalist Sects Before It

In order to fully appreciate the nature of Boko Haram and its *modus operandi*, it would be instructive to briefly examine the relationship between it and similar Islamic fundamentalist groups before it in Nigeria. There is no doubt that Boko Haram is not the first incidence of Islamic religious uprising in Northern Nigeria. It would rather seem that Boko Haram is largely a new addition to the long history of Islamic fundamentalist conflicts in the area. Perhaps, it was the recognition of this fact that led Aghedo to view Boko Haram as 'old wine in a new wine bottle' (Aghedo 2014). However, beyond the above indication of historical linkage, Boko Haram can be seen as an uncanny regeneration of two past Islamic fundamentalist episodes in the history of Nigeria. These episodes include the pioneering Islamic movement led by the highly venerated Usman dan Fodiyo which carried out the highly successful and expansive jihad in Northern Nigeria in the nineteenth century and the relatively later Maitatsine uprising led by the maverick self-proclaimed prophet Alhaji Marwa in the 1980s.

The *Maitatsine* uprisings started in Kano in the early 1980s and spread to other neighbouring states in the North. These uprisings until Boko Haram remain perhaps the longest and most widespread Islamic fundamentalist strife in the history of modern Nigeria. Mohammed 'Maitatsine' Marwa was the leader of the *Maitatsine* movement which unleashed terror throughout the North of Nigeria in a series of uprisings known as the *Maitatsine* uprisings. *Maitatsine*, which Marwa adopted as a nickname, means 'the one who damns' in Hausa language, a clear reference to his public speeches which were composed of curses and incendiary outbursts against the Nigerian state and non-Moslems. Reportedly, he came from Marwa, a town in Northeastern Nigeria (purportedly part of Cameroon before Nigeria's independence) (Danjibo 2009). Marwa claimed to be a prophet and Mujaddid in the mould of Usman dan Fodio whom he saw as his model (see Falola 1998). He clashed with the colonial administration before independence and was exiled from Nigeria, but returned after Nigeria's independence (see Danjibo 2009). In spite of arrest by the Nigerian authorities in 1975 for slander and public abuse of political authorities, his preaching began to attract the sympathy of other notable religious leaders in Kano and beyond, a development often ascribed to his successful pilgrimage to Mecca.

Given his customary ranting and disdain for constituted authority and public institutions, he quickly attracted a large following among the youth, unemployed urban dwellers, the poor and others marginal to the socio-economic spheres of the society. These followers[7] soon began acting out their frustrations and the teachings of Marwa by involving themselves in altercations and clashes with the police and even with other religious figures seen as opposed to the ideas of the movement. Maitatsine, in the bid to emulate dan Fodiyo took part in the violent activities of this group and eventually lost his life in one of such clashes with security forces in 1980. However, his death only served to spread the influence of the organization, deepen its animosity towards government and other citizens and more crucially transformed Marwa into a revered martyr of the cause.[8] The group engaged in terror and religious killings between 1980 and 1992 in the Northern states of Kano, Borno, Kaduna, Adamawa, Katsina, Gombe and Bauchi states and thousands of lives were lost before the uprisings ended in 1992 (Udoidem 1997).

Aghedo (2014) has tried to trace in broad details the relationship between Boko Haram and the Maitatsine uprising. In spite of the insights in the paper, he focused mainly on similarities between the two groups in terms of the rejection of secularism, denunciation of ostentatious lifestyle, rejection of Western democracy and education. But while the two movements or groups share the above traits, these traits can be fairly generalized for all Islamic fundamentalist groups anywhere in the world. Therefore, we see the relationship between Boko Haram, the dan Fodiyo jihad and Maitatsine as more fundamentally embedded in the personal idiosyncrasies, charisma and more crucially the prophetic and revolutionary zeal of the leaders. In this sense, these groups have been led by men who had personally envisioned a larger than life role for themselves, who see themselves as the embodiment of the essence of ultra-piety of Islam and as those brought into the world to radically transform it on the basis of what they all portrayed as unadulterated and pure Islam anchored on strict interpretation and enforcement of Shari'a law in all spheres of the society.

Evaluating the 'Haram' Notion

At the heart of Boko Haram ideology is the overwhelming notion of 'haram', which is applied to things Western or more crucially things alien to Islam or seen/defined along these lines. Generally, haram refers to things seen as tabooed in Islam. These are the things that the religion sees as either contaminated or violating of the purity of one's faith. A ready example is easily seen nowadays when Muslims shun away from food and especially meat considered haram. Often one comes across restaurants and butcheries stating that all the food or meat prepared therein are 'halal' (opposite of haram). However, it would appear that even Boko Haram used this description or concept in some nuanced sense that is often glossed over in the narratives about the sect.

Thus, very insightful in evaluating the often unexamined contention of Boko Haram regarding the haram of Western education is some form of nuancing of the notion provided by Yusuf himself. According to Yusuf, "western education is destructive. We didn't say knowledge is bad but that the unbelief inside it is more than its usefulness [opens up the door that some knowledge may really be beneficial]. I have English books in

my possession which I read regularly. I didn't say English amounts to unbelief but the unbelief contained therein and the polytheism inside" (Mohammed Yusuf—Audio tape released on 30 June 2006).

It is important to understand that even the often touted rejection of Western education by Boko Haram needs to be more critically examined, especially in terms of the fact that the discontent with Western education is not peculiar to Boko Haram. Most other Islamic sects in Nigeria, especially the radical ones, had always expressed misgivings about the influence of Western education, especially in relation to the moral and spiritual growth of members of the society. For instance, the Izala saw the society as contaminated by vestiges of Western education and some of its prominent clerics bemoaned the fact that Western education created the liberty for both males and females to be co-educated and saw the mixing of female and male students as completely immoral.

Moreover, even the distaste or disavowal of Western education by Boko Haram is often not properly understood. In this sense, there has been a tendency to see Boko Haram as replicating the Maitatsine movement of the 1980s in this regard. But a closer reading of the texts ascribed to the group and even some of its video releases would show that Boko Haram was not totally anti-modern like the Maitatsine. In this case, the grouse of the sect is not with Western education per se or even science and technology developed from this education (Yusuf used modern vehicles while alive and the group had a high use of the mobile phone as a means of communication and suspected tool for detonating IEDs which eventually led to a ban on telecommunication services in Borno state for some time as a strategy by government security agencies to cage the group) but rather were unnerved by some ideas mixed in these which the group, especially its leadership saw as un-Islamic.

In other words, close reading would show that the group does not really reject all things modern or Western. It would seem that the group, especially in the Yusuf era, tried to make albeit a crude distinction between Western education that has obvious utility and those that somehow contradicts Islam or its teachings. Thus, Western education that came through the Europeans including medicine and technology can be used by the believer if they do not contradict or clash with the teachings of the Prophet. In this case, they can also be used intelligently in ways that neither contradict nor denigrate the religion of Islam. Western education

in this instance could be accepted or subjected to the discretion of the faithful so far as such knowledge does not contradict or clash with either the Qur'an or the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. However, drawing this fine line has been difficult and burdensome in real terms given the wide-ranging and encompassing nature of education.

It also seems virtually impracticable in the case of education at the pretertiary levels to sieve as it were the un-Islamic or portions that contradict Islam. This is really as difficult in sociology (which Yusuf saw as particularly un-Islamic) as it is in the areas of biological sciences and medicine. Even in the broader context of Islam as a religion, the quest by nations like Iran to acquire nuclear capacity and stockpile the so-called weapons of mass destruction would seem difficult to explain from the perspective of the religion of Islam. A ready answer in this case would be that Iran is typically a Shia Muslim area seen as different from the Sunni of the likes of Boko Haram. However, other examples like that of Pakistan still raises the same dilemma.

An interesting observation is made by Mohammed (2015) that the noted disdain of Boko Haram for Western education (the so-called boko) arose from a historical close association between the colonial state in Nigeria and Christian missionaries. In other words, Christianity was more or less perceived in the North as the handmaid of the state. Hence, the Western state and the institutions it promoted or projected were viewed with certain wary scepticism by Muslims. Therefore, a good understanding of the attitude of Boko Haram towards Western education can be gleaned through an overview of the colonial roots and history of Western education in that part of Nigeria.

Boko Haram like some other fundamentalist sects cannot divorce the school system from its history as the twin pole of the colonial incursion into Nigeria—education was the twin component of the missionary exploit that paved the way for eventual colonial rule. As a result, it perceives Western education as a ploy to enthrone Christianity and supplant Islam. It sees the education given as structured and determined by Christian doctrines and the zeal of the missionaries (the originators of this system of education) to Christianize Nigeria. In the views of Yusuf, "many people have fallen in love with these western scholars because of their love for *dunya* (wordly affairs) turning a blind eye to Islamic law. Sometimes they call it a necessity, at other times they differentiate between

missionary and state schools. This signifies their ignorance of colonial history and the blasphemous schools, because when they began they had no teachers but the missionaries" (Higazi 2015: 16). Yusuf went on to state categorically that the schools whether now called state (public) schools or missionary schools have one ultimate purpose, that is, the Christianization of the attendees. As a result, true believers should have nothing to do with such schools and those who get involved in the schools whether as teachers or students are guilty of religious apostasy and should die. So the attack by Boko Haram on schools and students is underpinned by the above message which implies that it is obligatory for the true believer to rout all sources of apostasy against Islam.

History of Disdain for Western Education

The first Western education institution in Northern Nigeria was founded in Kano in 1909 by a Swiss-born missionary and explorer, Hans Vischer who was sent to Nigeria by the British Colonial office (see Walker 2016). In spite of Vischer's good intentions and the desire of the colonial office to produce locals with the right etiquette and basic training that would eventually ensure the right development in the colonies and more crucially aid the exploitation of the colonized lands with minimal labour cost to the British government, the Hausa-Fulani aristocratic class was generally sceptical about this new type of education. This was a people who historically have been bequeathed with hundreds of years of civilization webbed around the Arabic language and Mediterranean culture. Hence, they thought of the new education as essentially a ploy to divert them from Islam, which they saw as their true calling. As a result, the new education was seen as 'boko' meaning something that is not what it seems, that is, a sham, misleading, disguise, fraudulent. This attitude and disposition to this new colonially inspired education stuck and soon enough everything and anything to do with Western education and even the vestiges of Western civilization ranging from education to mode of dressing, law, governance system and so on became generally seen as 'boko' or a systematic sham devised by the Europeans to undermine Islam and derail the heavenly aspirations of true believers.

Initially, the colonial administration was motivated to offer education in order to transform children of Northern elites into future administrators for the colony. But the drive of the colonial masters was contrary to the position of the Northern aristocracy and spiritual leaders. In effect, Emirs and other elites in the North resisted the spread of schools or Western education from the onset. The fear was anchored on the perception that education would not only obliterate the culture but also replace Islam with Christianity. Given that indirect rule depended on the goodwill and active connivance of the Northern Oligarchy, Lord Lugard had to assuage these fears by promising to keep the missionaries and their schools out of the North. As a result, the process of introduction of Western education was fraught with suspicion and rejection by the Northern aristocracy.

Implementation of colonial education policies and programmes in the North was marked by tension between cultures and worldviews in spite of the belief of Lord Lugard and his European lieutenants that it was necessary to reform a society they considered backward. The crux of the tension apart from fears of cultural and religious usurpation was that Northern elites saw themselves as part and parcel of a long tradition of Islamic learning which took off in the area known as (Northern) Nigeria as early as the eleventh century, especially in the case of early scholarly communities in the old Kanem-Bornu empire. Interestingly, this system of Islamic study focused not only on the Koran and the Arabic language but even included cases of studies in sciences and mathematics.[9]

However, early history of education in Northern Nigeria was largely the history of Islamic study or education. In this case, Western education was considered a devious disruption and a ploy by colonial masters to supplant centuries old religio-cultural systems with something considered inferior. The Islamic schools in the North were in two main layers with the exception of the itinerant *almajirai* pupils. These layers include the elementary school equivalent or *Macarantan Allo*, which was the first stage of learning in which small kids learnt the Qur'an in their neighbourhoods under an Imam; when older (early youth), they now graduate to *Macarantan Ilmi* where the learning was in the Arabic language and the *Ajami* (Hausa in Arabic script) and focused on Qur'anic exegesis and law. In addition to these, the *almajarai* was highly regarded and involved children who enter into a form of a long period apprenticeship under a noted mentor. Equally

important is that the above Islamic education system was gendered in the sense that girls were only permitted to take part in only the *Macarantan Allo*, where they learn basic Islamic ritual practice considered enough for them until suitors came. The other level was reserved exclusively for the males. However, very crucial here is to understand that the above Islamic system was considered superior to Western education and much more reflective of culture and religion of the people. Therefore, they are considered both genuine and edifying for true Muslims.

The relative inferiority with which Northern Nigeria held Western education is perhaps clearly illustrated in the fact that Western education was typically called *Macarantan Boko*. This name captures the perception of this education as not only inferior but as systematic sham. Given this perception, those who decide for this type of education are seen as not true Muslims.

The disdain of the Islamic North of Nigeria for Western education has its roots in the history of Islam (which promoted Arabic language and parochial education anchored on the language, Qur'an and other holy scripts) which incidentally coincided with a colonial legacy of protectionism (based on the conviction of the British colonial administration that the traditional aristocracy and client-based authority relationship in the North were ideal in comparison to other ethnic groups). The colonial administration's wish to tamper as little as possible with the traditional administrative set-up and extensive tax system in the North in order to base its indirect rule system on it[10] incidentally further entrenched the North's aristocratic traditionalism and the dominance of ways of life including education determined and dictated by Islamic religion.[11] In this situation, even after independence, Western education played second fiddle to Islamic education and the prominence of social values and precepts emanating both from the Qur'an and Islam. Oropo et al. (2009) put forward the idea that Boko Haram are not just against education but Western civilization as a whole. According to them, Boko Haram's acting leader at the immediate demise of Yusuf, Mallam Sanni Umaru averred,

> 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 homosexualism, lesbianism, sanctions in cases of terrible crimes like drug trafficking, molestation of infants, multi-party democracy in an overwhelming Islamic country like Nigeria, blue films, prostitution, drinking beer and alcohol and many others that are opposed to Islamic civilization. (Sani Umaru in Oropo et al. 2009)

While the above attempts to shed some light, it also mirrors the confusion and ambivalence that have made it rather difficult to ideologically characterize Boko Haram. Thus, while the statement correctly sees education as part and parcel of culture and projects a single Islamic culture for Nigeria, it equally tends to suggest that some forms of Western education per se are okay with Boko Haram. In spite of this, it also goes on to reject all the manifestations or outcomes of this Western education. Even more telling is that while Sani Umaru may have been at the helm of affairs briefly, his pronouncements above contradicts in several ways those of the substantive leader of the group after the demise of Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau and also show inconsistency with the massive attacks on schools, killing of students, abduction of school children/students which have been one of the major focus of the Boko Haram leadership since 2010 under Shekau.

Notes

1. Zamfara state, other states where sharia has been declared in the North include Borno, Gombe, Bauchi, Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Niger, Kebbi, Sokoto and Kebbi (a total of 12 sharia states in Nigeria).
2. Personal interview with Hajia Mairo Alhassan (Gwoza, 19 April 2016).
3. Personal interview with Ja'afar Mala, 38 year old member of the CJTF and former Boko Haram member (Gwoza, 21 April 2016).
4. Ustaz Adams, Imam of a mosque in Gwoza in his early fifties (28 April 2016).

5. Personal interview with Staff-Sergeant Lazarus Haruna (Gwoza).
6. Male FGD Panel (Maiduguri 17 August 2016).
7. Known also as *Yan Tatsine* or followers of Maitatsine and because of their militaristic and confrontational posture.
8. Marwa was succeeded by his trusted disciple and confidant, Musa Makaniki who later fled to Cameroon after wreaking enormous havoc in Nigeria. He was reportedly arrested by Nigerian security sometime in 2004.
9. This is interesting against the background that Islamic education is often seen as essentially nothing more than a focus on the Qur'an, the Hadiths and Arabic language or scholarly devotion to the various schools and ideologies driving from the above. While recitation and interpretations of the Qur'an are critical elements of the study, they are not all that the system entails.
10. Indirect rule which was a favoured administrative approach of the British in West Africa entails the devolution of day-to-day administrative responsibilities of government to pre-existing local/traditional authority while the colonial power acted in supervisory and oversight capacities.
11. Perhaps emblematic of the colonial administration's love for the way of life of the North can be captured in the views of Flora Shaw the wife of Nigeria's pioneer administrator, Lord Lugard. According to the London Times editorial of 1904 written by Shaw, "the Fulani were a striking people, dark in complexion but of the distinguished features, small hands, and fine, rather aristocratic carriage of the Arabs of the Mediterranean coast. They were of the Mahomedan (sic) religion, and were held by those who knew them to be naturally endowed with the characteristics which fitted them to rule. Their theory of justice was good enough though their practice was bad; their scheme of taxation was most elaborate and was carried even into a system of death duties which left little for an English Chancellor of the Exchequer to improve" (Times London—Lady Lugard on Nigeria—2 March 1904: 12). The above sentiments which point to the fact that the colonial masters were enamoured with aristocratic North can be seen as the root of the conviction of the North in post-independence Nigerian society that they are best suited to rule. A conviction boldly captured in the slogan "born to rule" which at some point was boldly inscribed in the number plates of vehicles registered in one of the prominent Northern states.

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6

Structure, Funding and Socio-economic Imperatives of Boko Haram

Structural Organization of Boko Haram

Even though not much is known about the organizational structure of Boko Haram, what is known though is that it is organized under a loose federation of operating cells under the broad umbrella headship of the Islamic standard 'Shura Council'. Shura in Arabic refers to inclusive consultation. It is in keeping with both the Qur'an and Hadiths, which encourage all Muslims to take decisions in their affairs in consultation with all those concerned or who would be affected. The Shura Council is a standard body in the Islamic world. Perhaps, its usage by groups like Boko Haram underlines their desire to portray themselves as representing pure or true Islam through living out the prescriptions of the Qur'an and the activities of the Prophet Muhammad (see Onuoha 2012; Charles Editor Rivers 2015). The current Shura Council of Boko Haram is headed by Shekau but is largely a consultative assembly and the different cells, while keeping largely to the broad dictates of the council and its leaders, enjoy a significant level of autonomy in operations. As the elusive hunt for Shekau has shown, the Boko Haram leader, while making sure of the activeness of the various cells, maintains little personal and direct

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contacts with the cells but rely on a handful of select cell leaders and trusted lieutenants.

As our field work revealed, while there are many cells or "groups of Boko Haram elements" (in the language of our FGD participants), no one can pinpoint precisely how many these cells are and how far connected to the apex leadership these were. In the opinion of one of the respondents, "the Yusufiyya operated in units with each urban centre in Yobe and Borno having a unit which had ties with their headquarters in Maiduguri headed by Mohammed Yusuf and was anchored on wrong understanding of Islam.[1] Another concurred with, "the group is structured into cells with leaders of the various cells taking instructions from their overall leader Abubakar Shekau who lives in the Sambisa Forest".[2] On a very elaborate note, one self-proclaimed knowledgeable observer stated, "the group has different cells or zones from which it operates. Each cell has a leader and field commanders who receives training outside Nigeria in such countries as Sudan, Mali, Libya etc. on bomb making and arms drills as well as how to evade the enemies (securities). It is these leaders and commanders that do replicate such training in the various zones and also in Sambisa. The warriors are then trained on how to use the bombs, arms and logistics".[3]

It is important to mention also that in spite of the loose 'federated' structure offered by the cell arrangement and its apparent democratic appearance, leaders of violent extremist groups like Boko Haram often arrogate power and decisions to themselves that lend them to authoritarianism. Incidentally, the tendency towards adopting the Shura Council structure remains one of the ironies of such terrorist groups like the Taliban, ISIS and even Boko Haram which openly canvass for authoritarianism in leadership so far as it is in the name of Allah and for the ultimate good of the faithful. In other words, leaders deserve unquestioned loyalty, unfettered powers and unquestioned wisdom (insight) in order to act effectively as Allah's vice regents on earth. While the above appertains to the Emir or Caliph, leaders of extremist sects are more often than not cast equally as embodiments of both spiritual and temporal powers by members of their groups.

There is little doubt that given the shadowy nature of Boko Haram and the general air of discontent in the Northeast several violent groups or even cells of Boko Haram may have operated all these years with loose or no direct connection with Shekau. Perhaps, in the Yusuf years, that is, prior to

the middle of 2009, there may have been a more closed arrangement and tight rein over violent Islamic activism by the mainstream Boko Haram. In fact, the probability of this may even be responsible for the assumption in so many quarters that the faction which acted in Kanamma Yobe State was led or directed by Yusuf himself. But with the dispersion of the sect after the death of Yusuf and declaration of full-blown jihad by Shekau, it has remained improbable to imagine a close-knit and tightly controlled Boko Haram under Shekau. A situation made much obvious now with the emergence of Wilayat West Africa as another strong faction outside Shekau's leadership. Beyond the idea of structure, the sect was also seen by some of the respondents as operationally ruthless and prone to the utilization of all and every means to make its point. In the words of a victim (who was kidnapped and forcibly married to a Boko Haram fighter), "the sect uses bombs and guns to kidnap and kill people. The male kidnapped victims are always trained as warriors while the females are married to sect member often after payment of dowry of ten thousand naira (₦10,000) to the person. Any form of objection to their offers may lead to the death of the person.[4]

In addition to the semblance of control and coordination offered by the Shura arrangement, Boko Haram inevitably could not have survived for so long and engaged in wide-ranging violent actions over a large swathe of the North of Nigeria without good funding. In other words, funding is critical to the sort of violent proselytization favoured by the sect. Apart from recruiting fighters from their increasing number of followers, Boko Haram also use monetary inducements to attract fighters. The BBC had reported in 2014 about jobless young men in Diffa in neighbouring Niger who confessed to have been recruited to fight by Boko Haram at the cost of $3000 per mission (see BBC News 2014). The money used for this purpose was got from the countless breaking into banks by the group and the pillage of the property of perceived unbelievers in areas where it operated.

On Boko Haram Funding

In examining the sources of funding for Boko Haram, Onuoha (2015: 189) reports that "four major streams [of funding] stand out: membership dues, donations, external funding, and bank robberies. The payment

of membership dues was initially the basic source of funding for the sect. Before Mohammed Yusuf was killed, members had to pay a daily levy of 100 naira to their leader." The above seems largely plausible, especially in the Yusuf era, when the support base of the sect ran through different rungs of the social ladder in Maiduguri. In the consensus of participants of the FGD, "the sect on its own was rich and very popular in Maiduguri here before it was outlawed. There is hardly any family in this city that does not have at least a member affiliated to the sect. so when the crisis started, people were sympathetic to them until they started killing people indiscriminately".[5] Interestingly, a majority of the respondents believe that the sect has considerable resources. No wonder, there were sentiments like, "they have more than enough money to hire all sorts of people and even bribe security personnel where necessary to get both information and arms".[6]

However, some tangible evidence about the sources of the funding available to Boko Haram, which allows it to run massive camps for followers, pay its fighters and procure weapons, have been given in the mainstream Nigerian media. In two of the most prominent and perhaps valid sources of such revelations, it was reported that Boko Haram in some kind of mafia style received monthly pay-offs from the governors of such states as Kano, Bauchi and Borno. In these reports, the governors of these states paid Boko Haram in order to avoid attacks in their states as well as avoid retaliatory attacks; payments that in the case of Kano was reported to be about N5million in 2004 and had almost doubled by 2009 (see Ogundipe 2012; Shuaibu 2012). However, the states in question have vehemently denied these stories and the stories remain largely contested.

But one fact remained incontrovertible and that is that Boko Haram had access to fund very much over and beyond what its membership (including the successful businessmen in its fold) could convincingly provide even before it started engaging in kidnapping for ransom in 2013. The most prominent of these kidnappings for ransom (especially in dollars which has gradually become the effective currency of transaction of the high and mighty since 2012 in Nigeria) include the kidnapping of seven members of a French family in 2013[7] with the help of the affiliate sect, Ansaru, and the abduction of former Nigeria's petroleum

minister, Dr. Shettima Ali Monguno in May 2013 (see Nigeria News 2014; Olagbode et al. 2013).[8] These were high-profile abductions that yielded multi-million ransom payments for the group.

Also often fingered as a funder in the early years of Boko Haram is Mustapha Bello Damagum, the owner of a media group in the North known as The Media Trust. In fact, Damagum was arrested with Yusuf in 2007 on charges of trying to facilitate terrorism under the prevention of terrorism laws. The story was that some young men sponsored by Damagum's group to acquire Qur'anic education in Mauritania absconded from their school and presented themselves at the US embassy in Nouakshott claiming to have been recruited and being trained to join the al-Qaeda (see Walker 2016). Incidentally, the charges were eventually dropped and Damagum while still a devout Muslim literally withdrew from his former circles.

Looking at the source of funding for Boko Haram prior to 2009 is like searching for what is already in the open. The good number of businessmen and traders swayed by Yusuf's preaching were ready suppliers of the needs of the group since Yusuf ceaselessly exhorted his followers to commit all their resources to the jihad and build treasuries for themselves in heaven. However, the question becomes really critical after the 2009 face-off with security agencies and subsequent labelling of the sect as a terrorist group. In the post-2009 period, the group simply took whatever it wants through armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom and looting.

While quite a lot have been written and even more speculated about the sources of Boko Haram funding, there is still significant ambivalence and uncertainty about the core sources of funding of the group. This question as I have maintained is mainly more important in the post-Yusuf era than before then largely because of two main reasons. In the first case, under Yusuf the gospel of jihad was interspersed with exhortations on the faithful to sell their possessions and make the proceeds available for the jihad as a way of serving Allah. Second, under Yusuf, Boko Haram had neither embarked on full-scale warfare and extensive reach to other states in the North and even Kogi state (in the North central) and the national capital-Abuja and thus could make do with both voluntary manpower and free-will donation of its members.

Another factor may be located in the fact that until the July 2009 face-off, Boko Haram operated more or less as a free if not legally recognized religious sect (though Yusuf was not a certified preacher in spite of having been under the tutelage of Ja'afar Adam and the Izala Movement for some time. Both the Islamic Preaching Board and the Borno State Council of Ulama did not officially recognize him) and its members could engage in their normal economic activities and provide money for the group. But from 2010 things changed because after 2009 the group was officially proscribed by the state and had to go underground. However, this did not deter it from engaging in an extensive and brutal campaign to realize its goals.

Even though there are accounts that boldly claim that frontline Northeast politician and former executive governor of Borno State, Ali Modu Sheriff was once a prominent benefactor of Boko Haram (see Simons 2015 for instance), what can be verified is that: Sheriff saw the courting of Yusuf who then was acquiring a cult-figure status as important to his bid to achieve needed popularity for re-election in 2003; also Sheriff had a gentleman's agreement brokered by a prominent Islamic cleric from Kano state to let Yusuf be if he would agree to keep the peace and restrain his people from engaging in violence; Sheriff, just like any other politician, may have benefitted from the large number of young people in Boko Haram fold that could be useful for political mobilization and even political thuggery in the run-off to the elections.

There are speculations also that a former Nigerian ambassador to Sao Tome and Principle at one point stepped in as a major financier of the group; there were also stories of the involvement of a serving Nigerian senator from the Northeast and even governors in neighbouring states of Kano and Bauchi who paid regular royalties in mafia style to be guaranteed that Boko Haram would not wreak havoc in their states among other political big-wigs.

Boko Haram and the Exploitation of Entrenched Socio-economic Marginalization

Part of the process of thoroughly understanding Boko Haram is to appreciate the socio-economic location of the youth in the Northern states of Nigeria. Even though the economic downside which started in the early

1980s and officially peaked with the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) at the behest of the Bretton Woods Institutions in 1986 by the Babangida administration affected the whole nation, it was much direr in the Northeast than other zones of the country. This resulted from a constellation of factors ranging from a relatively low youth literacy level (especially in Western education), low entrepreneurship drive, customary dependence on the government for social provisioning, corruption in the public sector to mis-governance and failure of public institutions. Therefore, even before Boko Haram there had developed in the 1980s and 1990s the equivalent of the popular *area boys* syndrome in Lagos in the forms of the '*Yan Kalare*' (in Gombe state), the '*Yan ndaba*' (in Kano) and the '*Sara Suka*' (in Bauchi area), who were nothing better than criminally organized street urchins who saw extortion and criminal intimidation as ways of surviving the dire economic situation.

These groups of young men in the North much like their ilk in the South engaged in predatory activities including armed extortion. These were often acts perpetrated in broad daylight making use of a combination of rowdy praise singing, adulation and unabashed show of boisterous adoration for patrons seen as always willing to 'dip hands into the pockets' to settle these young men and outright intimidation, threat of use of force and even bodily harm for those not willing to easily part with their money or otherwise placate the youth. However, these young men were not bound by any moral obligations or limited by any affective considerations in their efforts to survive. Any better off member of the society was seen as obligated by some fuzzy laws of nature and society established by these young men to settle them.

They also functioned as muscles for hire and could in some cases and for the right amount indulge in such heinous acts as abduction, kidnapping and even the occasional murder. Incidentally, some of these 'immoral' youth were willing recruits into the Boko Haram cause and possibly a good number of them used the guise of Boko Haram to engage in their normal heinous acts outside the control of Boko Haram. In fact, the climate of insecurity created in the zone by Boko Haram and the unquestioned tendency to ascribe almost all acts of extortion, kidnap and even armed robbery to Boko Haram may have boosted the activities of these predatory extortionist groups.

In line with the above, it is important to note also that the history of contemporary Nigeria shows that just as in the case of Boko Haram now, economic deprivation and perceived social injustice have always created a scenario whereby the commoners (talakawas) readily embraced radical or extremist interpretations of both the Qur'an and existing social reality. In fact, the above has been well-detailed in the accounts of the Maitatsine uprising by both Isichei (1987) and Falola (1998). But even beyond the economic issue is that the Maitatsine movement also exhibited some of the idiosyncrasies being exhibited now by Boko Haram.

Apart from both of them sharing in the same '*Boko*' rhetoric which is not entirely strange to Islam in Nigeria since the colonial contact period, they also tapped into the youth demographic category for membership. Boko rhetoric reverberates in the messages of most other prominent clerics of the religion especially in the form of warning against the corrupting influence of Western ideas and lifestyles. Even some Christian preachers and clergies made a fair game of critiquing Western influences which they usually saw as the root of the moral decadence in the society. However, such messages did not contain exhortations to go out and fight or kill in order to stem the tide of Westernization and did not also define all Western influences as totally evil, bad or anti-religion.

The peculiar rhetoric of Boko Haram, which also to a large extent characterizes global Islamic fundamentalism, is the idea that Western influences and institutions are totally decadent, evil and the core source of rot in the social and political spheres as well as engaged in a war against Islam. Be the above as it may, a critical factor in the Maitatsine episode and to a considerable extent in the Boko Haram case is the over-powering feeling of hopelessness generated for a lot of people by economic deprivation and exclusion. In the case of Boko Haram, the decadent and corrupt political system which produced overnight billionaires and a governance system characterized by failed public institutions and unresponsive government over time added an additional and perhaps decisive fuel to the fire of violent Islamic fundamentalism.

The opulence and lavish comfort of the politicians and their cronies were against the backdrop of increasing misery, socio-economic marginalization and extreme poverty confronting the mass of the people including an overwhelming majority of young people in the society. Therefore,

much like the case of the Maitatsine where the followers of Maitatsine or the Yan Tatsine were carefully manipulated to "direct their anger against the secular state, and the Sufis and more traditional establishments that either supported or were indifferent to the increasing westernized state" (Comolli 2015: 41); Boko Haram directed its anger against the above but with one critical difference. This was that while the Yan Tatsine made a distinction between traditional establishments or Sufi gatekeepers as it were and the ordinary Muslims, Boko Haram with time obliterated this difference as both established authorities in politics and religion and ordinary Muslims paid the ultimate price as infidels. In other words, there was no form of discernment or attempt to avoid the massacre of ordinary Muslims who were equally as much victims of the establishment as Boko Haram members themselves. It is this wanton and indiscriminate slaughtering of Muslims that sets Boko Haram far apart from other Islamic fundamentalist organizations in post-colonial Nigeria.

A worrisome observation from the above detailing of the semblance between the Miatatsine movement and Boko Haram is the consistent failure of the leadership of Boko Haram to acknowledge in any significant manner a relationship with the Maitatsine. In this sense, given that the mode of operation of Boko Haram and even its desire for extensive and ruthless ideological jihad resembles more of the features of the Maitatsine movement than the jihad of dan Fodiyo, one wonders why Boko Haram does not allude to the Maitatsine movement as a source of influence.

The above may stem from the fact that Boko Haram leadership at the onset exhibited political expediency in exploiting the decadent political system to its advantage. Therefore, alluding to an infamous and failed jihadist attempt like the Maitatsine would have both questioned the Islamic credentials of Boko Haram (that never criticized the Prophet Muhammed and never riled against any portion of the Holy Qur'an) and undermined its appeal to the public. It might also have awakened the state to the dangers posed by the group much earlier and thus prevented its growth and ability to challenge the forces and might of the state. Therefore, making reference to the jihad of dan Fodiyo is an attempt to package Boko Haram in religio-historical garbs that would appeal to the public and also make its goals more loftier than they are since dan Fodiyo is still a highly revered and very influential figure amongst the Muslim 'Ummah' in Nigeria.

Statistical Indicators of Socio-economic Marginalization

It is necessary at this juncture to show support in the form of statistics for the narratives of socio-economic marginalization especially for the youth in the Northeast of Nigeria. This would show the prevailing socio-economic context under which the sect flourished and found favour among young people literally cast adrift from the society. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 should be considered typical of the situation which confronted these young people.

It would also be instructive to look at the position of the youth population in Borno state in relation to some other critical social indicators. Table 6.2 shows the distribution of youth attendance in school.

A look at the 'dropped out now' rate for both males and females would reveal that Borno state compares very unfavourably with the other three randomly selected states from other geopolitical zones in the country (the selection has purposely left out those states that may be considered well-developed and largely metropolitan like Lagos, Imo, Anambra, Ogun, Kano, Kaduna and Oyo. This was to avoid unfair and slanted comparisons). Even more glaring is what obtains in Table 6.3, that is, the percentage distribution of youth by state by level of education where Borno state

Table 6.1 2010 Poverty Rates by Zone in Nigeria

	Food poverty		Absolute poverty		Relative poverty		Dollar per day poverty	
Zone	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor
North Central	38.6	61.4	59.5	40.5	67.5	32.5	59.7	40.3
North East	51.5	48.5	69.0	31.0	76.3	23.7	69.1	30.9
North West	51.8	48.2	70.0	30.0	77.7	22.3	70.4	29.6
South East	41.0	59.0	58.7	41.3	67.0	33.0	59.2	40.8
South South	35.5	64.5	55.9	44.1	63.8	36.2	56.1	43.9
South West	25.4	74.6	49.8	50.2	59.1	40.9	50.1	49.9

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Abuja- Nigeria Poverty Profile (January 2012)

Table 6.2 Distribution of Youth by Selected States by Attendance in School and Sex

	Never in school		Now in school		Dropped out now	
State	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Borno	213,546	263,642	204,085	86,607	482,627	572,183
Niger	137,926	427,984	278,750	194,377	252,775	277,020
Ekiti	24,811	42,271	326,758	360,272	240,294	282,776
National	3,774,681	6,795,939	10,446,130	7,964,555	15,137,604	16,400,736

Source: NBS, 2012 National Baseline Youth Survey

Table 6.3 Percentage Distribution of Youth by State by Level of Education

State	Below primary	Primary	Secondary	Post-secondary
Borno	41.4	8.1	41.0	9.4
Niger	5.9	22.7	62.9	8.5
Ekiti	2.5	8.0	63.7	25.9
Abia	3.5	5.7	70.9	19.9

Source: NBS, 2012 National Baseline Youth Survey

has what can be considered an outrageous number of youth below primary level of education (first six years of education usually considered most basic in Nigeria) and even an unimpressive figure of youth with post-secondary education.

Also not impressive is the fact that as Table 6.4 shows, the young people in Borno state are mainly concentrated in non-formal education which in reality in Nigeria is for those who either because of personal incapacity cannot avail themselves of formal education or those who are striving to get an education at a much later stage in life unlike their peers.

The picture is not equally better with regards to youth literacy (see Table 6.5) and even unemployment (see Table 6.6). The summary is that available statistics generally indicate the disadvantaged position of Borno state and the entire Northeast zone of Nigeria in comparison with other states (outside the Northeast) and other geopolitical zones. The disadvantage is ironically heightened in the case of the youth or young people and it is from this demographic group that Boko Haram draws the bulk of its membership.

Incidentally, the information emanating from the above tables find ample support in the views of respondents interviewed in the study. Thus,

Table 6.4 Percentage distribution of youth by type of education by state

State	Formal	Non-formal	Informal
Borno	34.4	53.1	7.6
Niger	94.6	3.5	1.9
Ekiti	99.0	0.8	0.2
Abia	96.1	2.8	1.0

Source: NBS, 2012 National Baseline Youth Survey

Table 6.5 Youth literacy rate by state (%)[9]

State	Literacy in English	Literacy in any Language
Borno	57.3	73.3
Niger	58.3	63.9
Ekiti	91.6	95.4
Abia	95.6	96.6

Source: Adapted from the NBS National Literacy Survey, 2010

Table 6.6 Unemployment rate by state by year (%)

State	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Borno	12.5	11.8	27.7	26.7	29.1
Niger	4.2	3.9	28	11.7	39.4
Ekiti	11.4	11.5	20.6	28.0	12.1
Abia	25.1	11.9	14.5	22.8	11.2

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)—General Household Survey Report (2007–2011)

"Our people are poor, and illiterate that is why Boko Haram easily got their sympathy and brainwashed the youth into their destructive activities. You know Boko Haram is very rich and deadly, those that refused to support them were killed instantly. All these things aided their survival as a group.[10] Also, "the situation of young people here in Borno state calls for urgent attention. Most of our youth are not educated and the few ones that went to schools are jobless. There are no opportunities for them, no thanks to the crisis and the government".[11] And, "most of these young men recruited by Boko Haram were jobless. Had it been the government provided them with employment opportunities, they wouldn't have listened to Shekau and his group".[12]

There is no doubt that in spite of the acknowledged charisma of Yusuf and even the radical Islamic yarn he was adept at spurning, the massive

and deep-seated disaffection towards the government by the populace helped to greatly push along the actualization of Yusuf's goals. In other words, the failing and unresponsive governance system in Nigeria and a grossly deteriorating economic system that generated both political exclusion and economic marginalization for the ordinary citizens created the conducive environment for Boko Haram to recruit members as well as use these people to target the state and its agencies in a perceived justified jihad.

The socio-economic situation in the Northeast added more impetus to the ability of Boko Haram to attract and retain members, especially among the youth population who face dire unemployment and little or no future prospects of escaping severe poverty. The high level of unemployment and underemployment among young people in the zone equally hampers efforts towards curbing the insurgence. In spite of the overwhelming evidence of dire socio-economic situation over the years in the Northeast, it is not by any means the main driving force of the insurgence. In other words, the economic situation and political corruption have helped in creating a conducive environment for the fermentation of a perennial dream of ultra-Salafist elements to actualize a society rooted in pure Islam and unfettered Shari'a. Therefore, the socio-economic situation is more a critical ingredient in the mix than the main or only ingredient that matters.

Avoiding a Mono-Causal Explanation of the Boko Haram Insurgence

In spite of the acceptance of the role of poverty in the Boko Haram insurgence in the extant literature and public discourse, some commentators have disputed the poverty narrative. Thus, Simons (2015) contends that given the culture of marginalization, ethnicity and favouritism in the allocation of resources in Nigeria which has favoured the North in view of the fact that it has been in charge of the reins of power at the centre for a longer period than the South, the claim of poverty seems far-fetched. He goes on to argue that the 'poverty thesis' would be aptly more a case

of the irresponsibility of these Northern political elites than ordinary poverty. However, in spite of the above counter-narrative on poverty, Simons (2015) concludes that poverty which seems more pronounced in the North than the South is because of the poor investment in formal education and entrepreneurship.

There is need to point out with regards to formal education that available statistical evidence backs up this situation of neglect. For instance, the 2010 education data survey by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows that while primary school attendance for the whole country was between 35% and 80%; the rates for the Northeast and Northwest were between 43% and 47% and 35% and 38% respectively representing the lowest rates in the country (when compared with other zones, especially the Southern zones: Southeast, Southwest and Southsouth).

It is important to caution that while the economic drivers of the insurgence remain undoubted, any explanation of the insurgence solely or mainly in terms of these misses the mark. In other words, economic drivers alone are not the only explanations of the insurgence. After all, there are more impoverished, poor and hopeless young men in the Northeast that are neither members of Boko Haram nor intent on joining Islamic fundamentalist groups than there are young people who are members of the sect or intent on joining fundamentalist groups.

Therefore, the Boko Haram episode is, in reality, complicated and draws impetus from a number of factors ranging from the historical to the economic and political. Perhaps, this idea was captured by Comolli (2015: 77–78) when she cautioned against perceiving Boko Haram as a monolithic homogenous group driven by extreme religious ideology. In her words, "like any other insurgency, what we are observing in Nigeria and which goes by the name of Boko Haram or Ansaru is not a monolithic homogenous grouping. Extreme religious ideology may well be the overarching driver and the most commonly used identifying characteristic of both outfits. But under the broader religious umbrella, financial, criminal, personal and political interests may drive the violence at the individual level".

Equally significant is that in spite of an obvious consensus on the socio-economic deprivation young people face in the Northeast, some of the respondents in this study do not buy the idea that this has directly

generated the violence and wanton killings carried out by Boko Haram. In this case, "the adoption of force by Boko Haram as its *modus operandi* has rendered whatever grievances the sect has illegitimate. The fact that our people are poor, illiterate, unemployed and lacks opportunities are undeniable but has Boko Haram contributed positively in this regard? Definitely no".[13] Corroborating this viewpoint, another respondent opines, "Boko Haram defies just being a product of deprivation. We are suffering here but it takes more than hunger to take the life of another person especially when you know this would never end the problem".[14]

Notes

1. Hajia Mairo, 55-year-old women leader in Gwoza (20 April 2016).
2. Personal interview, Captain Sotonye, field commander, Operation Lafia Dole (Gwoza, 23 April 2016).
3. Personal interview, Ahmad Ibn Anas (Maiduguri, 14 August 2016).
4. Interview with 26-year-old Zainab Abdul; female victim of Boko Haram kidnap and forced marriage (Gwoza, 18 April 2016).
5. FGD session with adult females at LGEA primary school, Madimagari, Maiduguri (14 August 2016).
6. Personal interview, Hassan Usman (Maiduguri, 15 August 2016).
7. The kidnapping took place in the border town of Dabanga in the far North of Cameroon. This widely reported incident occurred on 19 February 2013. It is believed that the Boko Haram depended on the masterful expertise of the al-Barnawi led Ansaru to pull off this operation.
8. Monguno, a first republic petroleum minister (who passed on in July 2016 at the age of 95) was abducted on Friday 3 May at Mafoni Mosque in Maiduguri after the congregational prayers.
9. Literacy is defined here as the ability to read and write in any language, English or any other language.
10. Personal interview, Maduh Idris, 47-year-old farmer (Gwoza, 28 April 2016).
11. Personal interview, Barrister Mahmood, 49-year-old Maiduguri-based legal practitioner (19 July 2016).
12. FGD Consensus, FGD session with adult females at LGEA primary school, Madimagari, Maiduguri (14 August 2016).

13. Personal interview, Alih Ibn Mustafa, 38-year-old official of a mosque in Gwoza (20 April 2016).
14. Personal interview, Musa Idris, 26-year-old unemployed graduate (Maiduguri, 14 July 2016).

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7

Escalation of the Insurgence: July 2009, Leadership and the Remaking of Boko Haram

The 2009 Face-Off

The issue that triggered off the 2009 face-off between Boko Haram and security agencies followed from the attempt of security agencies in Maiduguri to enforce the largely unpopular (and now discarded in the sense of not being enforced) national regulation against riding on motor-bikes without helmets that came on board in early 2009. It was a regulation ostensibly necessitated by the need to improve road safety and drastically reduce human causalities from crashes involving motor-bikes in the country. The regulation demanded that commercial motor-bike operators (a viable means of transportation in most of Nigeria's urban cities by then) wear helmets and provide the same for their passengers. While the motor-bike operators (known as *achapa* in the North and *okada* in the South) kicked against the regulation in view of the added expenditure (cost of procuring two helmets each) on an already perilous existence, the passengers expressed fears about charms, skin diseases and general hygiene since all passengers who enter a particular motor-bike would wear the same helmet and some operators of the bikes are notorious for engaging in criminal activities (thus the fear of charms was very palpable).

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The enforcement of the law in Maiduguri was like the trigger that set-off the confrontation between Boko Haram and security agencies that had been brewing for over three years then. On the said day, the men of the Federal Roads Safety Commission (FRSC) intercepted a motor-bike convoy of the sect on the way to the funeral of some members.[1] These riders were not riding with helmets. In the altercation that followed, some members of the sect were wounded even though unfounded stories have it that some of these people eventually died. This was on June 11 and was merely the beginning since it took several weeks before the full face-off in Maiduguri. But in the interim, Yusuf responding to the June 11 incident stated that it was the coming to pass of his earlier prophesy that Boko Haram was going to be attacked by the authorities of the infidel state and that Boko Haram members would not accept such a humiliation and were ready to die with their brothers.

The incident woke up the authorities to the scale of danger and possible disruption of public peace Boko Haram posed and it responded with massive arrest of suspected Boko Haram members in Borno, Bauchi and Yobe states; Yusuf's message on its own sensitized Boko Haram members in ways that were tantamount to a call to arms. As a result, there were pockets of violent protests and killing in such places as Bauchi (where on the 26th of July, about 60 members of the Boko Haram attacked the Dutsen police station in which tens of people were killed); spreading of the violence by July 27 and 28 to Borno, Kano, Katsina and even Yobe states in a massive unleashing of terror and disorder that left hundreds of people dead. In response to what was becoming a large-scale state of anarchy, the Presidency directed security forces to use all means at their disposal to identify, arrest and prosecute those involved. It was this order that galvanized the military (the 3rd Armoured Division and the police) with armoured tanks to descend on Maiduguri in order to flush out and crush Boko Haram.

Even though the July 2009 confrontation was a watershed in the metamorphosis of the sect, it was a precipitated action. In this sense, it was a collision that had been brewing before then and especially between 2008 and 2009. Antecedent events like the arrest and brief detention of Yusuf by Nigeria's State Security Service in November 2008, increasing incendiary preaching by Yusuf and minor scuffles and run-ins between the sect

and law enforcement were all implicated in a very tense relationship between Boko Haram and the authorities before July 2009.

The military operation lasted a long three days and led to the death of hundreds of members of Boko Haram including the key figures in the sect then like Buji Foi and 72-year-old father-in-law of Yusuf, Baba Fugu Mohammed, who went on his volition to the police and never returned. The attack apart from flattening the entire headquarters of Boko Haram in the old Railway Quarters also totally destroyed their sacred Ibn Taymiyyah mosque that had become the pivot of its spiritual pursuit. The destruction of this holy mosque and the killing of Yusuf under suspicious circumstances have become parts of the planks of justification of the actions of the sect subsequently. In the views of one respondent (which is not the predominant views of the majority of the other respondents),

> Before the crisis, the group organized lectures and seminars mainly for the propagation of Islam and when on the 11th of June 2009 to be precise, over 30 of our members were killed during a burial procession in Maiduguri which resulted to conflict and subsequent killings of hundreds of sect members including our leader Yusuf and tracking and summary execution of our members across Nigeria which brought shame and dishonour to everyone associated with the sect. Members and associates of the sect then saw the need to regroup and redeem our honour through a jihad. In the course of the jihad, we adopted different tactics ranging from bomb and gun attacks primarily targeted at the government and her allies. However, the killing of women and children and Muslims alike in the course of the crisis under avoidable circumstance becomes a source of worry to me.[2]

The Killing of Yusuf and Emergence of Shekau

The police account that the founder of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf was killed while trying to escape from police custody did not cut any ice with discerning members of the Nigerian public. The general notion was that given the police's history of brutality, accidental discharge syndrome and use of extra-judicial means to overcome especially daunting cases or recalcitrant trouble makers, anything could have happened. Therefore, with regard to the Yusuf story, "nobody believed them. Policemen were

said to have emptied their magazines into his corpse as it lay in the yard of the force headquarters. His bullet-ridden body was displayed to journalists, who snapped pictures" (Walker 2016: 142). This might have resulted from an attempt at a perceived final solution to Boko Haram troubles by the police. No doubt, Yusuf's persona and carriage were beyond the strategic articulation and capacity of the local police.

A critical insight into the personality and aura of Yusuf is provided by a self-proclaimed member of Boko Haram called Abu Dajana interviewed over the phone by Walker (2016). According to the accounts of Dajana as reported by Walker (2016: 140), "in the whole of this country there is no mosque[3] like that [Ibn Tamiyyah], because of the things Mallam Yusuf used to teach. He reminded us about Islam, his teachings were about the practices of the Prophet to such an extent as some of the practices that had been forgotten were revived, such as praying at night and reading only the Qur'an at all times of the day. There wasn't a mosque like this in the whole of the country where you could go and attain as much knowledge." Incidentally, the killing of Yusuf became the binding glue of the solidarity of members of the sect and a readily offered justification for just-war by the sect. Thus, "the government of Nigeria is corrupt and irresponsible. We did not start the killings, the government forces did, and ours was a self-defence, a jihad. Many of our youths have fled the zone not because of the sect but because of military harassment and extra-judicial killings. As far as the government securities are concerned, every young man in this state is a member of the sect and deserves to be killed."[4]

Characterizing Victims of Boko Haram's Come-Back Attacks

Boko Haram after the July 2009 face-off with Nigerian security forces literally took almost a 15-month hiatus and re-emerged (announced their re-emergence) with the September 20 prison break episode in Bauchi. Prior to this incident, the government had deluded itself, especially at the Borno State level that the group had been vanquished. The above means that Boko Haram in 2010 moved from an active 'dawah' or

proselytization phase of the Mohammed Yusuf's era to the armed conflict phase of the Shekau (jihad phase) era in which there was a need to match fiery speech with action.

After the 2009 violent clash with the police and security agencies (26–30 July 2009) which ultimately led to the perceived extra-judicial killing of Yusuf, Boko Haram got a new leader in the person of Yusuf's former second-in-command Abubakar Shekau. Probably nothing has had a more transforming effect on Boko Haram than the 2009 conflict. Very crucial in this sense was both the killing of Yusuf and the emergence of Shekau. Following an initial hiatus (a period which may have been utilized by the organization in re-strategizing, rearming and rebuilding membership and allies) the group came out forcefully as an active, violent and terror-inspired organization.

The change in Boko Haram's *modus operandi* can be attributed both to the response of the state and the personality of Shekau and his peculiar style of leadership. Shekau can be described just like a lot of other Islamic fundamentalist leaders as a largely unstable character who despite the command of a good number of languages (including Arabic and English) has no significant formal education. But unlike Yusuf (the first official martyr of Boko Haram), Shekau wanted the jihad as soon as possible. In other words, he was overtly in favour of the immediacy of jihad and the need to refashion the sect as a tool of retribution and vengeance.

Therefore, while Yusuf ran Boko Haram mainly (except for the July 2009 face-off) as a more or less passive group which even though preached radical Islamic doctrines had no obvious plans to embark on commensurate action(s) in that regard, Shekau saw the time as ripe for translating idealism into action. As River Editors (2015) apprehended it, Yusuf led Boko Haram as a militant organization focused on a millenarian ideology and promoting a lifestyle of orthodox Islam; Shekau, in contrast, emerged from the onset as a radical militant Jihadist with a charismatic leadership style and sworn agenda to punish Nigerian authorities for the killing of Yusuf and to propagate a reversionist agenda of returning Islam to its roots and punishing Nigeria for its venality, corruption and its embrace of decadent Western influences.

There is a need to understand what may be seen as the metamorphosis of the attacks of Boko Haram especially in terms of the victims and targets of these attacks. In a very crude manner, four main groups, that is, main concentration of the attacks, can be isolated in the last six years of active Boko Haram violence. At first and perhaps as a direct consequence of the casualties suffered by the group in the 2009 confrontation with the police, the group focused its attacks mainly on the police, military and government targets. Soon enough, it included Christians and churches in the North (seen as the domain of the Igbo and other minority groups from the South of Nigeria) where people gathered to worship. The attacks on the churches took place even on such solemn and hallowed Christian periods as Easter and Christmas. The attacks were carried out using both suicide bombers, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) (including vehichle-borne improvised explosive devices (VIEDs)) and open shooting. These attacks apart from being seen by Boko Haram as furthering its aim of achieving a total Islamic society also exacted huge human carnage which falls in line with the desire of the group to create terror among the population.

Not satisfied with the above targets, the group particularly in response to its avowed goal to make the North uninhabitable for non-Muslims started attacking social spaces and relaxation centres, like beer parlours, hotels and even mass transit depots seen as the gathering spot of people from the South especially the Igbo of the Southeast. These attacks were mainly in the *Sabon Gari* area of the commercial city of Kano. At the same time, the group in the bid to further translate the forbidding of the West into action started attacking schools in the North often making a distinction between students who were Muslims (often spared) and those who were Christians (usually slaughtered by beheading). These students and schools were attacked because within the framework of Boko Haram they were representatives of Westernization and modernity and thus the students in these schools were by Boko Haram definition infidels who deserve death.

Finally, Boko Haram probably in response to the growing condemnation of its methods, questioning of its religious credentials and public criticism of the group by moderate Muslim clerics and political leaders began to target these people, a lot of who were killed through assassinations. Equally drawing the wrath of Boko Haram since 2014 were the groups of

hunters and village youth opposed to Boko Haram's wide-ranging carnage and wanton razing to the ground of many communities in the Northeast who since 2015 had loosely formed themselves into anti-Boko Haram vigilante groups (now known as the Civilian Joint Task Force) that work closely with the forces of the government in sniffing out Boko Haram elements and their hiding places. Interestingly, the increasing success of the military against Boko Haram has likely resulted from increased collaboration between the military and these groups who provide critical intelligence and help the military in spatially navigating the bewildering expanse of largely open and arid environment of the Northeast especially the border areas between Nigeria and such neighbours as Chad, Cameroon and Niger.

The Leadership Impetus to Boko Haram Insurgence: Between Yusuf and Shekau

In considering the history of the Boko Haram, it is really important to pinpoint two epochs in the development of the sect. These would be the pre-2009 era which was the era of both the founding and leadership of the sect by Mohammed Yusuf and the post-2009 epoch which was the era of the former second in command to Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau and which coincided with the transformation of the group from a purely religious focused and minimally disruptive organization to a serious sectarian and terrorist affront to Nigeria. Apart from the fact that Shekau's ascension into leadership was made inevitable by the extra-judicial killing of Yusuf, the sect faced a different sort of response from the Nigerian authorities and probably saw its choice of wanton killing and unabridged terror as warranted and even as the most apt response. In reality, while the Yusuf era was targeted largely at proselytization and pushing the boundaries of peaceful religious co-existence, the Shekau era was dominated by the need to exact vengeance on perceived enemies and to get going with the arduous task of jihad within the context of perceived just war. In this sense, the group after the 2009 face-off saw its actions, no matter how violent and vile as justified by the actions of the state towards the sect especially in the 2009 clash. However, it would appear that the personalities of the two figures also played a major part in the way the sect was organized and its actions at each of the two epochs.

Mohammed Yusuf: The Marks of a Charismatic Fundamentalist Leader

According to Walker (2016) it is erroneous to argue that Mohammed Yusuf's preaching was non-violent. In his views, Yusuf espoused a violent ideology from early on. The above train of thought finds support in the contention of Mohammed (2015: 9) that in a lecture in 2006, Yusuf argued, "in this da'mah we agreed that we are going to suffer like Bilal who was dropped to the ground, just like Ammar Ibn Yasir was tortured, just like a spear was thrust into Summayyah's vagina, these are trials that are awaiting, these are the hurdles we want to cross. Anyone who dies in the process goes to paradise." However, ambivalence is created regarding Yusuf's true position on violence. In this case, Smith (2015) has argued that Yusuf in spite of his fiery preaching and influence over his followers was not really primed for actual violence. What seems obvious is that Yusuf preached about both the necessity of jihad and the need for followers to get ready for the fight ahead. Therefore, while he may not have seen war against the Nigerian state as very urgent, he saw it as inevitable.

Yusuf was very skilful not only in providing spiritual nourishment for his followers but equally actively mediated in their economic and social provisioning. The economic role of Yusuf in the lives of his teeming commoner-followers has been aptly captured by Comolli (2015: 52) thus, "shrewdly, he made available a system of informal social welfare through micro-financing to help his followers set up small businesses and also arranged marriages—all measures that helped increase his popularity. Many of the local commoners came to see Yusuf not only as a preacher, but as a provider." It was this intelligent mix between spiritual and economic nourishment that endeared Yusuf to his followers and marked him out as a different kind of leader. He was in their eyes, the extreme antithesis of the political elites who in spite of the massive resources at their disposal cared little or nothing about the wellbeing of the ordinary citizens who they purportedly represented in Nigeria's deeply fractured democracy.

Therefore, part of Yusuf's selling point were the uncanny ability to combine spiritual nourishment with socio-economic provisioning in the bid to exploit the socio-economic and political situation of his environment. Thus, as another source puts it, "he began to combine his

fundamentalist preaching with social welfare programs and amassed even more followers by 2007. Yusuf's ability to mobilize the population in northern Nigeria made him an attractive tool for the political elite, despite Boko Haram's rejection of state authority" (Peters 2017: 2).

Yusuf as a leader was not only a rabid and influential preacher, he was also a provider who helped his followers with economic assistance. Apart from running a free entry commune (once you accepted the doctrine), he provided economic palliatives for the commoners and used the well-established members of the group to grant favours and privileges to his followers. Yusuf was, without doubt, intelligent in reading the prevailing socio-economic situation in the Northeast and keyed into this in order to sell both himself and his peculiar but enticing version of Islam. He clued into the historical disdain or at least suspicion of things western in the Northern society to ratchet up support for himself. Therefore, his penchant to attack anything seen as Western and point accusing fingers at the privileged members of the political class endeared him to the commoners.

He quite early saw that a persisted onslaught on 'boko' would resonate favourably with the people and saw that rebelling against traditional and mainstream frame of preaching and ideology would offer him the latitude to embark on unmitigated anti-boko rhetoric. Yusuf, even though not a politician, was not politically naïve since he saw how to use the political situation of the Northeast to his advantage. In this sense, he saw that the large throng of unemployed youth and commoners who came to listen to him could be further exploited and directed towards Boko Haram's goals by politicizing religion. In this situation, he offered his brand of Islam to this people as a solution to a hugely apparently failed socio-economic and political system of the modern state in Nigeria. Therefore, the removal of the state and/or its total subversion as well as the annihilation of the corrupt political class prodding up this state became a desirable goal for the members.

Yusuf was not just against the modern state and its institutions, he was also riled by people working for the government. For him, "our call refuses employment under the government which does not rule by what Allah has revealed [but others] such as the French law, the American law, the British law or any other constitution or system that goes against the

teachings of Islam and negates the Qur'an and Sunnah" (Yusuf, 2009a: 111 cf. Mohammed 2015: 11). He was not just vaguely against western education, he went further to pinpoint some subjects which he saw as particularly forbidden and totally un-Islamic. In his words (transcription from a tape he issued on 30 June 2006), "I have a book that discusses the knowledge of geography, geology and sociology. These branches of knowledge are not knowledge but full of unbelief. Even those studying it [them] are aware if they are fair to Allah, except if they haven't studied Islam. If you have read geography, you will know that in geography there is danger. If you have studied Islam, you'll know, whoever you are, that in sociology there is danger."

Mohammed Yusuf's disdain for and utter rejection of democracy and its institutions is captured in his unequivocal writings on the subject. Thus, "democracy says that the 'rule is by the people' hence there are no objections against being ruled by an unbeliever or a hypocrite or an immoral person under the umbrella of the democratic system, and this entails great danger and immense evil for all that it includes. Therefore, we hereby affirm and assert that democracy is a *tughut* (idolatory) that should not be believed in and should be refused" (Higazi 2015: 14). Yusuf was undoubtedly of the belief that democracy was evil and was a tool of the infidel Nigerian state. Therefore, those who participate in it or propped-up its institutions were apostates that deserve death at the hands of the faithful. For him, this represents 'takfir', that is, the belief that a group that claims to be Muslims can be false and deserve death. He communicated this message to his teeming followers and argued that such killing is actually an obligation on the faithful or true believers. This message resonates with the earlier teachings of other *takfir* ideologues like Ibn Taymiyyah, who was greatly adored by Yusuf and influenced his interpretations of the Qur'an.

Perhaps, Yusuf's messages appealed to the downtrodden because he was more or less one of their own. In this sense, he was not from an established family, that is, an oligarchy and he was not elitist. As Walker (2016) apprehended it, Yusuf and his close associates were from poor backgrounds. It is even alleged that he grew up an *almajirai* who spent years begging in the streets as a child. However, while he begged he also studied and devoted himself to the understanding of both the Qur'an and the Hadiths. This enabled him to quickly emerge as a natural leader of the youth wing of the

Salafist group within the environs of the popular and upscale Alhaji Mohammadu Idimi mosque in Maiduguri. As a matter of fact, before Yusuf parted ways with the Izala and the old school radical clerics, he was portrayed as the leader of the youth by such an Islamic figure as the late Ja'afar Adam, who eventually was gunned down by suspected Boko Haram members. But beside the downtrodden and the bulging youth population in Maiduguri, Yusuf's message also resonated with the middle class and a few rich people especially those who had achieved wealth by dint of hard work (commercial merchants and traders in the city).

Some of the tirades of Yusuf against the state were honed and influenced by his close involvement or association with Saudi Arabia. Therefore, there is no arguing the case that Yusuf's rejection of western democracy while resonating with his non-acceptance of the notion of secularism was further boosted by the well-known Saudi Arabian establishment's aversion to democracy, which it views as subversive and a threat to the monarchy (Mohammed 2015). The above orientation was no doubt shaped by Yusuf's alignment with the writings of some prominent Saudi scholars as Sheik Bakr Ibn Abu Zaid, Sheik Mohammed al-Amin ash Shanqiti among others, who argued consistently that the modern state, democracy and the individual freedoms (liberty) they promised or supported were really anti-Islamic. While these scholars were really eloquent and wrote vitriolically against democracy, Yusuf was either fully bamboozled by their scholarship or incapacitated by his lack of formal training in the religion to conceive of another possible narrative. In fact, Yusuf saw Saudi Arabia and especially the writings of radical scholars emanating from the Kingdom as the quintessential understanding of the religion. Therefore, he drank voluptuously from their fountain of knowledge in his many forays into the kingdom before 2009.

Abubakar Shekau: A Walk in the Dark

At the demise of Yusuf, the leadership of the sect fell to one of his most trusted lieutenants Abubakar Shekau. It was Shekau who literally resurrected Boko Haram from the ashes of the 2009 routing by the military and began a vengeful and widespread campaign which targeted perceived enemies and betrayers. This soon degenerated and became largely a war against

everybody and everything except Boko Haram. Shekau was reportedly born between 1972 and 1981 and hails most probably from Shekau village in Yobe State, Northeast Nigeria. Those who had been close to him (including one of our respondents in Maiduguri) describe him as a very intelligent, complex and often unpredictable leader who is completely at ease acting as the head theologian of the Boko Haram and as a garrison commander.

Probably, Shekau's theological strength is borne out by his nickname 'Darul Tawheed' (specialist in *tawheed* which refers to the Islamic concept of the oneness of Allah). Nonetheless, Shekau professes a longing for the original tenets of Islam and closely resembles a Salafi Jihadist who advocates and supports the use of violence in order to advance Islam. It is important to note here that Salafi-Jihadists are often contrasted with Salafi-Purists who deprecate the use of violence. Given this simple distinction, Boko Haram under Shekau aligns itself to Salafi-Jihadism, which rationalizes and utilizes violence in the bid to achieve reversion to original (undiluted) form of Islam.

In spite of the tendency to underestimate Shekau's intelligence and cunning, the fact that he has overseen the resilience of Boko Haram for over a decade now suggests otherwise. He has achieved this feat in spite of the combined efforts of the Nigeria security agencies and their ECOWAS and international collaborators. He has also persevered despite internal challenges especially the most recent threat of the ISIS backed Wilayat. Shekau may have been judged by his obvious outlook and posturing as a cheap unintelligent sectarian leader but this is akin to judging a book by the cover. Perhaps, nothing illuminates the capacity and mental pedigree of Shekau than his role in ensuring that the sect survived the 2009 massive onslaught and the demise of Yusuf and some other key leaders of the sect.

What the above informs us is that Abu-Bakr Shekau is a very intelligent, wily and cunning adversary. Yusuf certainly chose well in terms of a successor to carry the baton. But more important here is that the profiling of Shekau should cast him properly as a worthy and formidable adversary and dissuade security agencies believing that he is a careless and mentally poor renegade that can be taken down in one poorly organized sortie as the many reports of his false capture since the last six years suggest. There is wisdom in understanding that you cannot tame or overwhelm an adversary you continuously underestimate. The obvious

underestimation of Shekau has thus far worked in his favour and frustrated those who are in pursuit of him. In spite of how it may be constructed, there is wisdom in perceiving that until Shekau is caught or killed, there cannot be total vanquishing of Boko Haram.

As leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau initially had two known deputies, namely, Khalid al-Barnawi and Abubakar Adam Kambar. However, al-Barnawi, who is also known as Mohammed Usman (it is common practice for Islamic fundamentalists to bear two or three names universally. Often one is a real or given name and the other(s) names adopted due to operational prowess or operational pseudonyms), is thought to be the leader of the Ansaru an earlier splinter group from Boko Haram that is now moribund. Also, the other designated leader, Abubakar Kambar has been reportedly killed by Nigerian armed forces. Currently, military sources in Nigeria claim that Ansaru's leader is in detention awaiting trial for his many infractions ranging from murder to kidnapping of foreigners for ransom.

Some Comparison Between the Two Leaders

It seems plausible that without the religious zeal of Yusuf, which shone through, his oratory and fiery preaching and general charisma, Boko Haram may not have taken off and became what it is. Yusuf mostly drew people towards his person through his preaching. Generally, his listeners felt like he was revealing the truth in terms of new knowledge about the scripture or even correcting orthodox interpretations of the Qur'an. Apart from his speeches in Mosques in the state, he was always eager and willing to debate other Islamic scholars on contested issues about Islam on local television and radio stations. In addition to the unhidden and uncompromising quest for pure Islam, he spoke passionately against the lack of justice in the society which he opined was a consequence of the corruption of Islam.

In appreciating the role of Yusuf in Boko Haram and the predilection of the group towards the Salafi, one must understand that Yusuf was from a typical talakawa background. He was born into a poor family and grew up as an *almajirai* living on the streets with begging bowl in hand while physically dirty and tattered. But he was destined for greater things albeit

negatively and so by an early age he shone through and was soon the youth leader of a Salafist group within the popular Muhammad Ndimi mosque in Maiduguri. For a good number of his formative years and tutelage as an emerging youth leader, Yusuf was commonly showcased by the older patrons and preachers of the Izala society as a leader of the younger generation.

However, a trend which one observed in the field work was that a lot of the respondents perceived Yusuf as more of a religious leader than merely a violent sectarian commander. Thus, one of them contends, "before 2009, Boko Haram or Yusufiyya as we called them then were not violent toward other religious groups although as Muslims, they might hold animosity particularly against us, the Christians. Boko Haram is very similar to the Maitatsine Islamic sect that existed in the early 1980s in terms of ideologies and operation tactics, the sect can therefore be said to share the same ideologies inherent in Islam with Maitatsine. But unlike Maitatsine crisis, Boko Haram is stronger, armed and is lasting longer."[5] Another in a rather ambiguous manner argued,

> Boko Haram is a terrorist organization founded by late Muhammad Yusuf here in Maiduguri. It started on the falsehood as an Islamic sect and manifested as a full-fledged terror group in 2009 after a crackdown by the government of late President Umar Yar'adua. After the death of Yar'adua, the sect conspicuously emerged again under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau and began the most violent campaign in the history of Borno people during the regime of former President Jonathan. Boko Haram then was well armed even more than the Nigerian Army and killed thousands of people as well as massive destruction of communities.[6]

However, the same respondent goes on to argue that before the emergence of Shekau as leader, the sect even though purveyor of a radical strain of Islam was not violent. For the FGD participants, one participant expressed the consensus on this issue, "had it been the late Muhammed Yusuf is still alive or was not killed by the police, we wouldn't have witnessed the level of violence so far witnessed in the state. I strongly believe that government's high-handedness is responsible for the sect's resort to force."[7]

What is obvious from the above is that the leadership characteristics of these two had influence in the direction that the insurgence took at each epoch in its history. This would really underline the need for a thorough-going analysis of the personality characteristics of fundamentalist leaders and how these impact on the stance and nature of activism adopted by their groups. In summary, one can capture the difference between the two leaders thus (Table 7.1):

Table 7.1 Comparison of the Attributes of Both Leaders of the Boko Haram

Mohammed Yusuf (2002–2009)	Abubakar Shekau (2010–Date)
• Charismatic, emotional and fiery preacher • Great skills in preaching and relatively sound knowledge of the religion • Seen generally as a leader and provider (mediator of economic privation) • Educated (beyond secondary education?) • Time taking, reflective and systematic (the split of Ali) • Stints abroad (West African Region and Saudi Arabia) • Uncanny ability to hob-nob with the high and mighty and empathize with talakawas (his roots) • Years of tutelage (Izala and Ja'afar Adam, seen as future of the Faith) • Focused on social and political realities in Nigeria • Kanuri from Yobe State	• Brash, crude • Over-zealous (quality that made him second to Yusuf over and above those in the sect before him) and believes in the convincing power of violence and terror • Accused of drug addiction and often suffers bouts of mental eruption • Semi-literate and often verbally incoherent • Actions based often on impulse and easily provoked • Unclear connection to outside (apart from W/Africa) but once said to have travelled out to meet with al-Qaeda (by Abu Qaqa—Boko Haram spokesperson) • Ambivalent on external links (grouse with Ansaru, the 2015 pledge of allegiance = cry for help) • No known tutelage apart from being Yusuf's 2 i/c • Kanuri from Yobe State

Source: Author's profiling of the two leaders of the Boko Haram

A Strike at the Heart of the Infidels: The Assault on Chibok

> I am not puzzled that the official narrative has triggered contrarian impulses. The contending narratives point to a festering wound at the heart of the uneasy collectivity called Nigeria. Amina, Serah[8] and Sambisa Forest are metaphors of a country whose malaise is deep-rooted, troubling and potentially tragic. (Ndibe 2016: 48)

The 15 April 2014 kidnapping of the Chibok girls undoubtedly transformed Boko Haram from a local and domestically focused sectarian violent group to an internationally known and dreaded group. In fact, the massive social media campaign to bring the girls back (#bring back our girls) led at one time by such a prominent figure as the US first lady, Michelle Obama worked ironically to the favour of the group since it gave it unprecedented (within Nigeria's socio-political history) international profile and as Charles River Editors termed it, "a place in the pantheon of globally recognized terror organizations" (Editors 2015).

When Boko Haram in April 2014 in a devil may care attitude raided the sleepy but significantly Christian town of Chibok in Borno state and abducted hundreds of teenage school girls preparing for their final secondary school examinations, many observers were quick to regard this as one more act in what was becoming a thick terrorist plot by the sect. But this dastard act was far from the normal Boko Haram perceived senseless violence against innocent people.

Therefore, in spite of the international attention the Chibok incident drew and the gender dimension it first opened in Boko Haram insurgence, it was much more than regular day in the office or business as usual for Boko Haram. It was motivated primarily by the need to strike at what the sect saw as the heart of the infidels in the Northeast. Despite being one of the most discussed actions of Boko Haram, most narratives in both the mainstream academic literature and in the media have glossed over the historical cum religious forces that motivated Boko Haram to carry out its most audacious abduction in Chibok. Historically, Chibok consistently presented one of the few but most prominent examples of the inroads made by colonial Christianity into supposedly Islam

heartlands of the Northeast. Thus, Chibok was a well-known colonial centre of Christianity, missionary activities and even the dreaded western civilization. In this sense, the town boasts of a huge Christian population which should be considered a rarity in the Islamic Northern Nigeria, given that these Christians were indigenous to the area and not migrants as one would find in other areas of the North like Kano. Therefore, in a significant measure, Chibok nullifies and affronts the image of a monolithic Islamic Northern Nigeria.

In this situation, western education thrived in the area and schools established by the missionaries produced citizens deemed proficient in the ways of the West. This situation was not helped (in terms of drawing the ire of Boko Haram) by the fact that in the early 2010s when other educational institutions in Borno state were being forced to shut down in fear of Boko Haram, the Government School in Chibok was open and quickly became some kind of haven for even students from other areas of the state determined to forge ahead despite the uncertainty in their environment. Chibok in 2014 was not just a good example of the inroads made by western education and civilization but stood prominently as an affront to the desire of Boko Haram to Islamize the whole of Nigeria. In this case, it was framed by Boko Haram as a historical oddity bequeathed on the North by colonial Christianity, which deserves to be dealt a heavy blow in pursuance of the jihad and anti-innovation ideology of the sect.

In addition to the above, the Chibok offensive was aptly seen by Boko Haram as a ladder to enhanced prominence both nationally and beyond. As correctly read by the insurgents, the 15 April 2014 abduction of the Chibok school girls transformed Boko Haram from a local sect to an internationally known and dreaded group, now compared with such globally known terrorist groups as the ISIS, the Taliban and even the African champions, al-Shabaab. Most of the global prominence of the Boko Haram derived from the massive social media campaign to bring the girls back (#bring back our girls) which drew a good number of internationally prominent figures.

After two years of the abduction of these girls and a not too impressive effort by the Nigerian authorities in tracking their whereabouts in spite of a massive local and international concern and civil activism, a new video on YouTube showing the Chibok girls emerged on 14 August 2016.

This was an 11-minute video of the sect with around 50 of the Chibok girls. Boko Haram subsequently made an offer of prisoner exchange to the government with the girls (an offer that was later well-received by the #Bring Back our Girls group and some of the parents of the abducted school girls who saw nothing wrong with exchanging these young girls for some of the Boko Haram prisoners being held by the government). The hooded man in the video stated that a number of the girls have been killed by airstrikes by the Nigerian military and the video zeroed in on bodies littered on the floor (CNN report, 14 August 2016; Channels TV News, 14 August 2016; The Punch 2016a).

The army on behalf of the government soon after declared three people wanted in connection with the situation and location of the girls. These people are Ahmed Salkida (aka Ambassador) (a journalist strongly linked with breaking Boko Haram stories over time and to who the URL of the 14 August video was first sent), Aisha Wakil (aka Mama Boko Haram) and Ahmed Bakolori. It was Salkilda who claimed to have received the video link from Boko Haram and tweeted this fact on his tweeter handle. Meanwhile, the army denied the accusation that its air strikes have killed some of the girls saying such strikes were carried out with precision in order to avoid collateral damages. A couple (Mr. and Mrs. Kawo Yakubu) identified the girl who pleaded in the video for the government to listen to the group's demand and free them (through prisoner exchange) as their own daughter who was one of those abducted from Chibok.

Apparently, the army felt that the three people it initially declared wanted had information on the location of the girls. Salkilda, in particular, is said to have received this form of exclusive videos from Boko Haram once or twice in the past. Beyond the army's obvious demonization of Salkida, he has over the years appeared especially closer to Boko Haram than other journalists. Explanations for this obvious affinity were quick in coming from different quarters in Nigeria. Among these explanations from various quarters include: perhaps, he was the first that won the trust of the sect or he may have a much more sinister or dubious connection to the group or those close to the group. After all, this is Nigeria where things do not always seem what they are or in what is captured in popular culture on the streets of Nigeria thus, "the more you look, the less you see". However, it is left to Salkilda to prove that he is either a courageous

and perceptive journalist or a Boko Haram collaborator as the Nigerian army thinks.[9]

Meanwhile, it was reported the next day that Salkilda away to the UAE had called and asked for a flight ticket from the government to enable him return to Nigeria and answer the call of the army while the other two persons had reported swiftly to the Nigerian army in Maiduguri (Bakolori) and Abuja (Aisha Wakil) (see The Punch 2016b). The three claimed innocence, however, Aisha Wakil claimed to know the Boko Haram boys and had even at some point volunteered to facilitate a meeting between some of the sect commanders and the army which the army ignored (see The Punch 2016b).

In the view of a social analyst, the fanfare and excitement in government circles surrounding the rescue (reportedly by a vigilante group who found her wandering at the edge of the dreaded Sambisa Forest with a four-month baby and a man who claimed to be her husband. The man was later exposed as one of her Boko Haram abductors) of 19-year-old Chibok school girl Amina Ali Nkeki on the 17 May 2015 would make one believe that all the abducted school girls have been rescued and not one odd female among them (Ndibe 2016). The analyst goes to state that the excitement recreated quite a good number of counter-narratives from outside the government ranging from those who insisted that the whole thing was an abject hoax, a government stage-managed show to the belief that the entire Chibok girls saga never happened in the first place (Ndibe 2016).

The point is that the joy of the government starting from the governor of Borno state, Kashim Shettima to the President of Nigeria, Muhammad Buhari who made a show of full media coverage of Amina being feted at both the state government house and Aso Rock Villa of the president in an uncanny sense reveal the glaring incapacity of the government to have dealt squarely with the Boko Haram problem much earlier. Incidentally, and in spite of the take-over of the role of finders by the Nigerian army, Amina was reportedly found by a vigilante group. Therefore, in some sense, the euphoria over the accidental rescue of one girl out of over 200 others (then) makes one wonder about the mind-set of the government and its agencies in the fight against the Boko Haram. As Ndibe (2016: 48) critically averred, "for me, the question isn't

whether Amina represents a political ruse but why the military establishment of Africa's most populous country hasn't been able to comb Sambisa Forest for more than 200 school girls abducted more than two years ago. I am amazed that the military and the political authorities would make such fuss over the accidental not planned-rescue of a solitary captive … What kind of mindset would see what happened-the rescue of one out of 219 still missing girls-an occasion to blow the trumpet?"

Quite a lot have happened between 2015 and 2017 with regards to the Chibok girls. The most important being that over half of the girls have been accounted for mainly through negotiations and suspected prisoner swap between the Shekau led Boko Haram and the government of Nigeria. As at the last count, a little over 200 of the girls have been accounted for.[10] However, some of these girls remain unaccounted for and as the government security agencies continually claim to be engaged in mopping-up the remnants of the sect (since 2016) one wonders what has become the fate of these unaccounted for girls. Informed guesses would range from believing the story of the conversion of some of these girls, the use of these girls for suicide bombing to even the remote but not far-fetched possibility that some of them may have become collateral casualties in the war between the military and the sect.

Notes

1. Other sources would suggest this clash was between the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) and Boko Haram or between the combined forces of Operation Flush and the FRSC which seems most likely.
2. Personal interview with repented Boko Haram activist, Ademu Alih (Gwoza, 21 April 2016).
3. The Ibn Taymiyyah mosque in the old railway quarters compound of the Boko Haram.
4. Personal interview, Ahmad Ibn Anas (Gwoza, 14 August 2016).
5. Personal interview, Pastor Hosea John (Gwoza, 18 April 2016).
6. Personal interview, Aliyu Danbaba (Maiduguri, 17 August 2016).
7. FGD session with adult males conducted at the LGEA primary school, Madimagari, Maiduguri (17 August 2016).

8. Serah refers to Serah Luka, the second Chibok girl reportedly rescued by the military barely two days after the case of Amina. However, the identity of Serah as genuinely one of the Chibok school girls has been refuted by both the Chibok parents and bring back our girls activists.
9. Salkida has since exonerated and redeemed himself in the eyes of the Nigerian authorities.
10. An estimated 276 Chibok school girls were abducted in the 2014 raid by Boko Haram.

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8

Between Terrorism and Innovative Proselytization

Boko Haram in spite of the tendency to now simply dismiss it as a terrorist group unquestionably took off from a desire for a new form of Islamic practice in Nigeria and thus embodied what can be seen as 'innovative' albeit often unsavoury attempt at fundamentalist Islamic proselytization. The later remaking of Boko Haram came after years of innovative proselytization by the group. A good understanding of the group must be nuanced by appreciation of this transformation and recognition of the fact that the group even when labelled terrorist saw its actions as driven by the actions of the state and its agents. This is not to deny the fact that from the onset as already discussed, Boko Haram viewed the modern state in Nigeria as irrelevant and irresponsive to socio-economic challenges of the citizens and as propping up a decadent political class oblivious to both religious (Islamic) dictates and social contract with the citizens. It would be advisable to see Boko Haram first as a religious group with some 'innovative' or 'new' perspectives on Islam and later on as a religious group tilting on the brink of terrorism. In both cases, the group has undoubted fundamentalist credentials and sought the establishment of a new religio-political organization as most other millennial groups.

E. E. Anugwom, *The Boko Haram Insurgence In Nigeria*, New Directions in Islam,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96959-6_8

Innovative Proselytization: What Is New and Strange About Boko Haram

One thread that resonated widely with the interviews and the FGDs with gatekeepers and community members in both Gwoza and Maiduguri is the perceived difference or in some instances peculiarity and strangeness of Boko Haram in comparison with other Islamic sects in the society. While there is no doubting the fact that Boko Haram's roots lie in Sunni Islam which is widespread in Nigeria, it adopted a very strict Salafist interpretation of this version of Islam that is both unique and very separate from that embraced by the broader 'ummah'. The Salafism of Boko Haram is often seen as 'ultra-Salafism' or an extremely rigid but radical version of Salafism.

What really emerges from the above is the need for a closer and broader re-examination of Boko Haram as a true Islamic sect. Apparently, quite a good number of people I interviewed regard Boko Haram in the extreme as not really an Islamic sect anymore (meaning in most cases since 2009). For instance, "I am not sure that these people are really Muslims [Boko Haram]. At the beginning one felt it was a religious thing but now nobody is sure again. How can they be bombing mosques, killing both Muslims and Christians? They are more like people who are not well, I mean they cannot be Muslims. This is not Islam at all. In fact, it is either that they are ordinary blood thirsty people using religion as cover or they read the Qur'an upside down. This is not the behaviour of Muslims at all, we are not monsters, never."[1]

The above sentiments are equally supported by the feeling, "Boko Haram was a secluded group and had no problem with other religious groups. They were secluded in the sense that they were withdrawing from the larger society by making their own congregational prayers quite different from that of the other communities, live in a camp in some places and things like that. I don't think we have ever had a sect similar to Boko Haram in this state before."[2] Also, another opined that Boko Haram had a peaceful relationship with other sects, "the relationship was peaceful, although most of the groups later became jealous because of the rising popularity of *Jama'atu Allis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad* and instigated

the governments against us."[3] There is no denying that some of the respondents felt that Boko Haram was on the right track of Islam.

In spite of the above, the FGD participants saw the relationship as largely far from cordial or peaceful given the mayhem the sect visited on known and respected Muslim leaders that opposed it. Thus, "Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmoud Adam (Rahimahullah) and other scholars went through hell in the hands of the sect. Also, Sheikh Isa Fantani of Bauchi and the sect were in conflict even before 2009. Late Mohammed Yusuf and his followers never listen to any other ideology or interpretations of Islam."[4]

But what is really important is to examine if the mere adoption of ultra-Salafism debunks the religious claims of Boko Haram, especially since the group has been consistent about its aspiration towards true Islam and unadulterated Shari'a. In other words, given their rapacious capacity for violence and even the large-scale killing of Muslims, can Boko Haram be really seen as purveyors of the Qur'an and devotees to its teachings? In looking at the above, it is important to understand that such other equally violent terrorist groups like the al-Shabaab, the al-Qaeda and IS all lay claim to be purveyors of the Qur'an and knights in the vanguard of the rebirth of true Islam globally. These groups see themselves, in spite of their reprehensible violence as the true icons of religion in contemporary society and envisage a certain urgency about their mission to achieve global Islamism.

In this sense, the contention of Moghadam (2009) that groups that employ terrorism in the name of Islam should not be necessarily seen as deviant sects but rather as groups guided by a radical interpretation of the religion (Islam) becomes apt. However, while Moghadam's opinion is instructive here, there is still a need to understand the import of the concept of deviance as a sociological tool of reference. Deviance is a social label usually employed by society on those it sees as not located in the mainstream of its normative values. But even as a social label, deviance does not always imply negative and/or destructive tendencies since society regularly achieves growth and development through the activities of those perceived as deviant at the onset.

In other words, deviance is often tantamount to questioning the *status quo* or agitating for radical changes in the society. In essence, Boko Haram may even represent both extremes of deviance and this would still not

satisfactorily answer the question on whether or not it is a genuine religious group. It would appear, therefore, that in spite of the violent inversion imbued in its methods, Boko Haram portrays both millennialism and 'reversionism' often seen as critical elements of religious devotion even in mainstream Islam. Therefore, there is a need to make a critical distinction between the principles of Boko Haram and its methods of operation. While these principles are not so much as misguided as they are radical in nature, the methods employed by the group to achieve its goals are clearly counter-mainstream Islam.

Part of Boko Haram's claim to innovativeness can be located in the extensive use of the media, especially since the post-Yusuf era (see, Anugwom 2018). Thus, while Boko Haram may be seen as resembling past Islamic fundamentalist organizations in Nigeria to an extent, it has deployed the media extensively in the effort to achieve its goals. Accordingly, "Boko Haram (western education is sin) currently operating in the country is a mutation of the fundamentalist groups from the past trying to achieve their goals with new name, new technology and global collaboration from Al-Qaida networks around the Mediterranean and Middle East" (Simons 2015: 73).

The Terrorism Credentials of the Boko Haram

Boko Haram and the Generation of Fear and Panic

One of the defining attributes of terrorist groups is the generation and sustenance of fear and panic (terror) amongst members of a given society. Boko Haram even as its activities have greatly waned since 2015 has been able to breed terror amongst the Nigerian public, especially those in the Northeast. Since 2013, it has veered off making war on the government and its agents and has become more or less a terrorist group with intent on spreading fear and panic in the general public. The possible terrorism niche of the group has spread so far that it is no longer a phenomenon limited geographically to the Northeast of Nigeria but affects other areas of the country and all spheres of life.

The sect seems to have gradually gravitated towards terrorism since 2010. It has also been making increasing use of female suicide bombers, especially those in their teens in carrying out its attacks. Very emblematic example of this trend is the double bomb blasts which occurred on the 18th of November 2016 in two different states in the North of Nigeria. On this day, the first suicide bomb exploded in the popular GSM market in Kano in which about 12 people were killed and over 40 injured. That same afternoon another suicide bomb went off in Yola, the Adamawa state capital killing about 20 people. In both incidents which were widely reported by mainstream media, the suicide bombers were young girls whose ages ranged from 13 to 15 years. Incidentally, the bombings added to the speculation that some of the kidnapped Chibok girls have been successfully converted to Islam as Boko Haram had earlier claimed and are now willing martyrs to the cause of the group.

While this speculation has some merits, I believe that the incidents portrayed the strategic re-alignment of Boko Haram in the face of renewed and more rigourous campaigns by the Nigerian military. The use of young girls, therefore, was a ploy by the group to evade security dragnet of the military and easily penetrate civilian populations without any suspicion. Given the normal situation of women dressing in flowing gowns and *Hijab*, usually seen as out of close scrutiny and 'leering' by men especially in public places, even surveillance mounted by the security agencies is easily beaten by these young girls.

Thus, a recent development in the activities of Boko Haram, especially since 2014, has been the use of young girls for suicide bombing. A puzzle associated with this has been on how and where the sect got these girls who reportedly were as young as 9 and 11 years in some cases. While there is no use underestimating the impact of the sect's proselytization and even the allure of its main tenets on Islam, there is some doubt whether these girls voluntarily or consciously offered themselves for this assignment. Simons (2015) contends that some of the Chibok girls who refused to change religion or marry the fundamentalists may have been used (and killed) in this capacity. The above thinking achieves traction in the fact that on occasions, the bombs straddled on the girls were detonated by some accomplices watching from a distance. This was the case in the Sabon Gari market bombing in Kano in 2015 where the two girls

involved were dropped off by a van that waited until the detonation before zooming off.

It must be mentioned that Boko Haram is perhaps the first Islamic terrorist group in West Africa to deploy young women into the field as suicide bombers. The use of these innocent looking young girls was some kind of game-changer that caught both security agencies and the larger Nigerian public unawares. These young killers are effective and exacted heavy casualties between late 2014 and late 2015. Unconfirmed reports have it that about 90 of these young female suicide bombers had killed over 500 people and injured many more. The girls usually operated in teams of two, perhaps in the bid to inflict maximum damage. In most cases, more casualties resulted from the good number of public first responders to an initial or primary blast that got consumed by the secondary blast from the second member of the team. It is a classic suicide bombing strategy but very effectively used by Boko Haram.

Children and Women as Pawns in the Insurgence

What the foregoing discussion underlines is the fact that women and children are the greatest losers in the Boko Haram insurgence. The plight of women and children in the face-off between the government and Boko Haram forces since 2009 has been compounded by the fact that they are exploited and used as ready-made pawns ironically by both sides. A classical government strategy in the conflict is that wives and children of Boko Haram members are used as effective baits to lure out Boko Haram members or weaken them. The government has embarked on the apprehension and detention of wives and children of suspected Boko Haram fighters and other women and children suspected to have helped the group in one way or the other, often releasing some of them when in need of softening the stance of the sect towards a negotiated settlement of the conflict. A good example of the above measure by the government was reported by Okocha et al. (2013) in the run-up to the botched ceasefire and amnesty discussions in 2013. In this report in This Day Newspaper, the government had towards the end of May 2013 as a sign of goodwill towards Boko Haram and in the pursuit of possible amnesty then still

under discussion officially released 58 women and children in Borno and Yobe states (see also VOA 2013).

As other reports of the 2013 release show, some of the women and children freed were wives and children of top Boko Haram commanders. It was reported that among those freed were: one of Shekau's wives—Hassana Yakubu, one of the wives of the late Yusuf (see, Idris 2013). The women and children are usually accused of having helped Boko Haram militants. In the 2013 case, Governor Shettima of Borno state promised that the women would be given vocational training in order to help their re-integration into the society while the parents of the released children would receive cash incentives on the condition that the children should be in school. Apart from the above instance, women and children, especially those identified as wives and family members of Boko Haram fighters, have also been used as subjects of prisoner exchange between the government and Boko Haram. While the government would officially never acknowledge this, Boko Haram has repeatedly offered it in critical situations over the years suggesting that in spite of the official denials from government, the use of these women and children for prisoner swaps or exchange remains valid. In the most recent case, Boko Haram had towards the end of August 2016 offered to release the abducted Chibok girls in exchange for wives and children of the members of the group being held by the government. An offer that was apparently taken up leading to the release of over 80 of these girls in May 2017.

For the respondents, there was almost consensus that women and children have been victims of the insurgence. Hence, "as a women leader, I can authoritatively tell you that women are the big victims of Boko Haram crisis. Many have lost their husbands and children, even houses, and are displaced and might never return to this L.G.A again."[5] Another female respondent narrated her own ordeal as a result of the insurgence, "I have lost a child to the crisis and have been living in Maiduguri IDP camp since 2014. I just returned to Gwoza last week with my husband. We [women] have suffered a lot."[6] For the FGD participants, the agreement was captured thus, "girl-children were kidnapped, forcefully married and some were used as suicide bombers. One keeps wondering if at all Islam permits these activities of the group but to the best of my knowledge, Islam is against all these things."

In addition to the difficulties and trauma visited on women by Boko Haram, the Nigerian military has also left its own marks of trauma in these women. Apart from the reported cases of rape and sexual assault by the Nigerian military, there has been cases of young women made pregnant by these soldiers and abandoned subsequently. In the views of one of my respondents, a mother of three teenage girls, "our young girls have been lured away by soldiers who promise them all sorts of things. Some of these young girls are now pregnant and the supposed fathers are nowhere to be found. They are soldiers who have been reposted or simply disappeared. Women suffered from both Boko Haram and even from the soldiers. Sometimes you do not know which is worse since the soldiers also killed some innocent men and made women widows."[7] Incidentally while there have been some efforts, especially at the prodding of international forces to examine the case of rapes and sexual assault, there has been no effort at addressing the case of young women made pregnant and abandoned by these soldiers as well as the growing number of fatherless children produced from the sexual irresponsibility of these soldiers who were purportedly sent to protect the people.

According to Comolli (2015: 4), "children are paying for this insurgency in multiple ways. In a sickening turn of events, it became clear in 2014 that children had been selected by the Boko Haram for suicide missions." Apart from the above exploitation of children and using them as expendable weapons, the insurgence has occasioned severe socio-physical deprivation for children ranging from severe malnutrition, diseases to outright physical and sexual abuses. A commentator on a current affairs programme on Channels Television (popular TV station in Nigeria) in July 2017 likened the situation of children in IDP camps in the Northeast to the situation during the 1967–1970 civil war in Nigeria.

From Targeted Assassinations to Senseless Violence

Even though Boko Haram is often accused of unleashing senseless violence, the group has repeatedly countered this. In its views, it only attacks enemies of the group and their collaborators. It is the contention of the sect that even its attacks on beer parlours are not really because of the fact

that people go there to drink beer but because it had reliable information that it were soldiers and policemen who gather in these joints to drink. So the attacks in spite of what Boko Haram sees as mere propaganda by the government and its supporters were aimed at the soldiers who were fighting Boko Haram. In one reported video message, Abubakar Shekau was quoted as saying, "we are just fighting those who are fighting us, soldiers and police and the rest; and anybody, even if he is a learned Muslim teacher, if we confirm that he exposes us to the government, his children will become orphans and his wife will become a widow, in God's name. That is our way. But the ordinary people in town, we seek your forgiveness; I swear we will not harm you" (Abubakar Shekau in Sheme 2011).

The obvious take here is that the resolve of Boko Haram not to attack ordinary people or engage in senseless and imprecise killings withered severely from the moment the onslaught of the military started taking a heavy toll on the group. In other words, while the above principle may have formed part of the rules of engagement of Boko Haram, the need to survive and recruit fighters for its cause in the later years of the conflict may have put the above resolve on hold as cases of indiscriminate violence and forced recruitment of fighters who were given the option to either join the sect or die show. Some of those who later became the nemesis of Boko Haram in the form of the CJTF were former members of the sect who were coerced to join. As one of such people narrated, "I was made to understand under gun point and in the background of the raging fire that my village had become to either join or be beheaded. I had no option then but I thank God for the soldiers; I am now helping fight these evil doers."[8]

Boko Haram, unlike other Islamic fundamentalist groups in Nigeria, is also accused of using targeted assassinations to eliminate opponents, especially Islamic clerics and local politicians who speak out against the group and those who are perceived as having ratted out on the group during the 2009 face-off. A case in point was the assassination of the popular Islamic scholar and former teacher of Yusuf, Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam who was also an ardent Salafist. Ja'afar had publicly denounced Boko Haram and warned it against confronting the state and becoming nothing but religious demagogues. Ja'afar was shot in April 2007 while

praying in a mosque in Kano. It was largely believed that this heinous act was performed by members of the sect and it was on account of the denunciation of the group by Ja'afar.

Boko Haram is known much like Islamic fundamentalist groups elsewhere for the heinous and barbaric manners with which it killed perceived enemies. The most common form of execution is to slaughter people like rams, cutting open their throats and allowing them to bleed out. Even at death, the group usually go ahead to burn the corpse, throw the corpses into wells or rivers, burial in mass graves and so on. Incidentally, the mutilation of bodies and using women as free bounties of war go against the spirit of Islam and the precepts set out clearly in the Qur'an.

The use of the unpopular IEDs has meant that Boko Haram apart from the obvious illogic of its targets also care nothing about collateral damages. This would really explain why it has adopted varied styles in ensuring that its bombs go off and inflict as much damage as possible. Apart from the known Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) and the Body Borne Improvised Explosive Device (BBIED), Boko Haram also innovated into using other popular means of transportation for strapping their improvised explosive devices. Therefore, one can talk about the usage of such things as the Motorcycle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (MBIED) and even the Tricycle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (TBIED).

Another distinguishing feature of the insurgence is that it has killed more Muslims than any other Islamic fundamentalist uprising in the last four decades in Nigeria. In spite of the evident targeting of businesses and persons from the South, the Boko Haram debacle has consumed more Muslim lives than any other ethnic or social group. This situation is related to the huge role of the 'takfir' (also 'takfiri') in the ideology of the group. The takfir makes it obligatory for true Muslims or believers to kill others seen as practicing fake or adulterated version of Islam. Therefore, the group has killed even renowned clerics and scholars of Islam and slaughtered thousands of Muslims perceived as polluting Islam.

The catalogue of the atrocities of Boko Haram is common fare in most media outlets globally and even on social media and this should not detain us here. However, it may be necessary to state that the most deadly operation of the group is probably the series of operation carried out between January 2 and 7, 2015 against the town of Baga in the Northeast

of Nigeria, which shares borders with Cameroon Republic. The series of coordinated attacks by Boko Haram revealed not only the extent of sophisticated armoury available to the group but also its ability to exercise military-style coordination in attacks on perceived enemies. The group in the attack overran the military base of the Multi-national Joint Task Force in the town (troops and support personnel from Nigeria, Niger and Chad) and engaged in the gore slaughter of civilians. According to Amnesty sources, close to 2000 civilians were killed in this massive operation. However, the official Nigerian government sources put the figure of those killed at about 150. There is doubt that such a massive operation by an extreme violent group like Boko Haram over five days would not only occasion the death of 150 people.

The Media as Agents of Terrorism for Boko Haram

Apart from the well-noted nexus between the media and terrorism (see Rohner and Frey 2007; Frey 2004), Boko Haram has found the media, especially important in its insurgence. The media is critically important to Boko Haram as it provides the avenue for its indoctrination and recruitment of new members. As has been opined, "its method of recruitment is largely through indoctrination. It has also recruited among the escapees of prison jail breaks it has mounted in the past, in addition to using the Internet for the propagation of its extremist ideologies" (Onuoha 2015: 189).

What the above touches on is that the sect has seen the media as critical in its various operations. Apart from the undoubted recognition by the sect of the value of the media in its terrorism objective, it has also seen the media as veritable sources for recruitment of members and mobilization.

While there is no doubt that there is a growing globalization of media antics even amongst terrorist groups, nowhere is this universalization of media styles and antics more obvious than in the case of Boko Haram. Apart from a chilling but effective utilization of social media in spreading its gospel and often disseminating its capacity for unimaginable horror,

the leader, Shekau has been very adept in aping the communications antics of such other global terror groups as the al-Qaeda and the IS. But beyond the often unimpressive rehash of the media antics of these groups, Boko Haram has also in some instances responded to the battle charge of these groups. For instance, the 2011 suicide bombing of the UN Building in Abuja by an auto-mechanic was motivated by the al-Qaeda injunction to its members and allies to attack the far enemy.

Another profound use of the media by Boko Haram can be seen in the case of the capture of the town of Gwoza in Gwoza LGA of Borno state which was visually recorded by the sect. The video showed the detailed trouncing of the half-prepared Nigerian army in July 2014. It also showed how the rag-tag Boko Haram fighters in their rough and dirty kaftans came from their forest base in Sambisa and surrounding caves in the hills and swiftly overran the Nigerian military base in Gwoza. These thin looking young men with shaved heads on which were perched loose turbans looted the armoury of the military to the whooping cries of 'Allahu Akbar'. This attack is one of the most successful of Boko Haram and prompted its leader Shekau to state that Gwoza is now at the heart of a new Islamic state. He went ahead to pronounce Gwoza an Islamic caliphate.

The smart utilization of the media has been seen in one respect as manifestation of the sophistication of the sect and its transformation from a merely local fighting group to what has been dubbed, another beast, which has become more international in its ambitions (Meehan and Spier 2011: 17). According to the above report presented to the US House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security in 2011, Boko Haram now boasts of increased use of internet forums and social media outlets which it sees as not only signalling sophistication but equally increases both the potential and international ambitions of the group.

Boko Haram showed this adeptness in using the media very early in its history. At this early stage before 2009, the group had shown a thorough understanding of the media especially new media forms in broadcasting information as well as influencing and shaping opinions, especially among the youth. The founder of the group, Yusuf made use of video/audio tapes and blue tooth connections in reaching out and spreading his

message about the necessity of jihad. Using these media in one instance he circulated a speech immediately after the helmet incidence with the FRSC and police:

> What we are facing now is a new catastrophe, like the one Allah told us: And fear a trial which will not strike those who have wronged among you exclusively and know that Allah is severe in penalty. In Nigeria in the North in particular there were many catastrophes like the organized war against the Muslims by the Christian group in Nigeria, with the help of the infidel government of the country (…) they killed thousands of Muslims, burned their money, kidnapped their daughters and forced them to do bad things. Now they come up with a new system in the Borno Maiduguri Area. The ruler of that area, who is an infidel, unjust and a renegade person, did not rule according to what Allah has sent. (From a collection of four speeches by Yusuf quoted in Walker 2016: 141)

However, the media releases of Boko Haram, especially the vituperations of the current leader, showed severe instances of contradiction (and even confusion) especially between the goals of the organization and the methods it adopted. For instance, while the leader often said the group would neither kill ordinary people nor Muslims, the wholesale bombing of villages and the execution of males who refused to join the group contradict this. Also voicing a total belief in the principle of *takfir* (also, *takfiri*) in line with the ideology of global Islamism or jihadi groups and at the same time promising not to harm other Muslims outside the fold of the sect is surely a huge contradiction. This is because the *takfir* is used by global Islamic fundamentalist organizations like the al-Qaeda to legitimate the killing of Muslims seen as purveyors of corruption in Muslim dominated states.

Notes

1. Personal interview with Ahmed (18 July 2016—Maiduguri, Nigeria).
2. Personal interview, Abubakar Mallam (Gwoza, 18 April 2016).
3. Personal interview with a 43-year-old Boko Haram sympathizer, Muhammad Lawal (Maiduguri, 10 August 2016).

4. FGD session with adult males in Gwoza (2 May 2016).
5. Hajia Mairo, 55-year-old women leader in Gwoza (20 April 2016).
6. Personal interview, Hauwa Shettima, mother of six children [now five] (25 April 2016).
7. Personal Interview with Hajia Fatima in Maiduguri (28 July 2016).
8. Personal interview with 28-year-old CJTF member (Gwoza, 5 May 2016).

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9

Boko Haram and the Secular Threat to Nigeria

One often forgotten dimension of the Boko Haram insurgence is the threat it poses to Nigeria's secular state status. Although too much effort and emphasis have been invested in labelling and responding to the insurgence from a largely terrorist perspective, there is no denying the fact that it raises major questions regarding both the aptness and sustainability of Nigeria's secular state status. These questions assume even bigger significance when one appreciates that historically Islamic fundamentalist uprisings in the North of Nigeria have overtime gnawed at the same fundamental question—the continued desirability of secularity in the nation. It goes without saying that Islamic fundamentalist uprisings are in effect undermining of the capacity of the state to continue as a secular entity.

Nigeria is and has always been defined as a secular state. For instance, the current 1999 Constitution of Nigeria defines the Nigerian state as secular in the sense that there will be no state religion and guarantees both freedom of religion and no discrimination against citizens on the basis of religious beliefs held by such citizens. The constitution in Section 10 states that neither Nigeria nor any of its sub-units (states or local

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government areas) shall adopt any religion as the state religion (see Nigeria Constitution 1999: 24).

It is, therefore, in order to examine the impact of various Islamic fundamentalist or sectarian conflicts on an ideally Nigerian secular state. Even though Nigeria is defined constitutionally as a secular state, the actual practice of secularity has often been affected by religion. In this case, Islamic sectarian conflicts which flare up now and then may be expected to influence the nature and practice of secularity in the country. Incidentally, familiarity with the modern history of Nigeria beginning from the early nineteenth-century Jihad shows that religious conflict or violence is a consistent factor in the development of the nation. The influence of religion in this regard has been essentially negative and antithetical to state-building efforts. As a matter of fact, the threat which religious conflicts portend for Nigeria's development has been appreciated by commentators who see the coterminous division of the country along geographical and religious lines into North and South as harbinger of unending nationhood dilemma for the country.

Thus, Awofeso (1987: 18) contends, "history had completed its conspiracy on Nigeria by bequeathing two world religions on the country: Christianity in the south, Islam in the north." Perhaps, the history of Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria can be seen as embodying the basic question: what is the compatibility of the pure Islamic faith with a non-Shari'a socio-political environment. In other words, to what extent can true Muslims practice their faith to the fullest in a non-Shari'a secular setting? Ruminations on these questions are made current by a realization that the quest for Shari'a and perhaps a socio-political system fashioned essentially on Islam have become recurrent planks of violent and destructive fundamentalist activism in Nigeria's political history. These conflicts are as historically rooted as they are contemporaneous in Nigeria. As Kukah (1993) poignantly argues the Shari'a project which can be traced to the pre-colonial Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio aims at ultimately building a state in which politics and governance would be determined by the rules of Islamic religion in Nigeria.

The 'Boko Haram' group, which is the latest embodiment of the violent and puritan desire of fundamentalist Islam in Nigeria, is ostensibly against all forms of Western education which it sees as the roots of evil in

today's society. The group as alluringly different as it may appear is essentially in tandem with other forms of religious conflict in the Islamic North of Nigeria before it. Therefore, Boko Haram has antecedents in earlier Islamic fundamentalist activism in Nigeria. This does not deny the fact that it deserves closer scrutiny since as Soyinka (2009) succinctly argues it is likely the expression of a malignant outcrop of fanaticism and intolerance.

The need for a careful assessment of the effect of Islamic fundamentalist movements on Nigeria's secular claims cannot be over-emphasized since these movements have at various key periods in the nation's history raised big questions about the corporate existence of the nation. Religious uprisings like the recent 'Boko Haram' is seen in some quarters as the reflection of a Nigerian state overwhelmed by the challenges of building nationhood and where the acute scarcity confronting citizens make them easy preys in the hands of religious zealots touting one belief or another.

Theorizing the Secular State in Nigeria

In order to further appreciate the impact of Boko Haram on the secular credentials of Nigeria, it may be helpful to examine the secular state idea in Nigeria from the perspective of both religion and extant social theory. The effect of religion on the secularity question in Nigeria can be addressed largely from the nature of citizenship fostered by the Nigerian state. Generally, there are two competing ideas of citizenship in contemporary social science debate. These are the liberal perspective and the pluralist viewpoint. The liberal perspective, which is often seen as ideal, is anchored on a view of citizenship as reflecting the legal membership of a nation-state. In this case, individuals are perceived as having equal moral worth and government is expected to accord equal respect to individuals (Rawls 1971; Anugwom 2005). In effect, this means that individuals have equal rights and entitlements in spite of ethnic or religious affiliations. Interestingly, the liberal viewpoint underplays the importance of both ethnic and religious factors since all rights and entitlements ideally emanate from and are guaranteed by the state.

The liberal perspective logically gives rise to constitutions that have no peculiar obligation to any sub-national or religious grouping. As a result, such constitutions usually guarantee equal rights and opportunities for all citizens irrespective of social, cultural, religious, geographical or ethnic backgrounds. It is in such a circumstance that the nation-state is conceived typically as the arena of citizen formation and practice (Halisi et al. 1998). Directly resulting from this is that primordial orientations like ethnicity and religion become largely irrelevant while the nation-state becomes the bastion of solidarity for all citizens.

In opposition to the liberal notion, pluralists contend that the modern state is basically multi-national and as such sub-national membership both ethno-religious and otherwise should be the building block for political membership in the wider state arena (see Ejobowah 2000). This viewpoint while recognizing the importance of the sub-national community in providing a primary identity to the individual may promote a consciousness of this primordial group that breeds religious separatism.

However, the pluralist notion of citizenship which is anchored largely on the recognition of the sub-national level and even religious affiliations which imbue citizens with primary identity before the larger nation-state may in reality approximate the Nigerian scenario. In other words, while constitutional instruments and even central leadership rhetoric favour a largely liberal perspective, Nigerians due to historical and social conditions of existence still show a predisposition towards identifying themselves first as members of sub-national groups and religions before claiming to be Nigerians.

In such a situation, even the best efforts at secularization and liberal constitution are regularly undermined by primordial factors like ethnicity and religion to which people feel they owe primary obligation before the nation-state. Undoubtedly, the declining relevance of the state, in terms of failure to guarantee minimum security to its citizens and engage in productive and equitable socio-economic development that address the ever-widening gap between the rich and poor as well as deepening urban poverty make sub-state allegiance and identification common among citizens. Thus,

> Nigeria, then, can be seen largely as a modern state in which primordial and clannish loyalties hold sway. Therefore people see their allegiance and

> commitment to their ethnic or social group of origin as paramount, and superior to national allegiance. This problem is by no means peculiar to Nigeria. Indeed, it is quite common in Africa. The problem has been traced to the fact that African states did not discard the characteristics of ethnic kingdoms before they were granted independence. (Anugwom 2008: 169)

The above has also not been helped by the seeming inability of the government after five decades of independence to deliver on the rule of law without pandering to ethnic, religious and sectional interests which incidentally rekindles endless primordial loyalties among its citizens and groups (see Idowu 1999).

The secularity of Nigeria must be appreciated against the nature of pre-independent Nigeria, and the fears of domination that threatened the merger of the different ethnic groups into one nation-state. Shortly before independence, Nigeria's multi-ethnic nature was the source of bickering and primordial politicking. The political equation and contest at that time pitted the three major ethnic groups—Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo—against each other. In this situation, the ethnic minorities were largely excluded. Eventually, the obvious marginalization of the ethnic minorities and their agitation against it led to the establishment of the popular Willinck's Commission by the colonial government. The aim of the commission was to look into the fears of the minorities. However, the Commission rejected the secession of the minorities, but recommended measures for integrating them into the mainstream of Nigerian politics.

In this sense, the whole notion of secularity was, therefore, another large wedge intended to prevent the domination of any group (religious or ethnic) by another or other groups. The distrust and suspicion underlying interethnic relations in Nigeria deteriorated further shortly after independence and led eventually to the 30-month civil war (1967–1970). Therefore, the secular state concept, which recognizes no state religion or belief system and guarantees freedom of belief, was seen as appropriate in the effort to cement the cracks in Nigeria's weak federation. The overarching basis of Nigeria's unity, as clearly perceived by the founding fathers, and even the colonial administration, was the recognition of basic differences among the various groups, but the building of a nation anchored on the consolidation of similarities.

Islamic Fundamentalism and Secular Challenge Overtime

Religion especially when its pursuit takes an all-out form and willingness to sacrifice everything else contradicts the expectation of modernity. Renowned social thinkers and classical philosophers like Karl Marx had seen religion as a fad that would eventually fade with time while Emile Durkheim saw it as a cohesive agent in traditional societies that would decline in relevance as new forms and agencies of cohesion emerge. But happenings in the world today, whether one views them in terms of the threat of a nuclear potential but religiously fundamental Iran or the threat of Islamic fundamentalists and terrorists in all major parts of the world suggest that these classical scholars either underestimated the power of religion or were socially constrained in their perception of religion. In fact, as Ellis and Haar (2004: 17) argue, "western-trained thinkers largely failed to foresee the resurgence of religion because they had made a series of wrong assumptions about the place of religion in regimes of modernization." In other words, religion especially the largely virulent Islamic fundamentalism has become a phenomenon modern nations including Nigeria must contend with even as new forms of individualism and anti-religious orientations take root globally.

Therefore, the promotion and sustenance of secularity in a modern nation like Nigeria must constantly deal with the particularism of religion and the anti-secular pull of fundamentalist religions. In this sense, secularity may not only be the non-promotion of state religion but more critically seeking some form of accommodation with religious trends like Islamic fundamentalism which actively contradict secularism. Thus, the definition of modernity or secularity as essentially leaving religion behind or as a social force structurally impaired by modernity (see Williamse 2006; Dawson 2006) can no longer work and portends a tendency towards potentially explosive social illusion. This may mean that there is need to take the notion of secularity beyond its largely Western cum Christianity focused provenance. Secularization generally privileges the belief that Christianity which promotes Western values and education would logically induce rationalization and considerable independence in

thought among populations and by so doing weaken the power and significance of affective associations like religion.

However, this thinking which emanated from a largely Christian background (as the West) in which a clear-cut separation between the sacred and the secular is always possible did not factor in the rise and spread of Islam which promotes religion as a total way of life and this often obfuscates the delineation between the secular and the sacred. Aside from religion, the cosmology of Africa privileges the fact that things are not always in the form of black and white. There are usually opaque and nether regions of here and then where things are neither white not black. The illusion of secular or modern society in which religion is largely impotent would have continued but for the global wake-up call which the Osama Bin Laden engineered attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001 became.

The enormous carnage of the attack, the daredevil nature of the effort and the extreme terror and trauma induced by it made it imperative that one path of development needs to be pursued in the modern world, that is, the nexus between fundamentalist religion and violence. In other words, the world suddenly recognized that centuries of the promotion of Western values, education and secularism has hardly taken the bite out of the resilience of religion to impose its significance in peculiar forms in human life. Incidentally, familiarity with the modern history of Nigeria beginning from the early nineteenth-century Jihad shows that religion especially violence and conflict webbed around it are consistent factors in the development of the nation. However, the influence of religion in this regard has been essentially negative and antithetical to state-building efforts in the country.

The apparent discord between secularity in Nigeria and Islam apart from having immediate roots in the fact that the jihad led by Uthman dan Fodio was both a religious and political liberation effort can be related to the remote nature and founding of the religion by the Prophet Muhammad in the early seventh century in Mecca. As scholars are quick to point out, Muhammad's spiritual drive was partially fuelled by socio-economic passion and the vision of Islam as the combination of spirituality with politics, economics and social mores (see Ali 2003; Goldschmidt and Davidson 2006). In this sense, Islam from its humble origins in

Mecca and within the vision of the founder did not envision any separation between religion and politics. Islam in both tenets and purposes is largely inconsistent with secularism. In fact, the common perception of Islam as a total way of life embodies the incontrovertible nature of Islam as a belief system that permeates all spheres of life and guides the actions of believers in these various spheres.

Given the above reality, Muhammad during his lifetime played the role of both political and religious leader and had unquestioned authority in both spheres. This is really a major difference from Christianity where, as explicitly shown by Christ in the New Testament of the Bible, the faithful are exhorted to recognize the difference between the spiritual and the secular and the non-mixture of both.[1] In spite of the fact that the struggle for political power at the demise of Muhammad which led to the first split in Islam between the Sunni (those loyal to the Umayyad Dynasty founded by Mu'awiyah) and Shia (followers of the fourth Caliph, Ali) muddled the waters of the inseparability of religion and politics, fanatical and orthodox Muslims have always hankered after establishing the ideal Muhammadian order wherever the faithful hold a significant majority. Further enabling the distinction between religion and politics in Islam has been the expansionist ambitions of Islamic leaders who after Muhammad had gone on to conquer neighbouring states and establish vast geographical empires.

The need for warlords for these conquests and the maintenance of order in the vast empires necessitated a gradual distinction or separation or roles between the religious leaders (caliphs) and the political leaders (Emirs, Sultans). However, this separation was neither clearly formalized nor legalized. Hence in some cases, both authorities were crystallized in the form of a very powerful Caliph or Sultan who had unquestioned authority over both spheres. As a matter of fact, what existed in cases of separation was a loose separation in spheres of activity and power. In this situation, there was an undefined and opaque distinction between the two that allowed the negotiation and diminishing of this thin line at the whims and caprices of charismatic and powerful individuals.

As the case of the Sokoto caliphate in Nigeria shows, in most cases, the spiritual authority was subordinated to the political authority and the belief is that power emanates from Allah and those with political power

are already spiritually endowed and favoured. Therefore, a political leader like the Sultan could also be a spiritual leader at the same time. Be that as it may, Mohammed Ayoob in an interesting contribution has shown how the practice of subordinating spiritual authority to political power characterized the early periods of the post-Muhammad Islamic society. In his views, "the distinction between temporal and religious affairs and the temporal authority's de facto primacy over the religious establishment continued throughout the reign of the three great Sunni dynasties- the Umayyad, the Abbasid, and the Ottoman" (Ayoob 2008: 11). Besides the evidence of history, the realities of the modern state made a separation of authority and roles between the political and the religious spheres inevitable.

Even though such a separation has always been de facto in nature, it is eagerly embraced by forward-thinking Islamist realists who are cognizant of the fact that the needs of the modern state can only be confounded by a retrogressive insistence on the amalgam of both spheres. However, this reality has not always been able to persuade Islamic fundamentalists and others ostensibly desirous of pure Islam of the futility of such a return to the Muhammadian era. Nowhere is this dilemma more apparent than in present Nigeria where the pursuit of extreme puritanical religious and political powers has generated constant tension and threatened the secularity of the state. Without doubt, while the thesis of the indivisibility of religion and politics in Islam (see Lewis 1990; Huntington 1998) remain valid especially in reference to the vision of Muhammad, historical developments show the emergence of robust though *de facto* distinction between the two spheres in many Islamic empires. But this reality has not really hindered fanatical clerics and fiery Islamic scholars from advocating a pure Islam devoid of both this distinction and anchored on unadulterated Shari'a as the case in Nigeria seems to suggest. These clerics and puritanical Islamists use this as the plank of their advocacy and foment social conflict and violence in the process.

Probably, nothing has threatened the continuity of Nigeria's secularity more recently than the official promulgation of Islamic Shari'a as the customary and criminal law code of the tiny Zamfara state in the North of Nigeria in October 1999. The Shari'a law's transformation from a peculiarly customary law for Northerners to a criminal law applicable to

all people living in Zamfara and other states of the North that quickly followed suit in adopting Shari'a was a watershed in the history of Nigeria's secularity (see Anugwom 2008). Apart from its awesome ripple effects on the socio-political system and interethnic and religious relationship in the country, its negative impact on collective life was very instructive to say the least (see Anugwom 2008; Odey 2000).

The Shari'a was historically a response to the need to generate a set of laws that could be uniformly and strictly applied to all Moslems especially in the context of the emergent Muslim empires that brought together a large number of people from diverse background under one religious and political entity. The Shari'a was initially a set of rules codified into law which were the product of a select group of Moslem scholars or ulama who were given this task and who developed these rules in accordance with the scripture and injunctions of the Prophet Muhammad. The Shari'a right from the onset was meant to be comprehensive and focused on classifying human acts and activities as mainly forbidden, objectionable and recommended. As Goldschmidt and Davidson (2006) observe, these rules sought to encompass all spheres of life from those governing commerce and crime to rules about marriage, divorce, property, hygiene and other aspects of interpersonal relationships.

Government and Undermining of Secularity in Nigeria

According to Noltshungu (1983), Shari'a is a tool that would always be unearthed and used by politicians eager to achieve cheap popularity or unsure of their political footing in the North of Nigeria. In this sense, even though conflicts may be overtly couched on religious issues, they in effect may be symptomatic of crass exploitation and manoeuver in the political process. Such conflicts deserve close scrutiny in order to learn lessons and unravel their basic nature, goals, sustaining factors and overall implications for the continuance of Nigeria as a secular state.

The role of elites in religious conflicts in Nigeria has been captured to a large extent by the sentiment that these elites do not directly inaugurate

killings but they validate the past incidences and bless any future homicidal propensity in the name of religion (see Soyinka 2009). Therefore, while the political elites may not descend to the street levels to wage wars or endanger the lives of other Nigerians physically, their utterances have often produced malicious and heinous effects which may be related to conflicts bordering on religious intolerance and the edification of violence as religion. Largely indicative of this is the statement credited to the then Deputy Governor of Zamfara state in the heated Shari'a era of 2002 that, "like Salman Rushdie, the blood of Isioma Daniel can be shed. It is binding on all Muslims, wherever they are, to consider the killing of the writer as a religious duty" (Soyinka 2009). The statement beyond its chilling effects clearly calls into view the fact that elite manipulation and the senseless pursuit of political interests may be explanatory factors in the understanding of the role of religion in the apparent fragile secularity in Nigeria nowadays.

In spite of the constitutional provision which defines Nigeria as a secular state right from independence, religious diversity has often threatened this secularity. In this sense, vertical religious differences have continually questioned the continued and progressive existence of Nigeria as a secular state. Such problems may incidentally become heightened in the era of democracy when the liberal atmosphere of democracy may be seen as a guise for giving breadth to unfettered religious irredentism. While there is no contesting the fact that Islam remains a slightly dominant religion in Nigeria, more than 40% of the citizens of contemporary Nigeria subscribe to Christianity and other forms of religion. It must have been the realization of this fact that made the colonial masters very early in the history of Nigeria to insist on the principle of secularity as a canon of both constitutionalism and social life, a practice that has remained sacrosanct despite occasional controversies (see Kukah 1993) in the post-colonial life of Nigeria.

Therefore, in Nigeria, religious conflicts are often ethicized and sometimes give no one the choice but to invoke the notion of ethno-religious conflicts in the discussion of these conflicts. However, while the ethnic element remains coincident, the religious factor is basically the triggering and determinant factor in past conflicts in the country. Whatever be the case, these conflicts may generate enduring tensions which have the

capacity of taking the impetus out of any effort at nation-building. Interestingly, the likely determining role of religion in the case of Nigeria is borne out of the illuminating discovery that even in pure cases of urban ethnic conflicts in Northern Nigeria, religion functions as critical intervening variable (Obasi and Anugwom 2002).

The chinks in the walls of secularity in Nigeria which Islamic fundamentalist sects like Boko Haram have exploited is what Idahosa (2015) has called a constitutional ambivalence. In this sense, while Nigeria is clearly captured as a secular state and forbids the establishment of any form of state religion while guaranteeing the rights of religious freedom, it also constitutionally recognizes institutions and practices that are in effect negations of secularism. For instance, the 1999 Constitution recognizes the Shari'a's legal system and the customary legal system. In spite of the historical and colonial antecedents of these non-secular systems in Nigeria, they are now problematic and challenge the continued corporate existence of Nigeria as a secular state.

Even beyond the above constitutional ambiguity, public policy and administration in Nigeria have also been bedevilled by the willingness of the state to pander to, cater for and spend enormous resources on religion. A critical example in this case is the wanton depletion of scarce foreign currency on funding of pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia and Israel every year and enormous financial resources committed to such institutions and bodies like the pilgrimage boards. The above have created a scenario whereby the secularity claims of Nigeria is seen by a good number of citizens as nothing but symbolic tokenism and appeasement directed at some sections of the federation.

Without doubt, the impact of religion on national life in any given state can be influenced by the nature of the state and by its response to matters of religion. Therefore, in Nigeria, the overwhelming influence of religion in national life can be traced, in part, to the inability of successive Nigerian governments to live up to the ideals of a modern secular state. Hence, it has been argued

> despite the claim that Nigeria is a secular state, the government is still involved in matters either over which religious bodies also make claims or those in which the government's involvement is unsatisfactory to the religious bodies. Examples of such areas are education, health, legal Year Ceremonies, the

> Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), and Pilgrims Welfare Board, building places of worship and the teaching of religion in schools, to mention a few. (Williams 1997: 190)

In spite of the foregoing, many politicians, especially from the core North, are averse to any reference to Nigeria as a secular state. This derives from a belief that the use of the term 'secular' may be understood to mean 'irreligiousity'. As a result, in the debates on the Shari'a issue, before the promulgation of the 1979 constitution, many politicians from the North proposed that Nigeria should be called a 'multi-religious state'. However, in a Nigerian nation pockmarked by primordial or ethnic loyalties and mutually distrustful inter-group relationships, other politicians from outside the North viewed this suggestion as a ploy to eventually make Nigeria an Islamic state. This sentiment was a direct product of the view in some parts of the North that adopting the description 'secular state' would be eventually tantamount to the imposition of state restrictions on Islam.

In pursuing the examination of secularity in Nigeria today even from the point of view of religion there is the need to examine how pervasive socio-economic inequality may feed the potentials for religious conflict among the people. Actually, it has been shown that a great gap in socio-economic status sponsors the belief that even rich Muslims are unbelievers as exemplified in the philosophy of the Maitatsine movement responsible for perhaps the greatest number of Islamic religious conflicts in the history of Nigeria (see Udoidem 1997). In this case, religious conflict may become a metaphor for economic competition and the urge to violently establish an economic level playing field (see Odey 2000; Anugwom 2008). It is in this regard that the role of the state in social provisioning and stemming the tide of socio-economic inequality as guarantee of secularity becomes interesting.

In addition, it has been argued that

> the role of the state is very important, both in terms of the equitable and meaningful delivery of services, and in the impartial mediation of conflicts between various groups in a multi-ethnic society. Hence, a state that fails in its expected role in such a society establishes the foundation for unending strife between groups. In Nigeria, this scenario is made worse by the existence of a political class that sees the socio-cultural differences between groups as a useful political weapon. (Anugwom 2008: 177)

Secularity and the Desires of Boko Haram

Given the fact that Nigeria is a nation founded on an apparently irrevocable constitutional secularity (all post-independence constitutions in Nigeria have been anchored on this reality), one wonders what Boko Haram really desires in relation to the continued existence of Nigeria? The question is even more daunting in view of the obvious complexity of the nation even in such parts of it that one would least expect. For instance, even though there is the perception of the North of the country as holistic and monolithic Islam and Hausa-Fulani domain, the reality is that the North also harbours other minor ethnic groups and Christians (though a small number). Probably, the answer or response to the above question may be approached from two different angles, namely, what the elites or leaders of the group and by implication, Islamic Fundamentalist movement leaders want and what the rank and file or ordinary members want.

This difference is very crucial in realization of the different levels of articulation and conception of both religious and social issues which one would expect to exist in such a group. It would seem reasonable to believe that the approach to tackling the problem of Boko Haram may lie in the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the rank and file members of the group and youths in the North of Nigeria by implication. This approach is anchored on the fact that economic frustrations and socio-economic privations among this category of the population may make them willing tools in the perpetuation of violence and even breed the desire to let off the frustration of everyday living on other nationals through the use of violence all disguised as religious mission. In fact, this outlook may have informed the thinking of the committee set up by the Northern States Governors Forum (NSGF) and the Sultan of Sokoto in canvassing for total amnesty for the members of the Boko Haram Islamic sect (see This Day, 6 March 2013).

However, this is a dangerous suggestion since it easily emulates the policy approach of the Nigerian government to the Niger Delta militants problem without taking cognizance of the major difference between the two issues and also gives the impression that the only way to get the

government of Nigeria's attention and escape severe socio-economic deprivation is to engage in terrorism and violence. I will still come back to a thorough examination of the ramifications of simply conceiving the solution to the Boko Haram problem as a matter of socio-economic deprivation. It is important in providing answers to the desire of the elites of the sect and other Islamic Fundamentalists in Nigeria in relating it to the origin and character of the Islamic religion as established by Uthman dan Fodio in his nineteenth-century Jihad. In this case, these elites who are the brains and drivers of Islamic Fundamentalism in Nigeria are basically driven by the desire to live out the dream and desire of the revered Usman dan Fodio.

The activities of these religious elites derive from a fundamental dissatisfaction with the extant social and political structures which provide the larger context in which Islam functions in Nigeria. Thus, there is a largely unveiled political aspiration driving the dissension powered by these elites. Just like Usman dan Fodio, these elites see the control of the socio-political structures and leadership of an Islamic faithful within a Shari'a context as critical pre-requisites for full or unadulterated practice of Islam. Therefore, anything short of the above will always periodically generate religious violence and terrorism as the history of Nigeria in the last 50 years has amply demonstrated. Perhaps, the above suspicion has been aptly captured in the contention that Islam is a more absolutist faith than Christianity; thus it merges religion and politics and makes a sharp distinction between those in the Dar al-Islam and those in the Dar al-Harb (Huntington 1998).

One is attracted to the premise that Boko Haram just like the Maitatsine of the 1980s, the Kala Kato and other Islamic fundamentalist movements in the country before it remain essentially premeditated efforts to erode the secular basis of the Nigerian federation. These organizations or groups do not just seek any consistent form of religious Eldorado but are also fundamentally motivated by the desire to assume political control of Nigeria and establish a domination of Shari'a regulated civil and political administration in the country. Therefore, contrary to speculations which see Boko Haram as something new, familiarity with the operations and teachings of former Islamic fundamentalist organizations in Nigeria would suggest that Boko Haram is simply a new

form of the same old religio-political movement anchored on the radical reading of the Hadith at the behest of fiery clergy and elites who function as drivers of the movement.

The Boko Haram ideology is not just similar but resembles in many ways the ideology of the Maitatsine movement and that of the Kala Kato sect[2] that was active in Bauchi state between 2009 and 2010. In other words, while each of these groups, including Boko Haram presents its own peculiarity and idiosyncratic challenges, they are all similarly motivated and aim ultimately, at least from the perspective of the elites and leaders at a total transformation of Nigeria into a religio-political Islamic nation. In this sense, they constitute not only a threat to peace and public safety but more critically undermine the secular basis of the Nigerian state.

In spite of how one perceives or analyses the origin and evolvement of Boko Haram in Nigeria, there is no escaping the fact that the sect cannot accommodate or live with the notion of a true Nigerian secular state. The ideology or guiding principle of the sect which has been relatively consistent overtime makes such acceptance or accommodation of secularity impossible. Boko Haram's ideology and belief system are anchored on the non-negotiable need for pure Islam (elimination of heresies and contamination or innovation) and the full implementation of the Shari'a law.

In order to arrive at this religiously lofty desideratum, it believes that the Western-oriented state anchored on democracy (seen historically as negation of Islam by Islamic fundamentalists) is surplus to requirement and decadent. In other words, "Boko Haram is seeking create its caliphate based on the Islamic revivalist ideology of Dan Fodio and, like Dan Fodio combat symbols of corruption, poverty, nepotism, and bad governance and restore moral order, including ending the mixing of Islam with 'impure' concepts of democracy, secularism and liberalism" (Pieri and Zenn 2016: 68). Therefore, for Boko Haram there is a need for radical political change and the dethronement of a secular constitution like Nigeria has, which is seen at best as a contravention of Shari'a and as an affront to the quest for an Islamized state.

Be that as it may, it is important to understand that while an economic approach as embodied in the call for amnesty appears good for the mass of youths involved in Boko Haram and Islamic Fundamentalism in

general in Nigeria, it, however, has an equally inescapable political twist to it within the context of Nigeria's current socio-political dispensation. This is especially, as mentioned earlier, in view of the fact that the call for amnesty is resonant of the current amnesty programme of the Nigerian government for former youth militants in the Niger Delta region of the country which kicked off in 2009. Therefore, in Nigeria's political system in which ethnic politics and ethno-regional rivalries seem rife (see Anugwom 2008; Obasi and Anugwom 2002; Ejobowah 2000) the call for amnesty especially coming from Northern political elites and traditional hegemony may be unwittingly motivated by the desire to see the replication of the Niger amnesty in the North.

A suspicion made more persuasive by the fact that the claims of the Niger Delta people to the oil resources in their environment has often generated a negative response from the Northern elites. Typical of this attitude is the very unpopular argument of the Northern intellectual Usman (2000) who floated what he called 'organic theory of the state' in which groups with recognized identity within a state cannot now use such identity as the basis of laying claims to natural resources found in their homeland. But this logic or perspective remains largely untenable and has far-reaching implications for the claim of ownership of any mineral resource for that matter since the ecological system beneath the soil and in the seas and waters are not really fixed in peculiar geographical regions consistent with the politically determined spatial structures of the modern nation-state.

Equally interesting is to appreciate that the call for amnesty for Boko Haram members seems unpopular among the rest of the Nigerian populace. In fact, the online response to the suggestion has been very critical and unsupportive of the move even though there is the general consensus about the seeming inability of the government to tackle the problem squarely. In fact, over 98% of those who commented online to the suggestion questioned both the logic behind it and the real motives of those advancing the suggestion. Typical of such comments is the one credited to one El Nino1 (obviously a pseudonym) which ran thus, "these people are retarded. Nigeria government might as well give amnesty to kidnappers, armed robbers, everyone in Nigerian jail especially those on death row, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, pen robbers, etc. etc. Mr. Sultan

and his committee have you become so chicken scared that you are not thinking straight anymore?" (This Day Live, Online edition, 6 March 2013).

The point is that giving in to this inopportune call for amnesty may set a dangerous precedence in which case terror and violence become favoured tools for getting the attention of the government to the socio-economic plight of its citizens. There is no gainsaying the fact that the North of Nigeria harbours a massive population of unemployed youth and some of these young people have been sucked into the now fashionable Islamic Fundamentalism in the region and used in causing mayhem. Equally understandable is that the massive economic deprivation among the youths in the North needs to be addressed one way of the other. However, the above conditions of high youth unemployment and the easy prey unemployed young people are to devious religious and political elites are not in any sense peculiar to the North. These conditions are in reality common to the youth population all over Nigeria.

Some uncharitable observers may even argue that the above dire situation may be equally pervasive in some areas in the South of Nigeria with a higher educated youth unemployment than in the North. Therefore, to single out young people in one zone or region of the country for special attention because of the fear and insecurity generated by their use of terror as a weapon is rather unfortunate and a short-sighted political approach from the perspective of what is good for the country at large. Also, giving in to the amnesty may be tantamount giving in to violent intimidation which does not just weaken the state in the long run but may equally generate a spate of violence from youth in different regions of the country who may see this as the only way to get the attention of the government.

Notes

1. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.
2. The sect is actually called the Kala Kato Maitatsine movement, that is, a renamed Maitatsine movement. The Maitatsine caused a series of religious uprisings in the Northern states between 1980 and 1992.

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10

Ethnicizing the Boko Haram Insurgence

A critical element of the Boko Haram insurgence has been how it has or has not dovetailed into the well-known proclivity for ethnicization of social conflict in Nigeria, a situation that has been attributed to the unfortunate coincidence between religion and socio-geographical distinctions in the country. This has created a situation whereby the North of Nigeria can be seen as predominantly Muslims and the South predominantly Christians. The above which can be attributed to the colonial experience and governance style (see Nnoli 1980) and reinforcement of these centrifugal tendencies over time by the political class has bred a scenario where social conflicts are easily apprehended by the populace from and even waged along the lines of these primordial distinctions.

A good number of writers have argued that Boko Haram resonates with underlying ethnic, political and religious tensions between different groups in the Nigerian federation (see Solomon 2015; Linden 2018; Ekeanyanwu and Olumba 2016; Idahosa 2015). In this sense, the history of centrifugal forces predisposes the scrutiny of social conflicts against ethnic and political motivations. Boko Haram was thus perceived at the beginning as another form of ethno-religious schism targeted at

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non-Northerners and non-Muslims residing in the Northeast. What perhaps gave the insurgence its ethnical undertones in terms of being directed at the ethnic groups from the South, especially the Igbo, was the fact that during the initial post-2009 phase (2010–2012) the attacks of Boko Haram, which concentrated mainly in Borno, Bauchi, Yobe and Kano states, targeted mainly churches, shops, drinking joints (beer parlours in local parlance) and the police (especially singled out for its role in the 2009 face-off and death of Yusuf). These targets apart from the police were areas of high concentration of migrants from the South and minority Northern Christians who are not members of either Hausa-Fulani or Kanuri ethnic groups.

Ethnicity, Its Nature and Embodiments in Nigeria

A good way of appreciating the nature of ethnicity, its peculiar imagination in Nigeria and how the Boko Haram insurgence can be connected to it would be through unravelling the nature of the concept and its overwhelming role in political and public affairs in Nigeria. In view of the above, it would seem valid to argue like Gilley (2004) that the concept of ethnicity is quite problematic and thus challenges both empirical and conceptual utility. However, it would amount to throwing away the baby with the bath water to argue as Gilley does that the claims of surging ethnic conflicts in contemporary global society are unsubstantiated and that there is good argument for abandoning the field of ethnic conflict studies altogether. Gilley's worries all the same seem plausible given the-be-all and explain-all tendency one often encounters in the use of the concept of ethnicity.[1] Gilley's concern that in the studies of contemporary politics the use of ethnicity or ethnic conflict deserves caution cannot be totally faulted, especially since the isolation of ethnicity as a free-standing explanation of conflict has been a daunting challenge. In this sense, ethnicity as a social identity remains incontrovertible but only privileges conflict in concert with other factors like economic marginalization, poverty, social exclusion and competition for resources.

But in spite of the above fact, ethnicity, especially in developing societies, remains a dividing line (although dynamic) between those in contest or conflict and, more critically, often serves as a crucial tool for rallying support and mobilizing forces for social conflict. There is, however, a need to caution against the tendency to view ethnicity as a fixed and never-changing phenomenon. This is quite inadequate since the most one can do is to perceive ethnicity as a fixed identity marker but which is used in a dynamic sense in a plural society, that is, people invoke ethnicity or seek its affiliation in order to gain or access something valuable or scarce, especially in developing societies with weak institutions and unresponsive governments.

Ethnic identity and ethnicity, that is, the consciousness of/or utilization of one's ethnic or cultural orientation (as different from those of others), are specifically anchored on cultural values and beliefs that support a collective identity. Therefore, one's membership or subscription to a given cultural group is the springboard of ethnic identity and ethnicity. The above influences self-identity and attitudinal or action orientation, especially in relation to others seen as different or belonging to a different cultural group. In its essential form, cultural identity implies attachment (allegiance in most cases) to one's cultural heritage as well as the readiness or disposition to engage in practices seen as reflecting, and in the case of ethnicity as projecting or promoting the collective interests of one's cultural group. In other words, it can be contended that the set of goals, values and beliefs which an individual adopts shape the manner in which that individual negotiates with the social environment as well as the opportunities therein (see Cote 2000).

The distinction between the cultural group or cultural identity and social identity is often blurred or becomes confusing as society develops and assigns less significance to core/primordial predictors of cultural values. Thus, while one can make a clear distinction between social and cultural identity in a developing society, the declining importance of cultural referents for inter-group and inter-personal relationships in the developed societies often makes such distinction very difficult and analytically of little value. In effect, one may see the above point and the growing recreation of cultural values by social groups and associations in

developed societies as one of the reasons why ethnicity and the conflict around it have become largely a developing society's concern.

The conceptualization of ethnicity and ethnic identity in social science has gone through enormous transformation in line with the considerable scholarship which has been invested on these phenomena since the 1960s. Critically emblematic of this transformation is that the conception of ethnic identity from a largely anthropological and sociological perspective as entailing attachment or subscription to primordial loyalties which serve as critical markers separating groups in situations of culture contact or in multi-cultural or heterogeneous societies popular in the 1960s has now become unfashionable. Thus, there has been a shift from focusing on primordial factors *per se* to imagining ethnicity and ethnic identity as situational strategies and contemporaneously as dynamic (constructs) tools for negotiating and accessing resources and staking claims in the context of inter-group relations.

The conception of ethnicity as a situational strategy owes its prominence to the area of political science (see Cerroni-Long 1997). In this frame of reference, ethnicity becomes conceived as a situational strategy employed and deployed in the process of negotiating relations in a multicultural or plural society. Therefore, cultural differences *per se* among the various groups are not as important on their own as their usage in the definition of inter-group boundaries and more critically in the access to and right to valuable resources in the society. Therefore, ethnicity and ethnic identity may become instrumentalized in the access to crucial resources in society. Ethnicity nowadays goes beyond a mere instrumentalization of identity but is rather a highly dynamic concept.

The indisputable dynamism of the concept has been made apparent by two major developments in the contemporary world, namely, the tremendous increase in ethnic politics since the 1980s which has undoubtedly called attention to the roots and nature of intra-cultural diversity and problems thereof (in a sense, one can rightly conceive ethnic identity in view of the rapidity and constant intra-group splits as contrary to the earlier notions of its scientific nature); also reinforcing the above development is the twin phenomena of increased (and problematic to international relations) international migration and globalization which have challenged both the orthodox notions of cultural boundaries and

normative partitions. In this situation, one cannot help but acknowledge that cultural variation is continuous, fluid and often contradictory of the orthodox geographical and social bounds of culture. Therefore, ethnicity has become highly dynamic and takes its meaning and essence from the emergence of culture in the last few decades as the site of social fragmentation and contestations.

Hence, any realistic conceptualization of ethnicity should be framed within the parameters of a dynamic social phenomenon which can privilege quite a wide range of attributes. In the case of Nigeria, the framing of ethnicity within a dynamic sense enables its perception as a critical tool of political and social mobilization, a factor in resource allocation and development planning and execution, a critical marker in urban and metropolitan areas and a highly emotive and conflict-prone phenomenon when evoked within religious and political contexts, especially given the coincidence between geo-ethnic identity and religion in contemporary Nigeria.[2] In this situation, ethnicity has as usual been subjected to elite manipulation in the well-known scheme for political and economic gains and has been a particularly volatile issue when intertwined with religion. Thus, social conflict and especially religious conflict in Nigeria even before the advent of Boko Haram have lent themselves to the ethnic fervour very high in the country. This situation has not been helped by the political class who has had no compunction whatsoever in deploying ethno-religious sentiments towards achieving political ends.

In addition to the foregoing, one also subscribes to the reality of identity or ethnicity as emerging primarily from the perception of a given subcultural membership which becomes conscious or moves from a largely idle mood to drive in the context of interaction with perceived culturally distinct hegemonic group(s). In other words, the existence of a perceived distinct hegemonic or dominant group in a multi-cultural society privileges the articulation of ethnicity, especially where the process or system of resource distribution/allocation and access to crucial resources and societal commonwealth is fraught with inequity. In purely sociological sense, this entails that the process or system reinforces and reproduces relative deprivation which in adverse cases creates an action-inducing deprivation or marginalization which results from a group's

perception of a critical shortfall in the ratio of its inputs and benefits from the commonwealth in relation to significant other(s).

This logic is probably easy to fathom in the case of societies like Nigeria where the dependence of the economy almost solely on a natural resource like oil with known global value (per barrel) every time makes the calculation of inputs (contribution) to the national wealth or income quite easy. However, one must caution that even though marginalization or relative deprivation may operate in both psychological (perception) and real dimensions, it is not sufficient on its own to produce conflict without a process of mobilization which is anchored on memory (documenting and remembering injustice through time) and the imagination of the state in Nigeria (as ethnicized, biased and/or captured by a given ethno-regional group or interest).

As Poluha (1998) contends, one should not assume in general terms that ethnic groups do not change over time. In other words, one should not assume that people of the same ethnic group necessarily live together, geographically or that people of the same ethnic group share similar or same political interest and that ethnic group rights are seen by these people as superior to individual, class or gender rights. In effect, ethnicity and even ethnic identity are dynamic and negotiable and are not consistently the important factors in the lives of people from such groups. This entails that at some point in the lives of the people, especially as the state and its institutions develop and play their expected roles well, ethnic consciousness and its value decline.

In spite of the throwback and often pejorative connotation of the word 'primordialism' vividly captured in the contention, "primordialism, which emphasized the archaic cultural basis of ethnic identities, is plainly redolent of the traditional versus modern dichotomy of modernization theory, as well as of the earlier colonial and anthropological stereotypes of stagnant and unchanging tribal societies" (Berman 1998: 309), it often serves the purpose of indicating the long history of ethnic identity and more crucially its location within the rubric of cultural values and endowed with social affection or valence by members of a group. In spite of all its shortcomings as a contemporary social science concept, primordialism has the fundamental value of situating ethnic identity as a fragment of the past that has been found useful in the present and more

critically in political and economic relations between groups in a heterogeneous or plural society. Thus, ethnicity which derives from the idea of shared ethnic identity appeals to the emotional and subjective feeling of belonging together and having similar fate by virtue of socio-historical and cultural origins located squarely in the membership of a given cultural group.

Ethnicity, Politics and Resource Competition

In as much as one agrees with the argument that ethnicity as an explanatory category in social analysis may fall prey to a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy in which all things can be attributed to it, the invocation of ethnicity or ethnic conflict may still be genuine, especially where the ascription of social reality to ethnicity is anchored on rigour and consistent with the social worldview of the society concerned. Thus, in a society like Nigeria with what can be called concentrated ethnicity where there is a coincidence between spatial reality and ethnic or social group dominance,[3] ethnicity emerges naturally as a social marker or important basis of identity. In this case, the ethnic factor becomes imperative and unavoidable in the analysis of inter-group relationship in the society. Given the above reality, the interaction between the different groups becomes one in which ethnic identity is evidently strategized in the access to common resources. It is the above bid to instrumentalize ethnic identity that breeds unhealthy competition and conflict often structured along ethnic group lines in such a plural or multi-ethnic society. Lake and Rothchild (2001: 129–30) capture the above by arguing:

> Competition for resources typically lies at the heart of ethnic conflict. Property rights, jobs, scholarships, educational admissions, language rights, government contracts, and development allocations all confer benefits on individuals and groups. All such resources are scarce and, thus, objects of competition and occasionally struggle between individuals and, when organized, groups. In societies where ethnicity is an important basis for identity, group competition often forms along ethnic lines.

Perhaps nowhere in Africa is the observation that "economic policy making in Sub-Saharan Africa has been greatly influenced by ethnicity—including via policies to manage or, even worse, to exploit ethnicity. In the process, ethnicity has been promoted, not abated" (Johnson 2005: 66) more apt than in contemporary Nigeria where the act of governance and politics, in general, have been one giant process of ethnic manipulation and exploitation. In this sense, social groups in the country including religious sects like Boko Haram may have seen deployment of ethnic bars as critical to achieving their goals and attracting the support of a given ethno-religious group against another.

In addition to the emotive baggage of religion when ethnicized, ethno-religious sentiments have also been unearthed in the allocation of resources or distribution of the goods of the state. In fact, one of the grouse of Boko Haram with the government stems from a perceived social injustice in terms of the distribution of resources and access to public goods. To the sect, the extant political and economic arrangements may have generated a situation whereby some people are treated as second-class citizens, while others are privileged. A lot of these perceived less privileged are located in the bastion of Boko Haram in the Northeast. Without doubt, the nature of resource or revenue allocation principle that is in vogue in Nigeria raises some crucial questions regarding the definition of citizenship in both economic and political terms and the entitlements of such citizenship. In a sense, citizens who are obviously cheated, by fact of marginalization in the power game and/or in the allocation or distribution process are indirectly classified as second-class citizens. As a result, federalism within the context of democracy as one finds in Nigeria should in all its ramifications engender both a right definition and sense of citizenship that treat all sections of the country fairly and justly.

The state is in ideal terms at the centre of revenue allocation to various institutions and sub-state units in a federation. In this ideal situation, the state is expected to play mediatory and impartial roles in the allocation of societal resources as well as handle the conflicts or rivalries between the different sub-state units or groups over who gets what from the resources pool of the state. Equally germane here and resonating of the questions raised by Boko Haram in its disavowal of the state and its elites is that the state in Nigeria may be largely seen as having all the main essentials of a

predatory state which is a state patrimonialized by power or political elites for their own selfish ends. Despite this, the framing or construction of the patrimonial state elites as the model in Nigeria may raise questions about the influence of ethno-regional factors. However, the two phenomena are not really mutually exclusive since the dominance of ethno-regionalism easily produces myopic political elites who establish an ethnic patrimonial network as the basis of power. In line with a superior commitment to the primordial public and its existence as a psychological buffer zone, ethno-regional background is often viewed as critical in power bargaining and negotiation even at the centre where the zoning of political offices on the basis of ethno-regional divisions by political parties reinforce the feeling of allegiance to the primordial public.

Hence, opportunistic politicians would always pay both attention and allegiance to the primordial public as a stepping stone and foundation of political power. While the above was portrayed in the alliance between the political elites and Boko Haram before 2009 where the sect, especially its leadership, mobilized grassroots support for the governing party in Borno state, the political elites have shown a predilection towards neglecting this support once in power. Therefore, social conflict in this situation brews from both the frustration of being neglected and the failure of the political system to deliver on promises made prior to elections. Groups with popular base like Boko Haram before 2009 may then become fulcrums of popular mobilization against the ruling class and champions of the anti-marginalization campaigns or struggles of its members and other commoners.

State, Ethnicity and Marginalization: Fertilization of Social Conflict

In Nigeria, the concept of marginalization has become popular in capturing the perception of unfair treatment or injustice in the resource allocation process by social groups in the country (see Okilo 1980; Ifeka 2001; UNDP 2006). Marginalization in this case can be seen as resembling the concept of relative deprivation. Hence, marginalization only results when

a group compares its lot with that of another or significant others and feels cheated or unfairly treated. It emanates from a peoples' perception of injustice in the allocation process at the centre in Nigeria's federal state. A social group feels cheated either in terms of the resources allocated to other groups or in terms of a discrepancy between its contribution and the share allocated to it.

As a result, marginalization is "the deliberate disempowerment of a group of people in a federation politically, economically, socially and militarily by another group or groups which during the relevant time frame wield power and control the allocation of material and financial resources at the centre of the federation" (Nsukka Analyst 1994: 1). This conception of marginalization entails that it is analytically and semantically different from the concept of marginality which borders on limitations established by one's incapacity. Therefore, marginality as different from marginalization refers to the relative or absolute lack of power to influence a defined social entity, while being the recipient of the exercise of power by others (Adedeji 1993).

Marginalization can be perceived as a systematic tool and captured in supposedly objective formal regulations governing the exercise of power or the access of citizens to valuable resources in the society. It is important to understand that marginalization where it really exists is not just a debilitating psychological condition but equally confines a given group to hapless irrelevance or incapacity. Therefore, as Axtmann (1998) observes, the main feature of marginalization is the ability to make regions and countries irrelevant within a given socio-political context. Hence, marginalization does not just underline social inequity but more critically engenders a structural incapacity to question and change the *status quo*.

The desire to liberate the group (defined generally as the ordinary people or commoners from Boko Haram's perspective) from this structural incapacity or injustice often generates the framing of the problem by the oppressed as embedded within primordial differences between the group and the others in charge of state power or in control of dominant agencies of the state. This is the genesis of struggles and agitations built on the perception of injustice within the existing state structure and which utilizes both the narratives of injustice and primordial distinctions or

ethnicity in mobilizing support. This may really explain why at the beginning while Boko Haram rallied against the political class, it equally defined other groups outside the North as enemies and infidels who deserve death. This orientation gives conflict a complex nature as political, economic and ethnic factors are conflated. Conflict as a viable option to access state resources becomes even more likely in societies like Nigeria where marginalization has been seen as systematic and deliberate ploy at the disposal of the central government.

The nature of the state in Nigeria as obvious from the foregoing gives rise to the utilization of ethnicity in the bid to access state resources and power. In other words, the political elites perceive the claims to an ethnic platform often captured in the metaphor of grassroots base or support as critical to both accessing and legitimizing claims to both positions and resources in Nigeria's plural society. Ethnic differences and differentiation of the society along such lines become valuable to the political class and other economic and political elites. As a result, "demarcation of ethnic differences takes on political importance to the degree it is relevant in legitimating claims to rights and resources, and in providing individuals with both meaning and organized channels for pursuing culturally-defined interests" (Berman 1998: 328).

But while the ethnic base has been critical to the competition for resources of the state, valuable returns to the geographic enclaves of the political elites apart from the occasional infrastructural token and possibly the establishment of a subservient group of ethno-political elites at the grassroots remain largely debatable. From the forgoing, the contention that "the state is a conglomeration of agencies and offices to be captured and manipulated, beneath the guise of official 'development' ideology, for individual and communal benefit" (Berman 1998: 339) remains largely instructive in the appreciation of the state and its elites in Nigeria. In this situation, ascension to state offices is gauged and defined essentially in terms of the personal benefits of the office to the holder and his kinsmen and ethnic enclave. Even group memory and its reproduction are hostage to perpetuating ethnic interests and engendering the consciousness not only for seeking redress from injustice but equally for perpetuating narratives that promote the perceived interests of the ethnic group often conflated with religious factors.

The situation of Nigeria has not been helped as stated by the uncanny coincidence between ethno-religious divide and geographical divisions. Thus, the Northern region became the domain of the Hausa-Fulani; the Western region, the home of the Yoruba, and the Eastern Region, the bastion of the Igbo. In more ways than one, Boko Haram initially latched onto this ethnic tradition and religious distinction to focus its attacks on business and people seen as not from the North and not Hausa-Fulani. However, this ethnic focus changed drastically after the 2009 face-off. The re-emergence of Boko Haram in 2010 from the rubrics of the 2009 onslaught redefined both its focus and confinement to the conventional ethno-religious fervour of Nigeria. A change that really underlines and authenticates its position as something novel even though embodying much of the old.

Boko Haram and the Charge of Ethnicity

The ethnicity charge against Boko Haram manifests mainly on two levels, namely, as the bid of the minority Kanuri (in the North of Nigeria) group to reaffirm and re-establish its dominance in the Northeast against the greater influence of such other contiguous ethnic groups like the Hausa and Fulani within the geo-politics of Nigeria. The above perspective is however weakened by the fact that Boko Haram is composed of both the Kanuri, Hausa-Fulani and other really minority ethnic groups as Dugherde, Kanembu, Babur, Karekare, Bolewa and so on. Also, a bigger improbability is put on the perception of a pan-Kanuri agenda by the fact that historically, the North of Nigeria has presented a holistic and homogenous front in the politics of Nigeria. Therefore, in the contest and competition for national resources in a centrifugal Nigeria, the North has largely presented a united and wholesome front. The only exception to this is the often recurrent notion of a Middle Belt of Nigeria which is seen as a geographically and politically distinct zone from the North and South of Nigeria (though the idea of the Middle Belt make more sense as a political alliance of minority ethnic groups distinct from the hegemonic Hausa-Fulani than a strict geographical metaphor). The Northeast, especially Borno and Yobe states (epicentres of Boko Haram existence and

activities), has never been framed as the Middle Belt in the extant political history of Nigeria.

Another ethnic dimension of the insurgence is seen by some observers is the earlier violent activities of the sect that targeted establishments as churches, shops and relaxation spots frequented by mainly migrants from the South of Nigeria. This was particularly the case between 2010 and 2012 but the actions of the group since then cannot realistically be deemed as any form of systematic attack on or targeting of a particular ethnic group. As a matter of fact, the insurgence may have exacted more fatality and collateral damage on the indigenes and groups in the Northeast and Muslims than any other ethno-regional and religious group.

All said, there is no gainsaying the fact that being located in the Northeast has greatly helped the group. In this sense, Boko Haram has benefited from both the socio-cultural and spatial knowledge of the Northeast. In other words, the sect possesses a formidable indigenous or local knowledge and normative embeddedness that have helped it evade security agencies and appeal to the local populace not only in Nigeria but the entire Lake Chad Basin area. As Anugwom (2011) discovered local knowledge and familiarity with the geographical make-up of a territory can facilitate elusiveness of militant groups and at the same time situate then socio-culturally and thus local support.

Boko Haram, Ethnicity and Re-writing the Kanuri History

Another angle to the ethnic undertones of Boko Haram insurgency is captured in the role of the Kanuri ethnic group in the leadership and growth of the sect. In this sense, prominent leaders of the group starting from its founder Mohammed Yusuf, the current leader, Abubakar Shekau and erstwhile prominent Shekau deputy Mamman Nur are all of the Kanuri ethnic group. Even the leader of the ISIS-sponsored splinter group Wilayat is also led by a Kanuri indigene. As has been stated, "it is the Kanuri who have held the key positions of leadership within Boko Haram, including Yusuf and Shekau, and it is from Kanuri heartland that

the movement was launched in Maiduguri, Borno state" (Pieri and Zenn 2016: 79). The above raises questions on whether Boko Haram can be seen as embodying an ethnic or Kanuri ethnic agenda. One response to this concern is found in the curious narrative that Boko Haram signifies ethnic revivalism by the Kanuri who have been treated to social group dismemberment (by colonial administration division of social groups in the Lake Chad Basin), molestation, stereotyping as insurgents and large-scale persecution (by the Nigerian state) from the colonial period to now (see Maryah 2018).

However, while there is undoubted substance in the perception that the non-involvement of Kanuri elements in the dan Fodiyo jihad and the fact that Gobir which was seen as the epicentre of the contamination of Islam in the pre-Fodiyo jihad era was a prominent Kanuri controlled city may still be a festering sore in the hearts of puritanical Muslims of Kanuri extraction, the assumption of Boko Haram as simply reflecting a total Kanuri agenda or revivalism seems very tenuous (see also Pieri and Zenn 2016 on Kanuri foundations of Boko Haram). Therefore, while one cannot discountenance the Kanuri domination of the leadership of the group, other groups, especially the Hausa-Fulani in the Northeast and beyond, have been implicated as members and fighters of the group.

One cannot totally discount the narrative that Boko Haram in a way has the desire to re-write the history of fundamentalist or puritanical Islam by bringing back the Kanuri to the centre and core of the revival of Islam championed by the group. In other words, the sect embodies a desire for the prominence of the Kanuri in Islam but equally recognizes the importance of a pan-North agenda that go beyond the geographical and ethnic confines of the Kanuri. This may underline the fact that the key messages and sermons of the sect are in the Hausa language seen as unifying and generally spoken in the whole of the North of Nigeria. But while steeped in Kanuri history and Islam longing, Boko Haram finds a much more contemporary resonance in the dan Fodiyo legacy.

To this end, it sees the quest of dan Fodiyo to cleanse Islam, foster full Shari'a and achieve political power based on these as the way to go. In a sense, while remaining true to a primordial Kanuri heritage as its leaders and key commanders are from the group, it embodies the

practical need to spread its tentacles by projecting a front that goes far-beyond Kanuri. Therefore, while Kanuri identity gave it a distinct historical footage and even grievance, the dan Fodiyo legacy provided both an appeal beyond the Kanuri and a connection with modern Islam in Nigeria. The dan Fodiyo legacy is one revered and claimed by probably all Muslims in Nigeria and these facts were not lost on Boko Haram.

The Kanuri heritage of Boko Haram even though never actively or brazenly exploited in the activities of the group became valuable from 2013 when the group sought to spread beyond Nigeria. In this sense, given the fact that the Kanuri was a relatively large group in the Lake Chad Basin before colonial dismemberment of ethno-social groups broke it up, there are Kanuris now in the geographically contiguous countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroun. Thus, the common Kanuri heritage between these groups was instrumental in enabling the easy spread of Boko Haram into these other countries since 2013. The same affinity and geographical proximity can be equally implicated in the ease with which the group operates in the Lake Chad Basin and the reason why it has found it very easy to elude government security forces operating in this area.

Notes

1. The assumption that ethnicity and ethnic allegiance can be used in referring to football club supporters or fans watching football matches in the now popular viewing centres in Nigeria (Majaro-Majesty 2010) is indeed a clear-cut case of what ethnicity is not and is also illustrative of how a regularly bandied concept like ethnicity can be wrongly conceptualized and used.
2. Typified in the recurrent social conflicts which have plagued the ancient Northern Nigeria city of Jos where ethnic and religious differences between two groups in the city has been manipulated politically and otherwise to herald sporadic violence since the fourth republic in Nigeria (from 1999 onwards).
3. This is often captured in the expression 'ethno-regional' groups.

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11

Coming to Grips with New Forms of an Old Problem: State Response, Internal Challenges and External Credentials

The State: Interpretation and Response

While Boko Haram at first glance would appear to anyone with knowledge of the socio-political history of Nigeria as a re-emergence of the old foe of Islamic fundamentalism, there are reasons to suggest that Boko Haram while resembling the past embodied new challenges for the state in Nigeria. In this regard, whatever response that the state had tried in past instances of Islamic fundamentalist conflict in Nigeria would not suffice in the case of Boko Haram. But given a generally haphazard and non-institutionalized response to such conflicts in the past, the Nigerian state was for a good number of years unable to fathom an adequate response to the Boko Haram insurgence. The response of the state from 2009 can be analysed under two main though interacting approaches, namely, the political response and the military response. While the former embodied the reading, interpretation and programmatic orientation of the state to the group, it also largely informed the way and manner the later was framed and executed.

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The Political Interpretation and Response

Boko Haram before the renewed onslaught of the government from 2015 has been seen even in government circles as a cankerworm that has eaten deep into all spheres of the Nigerian society. Emblematic of this situation is the candour and helplessness expressed by a former Nigerian President, Jonathan Goodluck in describing how much inroads the group has made into sensitive government and public spheres in 2012. In a report by Reuters in 2012, Jonathan stated in reference to Boko Haram, "some of them are in the parliamentary/legislative arm of government while some are even in the judiciary. Some are also in the armed forces, the police and other security agencies. Some continue to dip their hands and eat with you and you won't even know the person who will point a gun at you or plant a bomb behind your house" (Reuters Report, "Islamists Sect has Support in Nigerian Government: President." 9 January 2012). However, in spite of how contradictory or ironic the utterances of the then President sounded, a good number of the ordinary citizens of Borno state saw politics and politicians as factors that aided the nebulous growth of Boko Haram.

In this case, "the sect became very popular due to low level of understanding of Islam by our people and the patronage of the then government of Borno state who were playing politics with everything. At a time, the sect was said to have allegedly nominated members of the state executive council and enjoyed financial support from the government in running her dangerous plans."[1] Adding to the above sentiments, another respondent stated, "the sect was popular in Maiduguri due to its role as the spiritual arm of the then ruling party under Governor Alih Modu Sherrif. Muhammad Yusuf who was the leader of the sect was also a strong ally of the then government, consequently most of the thugs of the said party enjoyed spiritual protection from the sect and when the sect had confrontation with federal government security forces in 2009, the thugs, being the armed wing of the political party responded and today the rest is history."[2]

The much-publicized statement of former Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan in 2012 incidentally points to the general belief (at least at the early stages) that the group was enjoying huge political

patronage and had some political elites in its fold. Apart from the reported case of a former commissioner in Borno state, Alhaji Boi, fingers have been pointed upwards and higher the political ladder. Simons (2015) has in his own account mentioned the likely involvement of a serving Nigeria senator with the group and how the daylight escape from detention of a mastermind of the 2011 Christmas day bombing was made possible by the complicity of a serving police commissioner.

What emerges from the above is that there is no doubt that like other Islamic fundamentalist groups before it, the captivating rhetoric of Yusuf and Shekau had lured notable political elites in the North into Boko Haram. These men were either desirous of achieving lofty religious ideals or more likely perceived political capital in associating with the group. However, there is need to state that the romance between the group and these political elites may have ended since 2013 and especially 2014 when the group achieved both global prominence and infamy through the Chibok abduction.

Such politicians soon distanced themselves from the giant monster they helped create. Moreover, the spate of assassinations of religious clerics and local politicians between 2012 and 2013 by the group may have made these politicians wise to the inherent dangers of keeping company with a combustible group like Boko Haram. Beyond the romance with conventional politicians, is the speculation that the group has gained the support or sympathy of some traditional and religious leaders in the North. In fact, the strong push of these two groups for the Jonathan Goodluck government to grant amnesty to the members of Boko Haram much like what happened in the case of the Niger Delta militants may be seen as a strong pointer to the fact that even if such people do not support the sect, they at least do not see it as representing a terrorist group. The push for amnesty for the sect did not succeed and in an incisive analysis Martin Ewi (2013) lampooned the idea and called for a criminal tribunal for the members of the group. Also, Shekau in characteristic contempt for the Nigerian state argued that it was the politicians and not the sect that needs amnesty.

Generally, the response of the government and its agencies to the insurgence prior to 2014 has been viewed as part of the problem rather than the solution. It has been argued in reference to the Nigerian government's

approach to extremist groups in the North that, "violent repression had usually been the preferred approach at the expense of a more holistic attempt to address some of the grievances put forward by the groups… the government's response to Boko Haram violence has very much shaped the sect's latest development" (Comolli 2015: 109). The 'latest development' captured above refers to the post-Yusuf era when Boko Haram became more ruthless, bloodthirsty and totally ruthless. The above contention finds support in the view that, "Boko Haram was not initially a popular sect, but the use of brutal force by the Nigerian government in 2009 and the subsequent killings of Boko Haram members who were all indigenes and have loved ones in the various communities angered their relatives to join forces with the sect to retaliate by contributing resources and manpower to attack the government forces."[3]

In partly explaining the escalation of the insurgence and the distrust of the state security agencies by the people, Mohammed (2015) contends that it had to do with the high-handed and repressive approach of the military to the problem. In this sense, he sees the metamorphosis of Boko Haram into a hydra-headed and bloodthirsty monster as a product of the above approach of the state. Therefore, "while the Boko Haram was, at least at inception, committed to not harming those who had not antagonized them and alerting people in areas where they intended to fight, [in typical Islamic jihad style as prescribed] the security agencies were known for their brutality in retaliation against the population for the actions of their opponents, especially where the agencies had incurred fatalities. The military Joint Task Force-Operation Restore Order (JTF) functioned like an army of occupation. Unable to distinguish Boko Haram members from unarmed civilians, they resorted to taking vengeance on the whole civilian population" (Mohammed 2015: 21).

In other words, Boko Haram was motivated to see the involvement of the group as a case of just war and the populace to an extent bought into this perspective. Sentiments along this line were observed from some of the people I talked to in the field. Thus, "the Nigeria government and Borno state government in particular are responsible for the violent nature of Boko Haram. The army won this battle in 2009 and arrested the key elements who were handed over to the police; only for the police

to connive with some politicians to eliminate the suspects without charging them to court for fair hearing and justice. The action of the police angered the sect and forced them to adopt violent approach."[4] For another respondent who appeared like an advocate of the methods of the group, "our mosques were bombed, hundreds of our members were killed and you expect us to say thank you to the government? For God's sake, government does not have the monopoly of violence and we have proved that to them."[5]

However, in spite of the above, it is important that the logic of assuming that the violence of Boko Haram was a reaction to the highhandedness of the military is not taken too far since it would end up providing justification for inexplicable violence. What appears incontrovertible is a deep dissatisfaction with the initial response of the state and its agents. For a good number of the respondents, this mirrored the incapacity of the government in conflict resolution. Typically,

> To be frank with you, our conflict resolution mechanism is quite antithetical. Our governments choose military action to resolve ideological conflicts. They started killing Boko Haram members and their leaders which forced the sect to adopt violent approach in self-defence and got them the sympathy of the people of Borno state who saw them as brothers in trouble. The communities contributed financial help in the form of donations to the sect and the youth were obliged to join them in the fight even though some of them were not members of the sect before the crisis started in 2009.[6]

While there is no doubt about the repressive approach of the military, especially before 2014, Boko Haram was an experience that severely challenged the capacity of the army since it has not been honed through a long period of real warfare and the more tasking challenge of a guerrilla-like encounter as presented by Boko Haram. In other words, the asymmetric conflict of the insurgence severely tasked the army given that the soldiers were not specifically trained in such warfare. In fact, terrorism specific capacity building for both the military and the police in Nigeria post-dated the insurgence.

The Military Response

The Military Options: From JTF to JTF (ORO) and Lafia Dole

As already stated one of the issues that worsened the insurgence was the nature of the response from the Nigerian government, especially security agencies that often resorted to crude and barbaric methods in dealing with the group. The security agencies also held onto family members of suspected Boko Haram members in order to persuade these members to come forward or capitulate. Thus, by the middle of 2014, the security forces in what resembles a covert operation had a good number of the wives of Boko Haram fighters in detention.

Also the strategies of Boko Haram often relied on a clear mastering of the lapses of the Nigerian security agencies. The Chibok episode is a testimony to the apparent lack of alertness by security agencies even though by 2014 the war with Boko Haram had raged for over four years. Apart from freely using security agencies in beguiling the young girls in Chibok into initially believing that they were security personnel, Boko Haram fighters took over 200 students and held them for over five hours while stealing enough trucks with which to move them. The immediate queries after the abduction of the girls included the following: how come these people could spring off with over 200 students into thin air? What means did Boko Haram use in moving such a high number of abductees? Where were the teachers and other staff of the school for almost the six hours the operation lasted on-site in the school? The answers to the above lie in the apparent nonchalant attitude of the military high command at that stage, poor logistical support for the military men in the field, poor intelligence, a bogged-down army structure that was not mobile and lithe enough to match the slash and grab approach of Boko Haram, especially when the group found a good and fortified base in the Sambisa Forest.[7]

The general feeling among the public was that the security agencies, especially the police, helped in making the hunt for Boko Haram intractable. The long years of the perception of the police as corrupt and untrustworthy meant that people were unwilling to rat out Boko Haram

because of fear of reprisal from the group since the police could not be trusted to keep the identity of such informers secret; actually when push came to shove prior to 2015, a good number of members of the general public in Borno state would rather seek solace and protection from Boko Haram than the police.

New Strategies and Cry for Help

As part of the new strategies to tackle Boko Haram, especially in realization of the limitations of the Nigerian army, the government of Nigeria in late 2014 contracted a well-established military outfit from South Africa to help. As Walker (2016) reports, this outfit run by military veterans of apartheid South Africa and known as Specialized Tasks and Training Equipment and Protection (STTEP), former partners in the infamous private military company known as Executive Outcomes were contracted. This engagement took place almost at the same time as the well-broadcast seizure of $9 million by the South African authorities ferried into that country in a private jet belonging to the then President of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Ayo Oritsjeafor, a known associate of former President Jonathan.

However, in appraising the considerable strides made against Boko Haram by the Nigerian military it may be in order to caution, contrary to the over-optimism in some government quarters that Boko Haram has not been effectively vanquished. Incidents like the suicide bomb in the government secretariat in Maiduguri in June 2016 and the attack on 28 July 2016 on a UNICEF convoy returning from administering aid to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Bama, Borno state, the attack on and kidnapping of staff members of the University of Maiduguri en route to Lake Chad Basin for exploration study in August 2017, the Dapchi school girls abduction in February 2018 and other well-reported bombings in 2017 and 2018 bear eloquent testimony to the capacity of Boko Haram to still cause mayhem and inflict pain in Nigeria.

Also, in tackling Boko Haram insurgence, the Nigerian military has adopted a number of approaches; some of the changes in strategies were occasioned by obvious failure. At the onset in 2009, the operation against

Boko Haram was orchestrated by the military's Operation Flush, after this, a JTF akin to the Niger Delta military operation was established though it yielded little fruit. And in 2013 the JTF was terminated and the operational command was handed over to the Army Chief of Staff. This development shows a radical change of strategy with the formation and deployment of the so-called Civilian JTF (CJTF) which is a state-sponsored militia formation of hunters and youth elements opposed to the reign of terror of Boko Haram. The CJTF was empowered to arrest suspected Boko Haram members and sympathizers. Even though the involvement of the CJTF has occasioned wide-ranging human rights abuses and extra-judicial methods of engaging Boko Haram, it has also helped in the successful push against Boko Haram since 2014. Again the relocation of the tactical headquarters of the war against Boko Haram from Abuja to Maiduguri by the Buhari government since assumption of office in 2015 has further energized the military.

The CJTF has had such profound impact on the war with Boko Haram since 2014 that the sect has seen the outfit as a potent foe. To this end, it has engaged in operations against identified CJTF members and their families. In a video released in 2014, Shekau addressed the CJTF thus, "your name is not Civilian JTF but Civilian trouble. My advice to you so-called Civilian—JTF is to flee, take up arms, get conscripted into the army or police, because I am telling you is that I have started a war against you. The war against you has just begun…From now on, my focus of attack is going to be the Civilian—JTF. Let the Civilian—JTF know that this is me, Shekau talking. You will now really understand the person called Shekau. You don't know my madness, right? It is now that you will see the true face of my madness. I swear by Allah's holy name that I will slaughter you. I will not be happy if I don't personally put my knife on your necks and slit your throats" (Abubakar Shekau in Ola'Audu 2014).

Incapacity of the Nigerian Security Agencies in Dealing with Boko Haram

One of the prominent manifestations of the incapacity of the Nigerian security agencies in dealing with Boko Haram is the recurrent unsubstantiated claims of the killing of Shekau by the military. One of

the boldest of these claims came in August 2013 when JTF spokesman Lt. Col. Sagir Musa issued a statement that Abubakar Shekau may have died of gunshots he sustained during an encounter with the JTF in one of Boko Haram's camps in Sambisa Forest. The encounter according to Musa occurred on 30 June 2013 (see Marama 2013). Apparently, Musa was led into this hasty conclusion by two facts, namely, the overwhelming of Boko Haram by the army in this particular battle and the uncustomary silence of Shekau between the end of June and August 2013. The above facts made the army believe that Shekau who usually would have responded to the thrashing of Boko Haram in this battle with threats of reprisals or restatement of the resolve of the group was likely a casualty of the battle.

However, as Idris (2013) reported, Shekau soon after the statement from the army reappeared in a video in late September 2013 to remind the world that he was alive and to pour his usual invectives on the enemies of the sect. In the video, Shekau stated inter alia,

> The world should know that I am alive and will only die at the appointed time. Everybody should be judged according to the dictates of his conscience. What I am doing is written in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith and I will not stop. I challenge all the clerics of the world to question my deeds. Those underrating my capacity should have a rethink…The concept of the Government of the people by the people for the people will never be possible and will never exist. Democracy shall be replaced only by the government of Allah, from Allah and for Allah. (Idris 2013—Daily Trust Online, 2013)

While the police in Nigeria has been roundly criticized for its role and handling of the Boko Haram insurgence, there is need to understand that the police is historically mired in a mental frame that militates against policing on the basis of equality and providing security to all citizens irrespective of socio-economic status and difference in perspectives. Therefore, the weakness of the police in Nigeria in addition to known institutional characteristics and limitations may be seen as related equally to its colonial history. As Comolli (2015) argues, this weakness can be generalized for all former British colonies in which the police was introduced and designed to protect the colonial powers' own interests.

Hence, at the end of colonization what emerged was a force that had been structured around provision of security for the state and much later the intimidation of political opponents rather than the protection of the average citizen. In other words, the post-colonial police in Nigeria was mired in and inherited the tendency of looking out for the interests of those in power at any moment and not really providing security for all citizens irrespective of political and religious persuasion. As the Nigerian example shows, the police is primarily an instrument for perpetuating the interests of the rulers, intimidating opponents and ensuring total compliance with the wishes of the ruling class at any time.

However, while the Nigerian military has received its fair share of criticism regarding its inability to tackle Boko Haram insurgence expeditiously, there is need to spare a thought for the operating and structural impediments to the military in Nigeria. In terms of experience, the Nigerian military, apart from having 80,000 active troops, lack contemporary war or conflict exposure. Apart from the Nigerian civil war of 1967–1970 and the involvement (limited scale) in peacekeeping operations, the military lacks any first-hand experience of conflict. In fact, given that the civil war ended over four decades ago, a vast majority of the fighting forces of Nigeria, apart from simulated exercises and training routines, lack the experience of what real warfare looks like. The lack of experience is especially telling when such an army is challenged by insurgence of the Boko Haram type which strategically resembles both guerrilla and asymmetrical warfare.

The above experiential deficiency of the military has not been helped by such structural problems as deep-rooted corruption in both the military hierarchy and in the Nigerian state which has resulted in the fact that despite very huge allocation to the defence sector in yearly budgets in Nigeria, the military remains inexplicably underfunded and grossly under-equipped.[8] Therefore, the Nigerian military in facing Boko Haram has been bedevilled by an appalling lack of intelligence, porous intelligence network, lack of trust of the local population that limited the level of information available to the army and the very extensive and porous border around the Northeast, especially Borno state. In fact, it is locally known that there are hundreds of footpaths that traverse the border areas

of the zone and those of neighbouring countries and these paths are usually well known to the locals and not to Nigerian military. There is no gainsaying the fact that these unknown terrains to the military constitute critical gateways and passages for the insurgents and helped in human, arms and material goods trafficking between Nigeria and these other nations. The reputation of Maiduguri as a prosperous commercial town has been aided by this proximity to international borders and the opportunity it creates for manipulation of commerce.

Splitting and Re-connecting: Internal Challenges and External Credentials of Boko Haram

The Ansaru and Wilayat Angle to the Insurgence

The Ansaru sect originally seen as an affiliate of Boko Haram and the brainchild of a touted former deputy to Shekau, is fully known as "*Jama' atu Ansaru Muslimina Fi Bilad al Sudan*," which is roughly translated into "Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa" and had been responsible for some of the attacks in the Northeast ascribed to its principal—Boko Haram. The Ansaru which operated mainly between 2012 and 2013 broke away over discontent with the brutal style of Shekau (see Peters 2017); his resolute focus on only internal matters and not actively seeking collaboration or alliance with international jihadi groups. Ansaru debuted under the leadership of Khalid al-Barnawi and also included the hitherto third in command to Shekau, Mamman Nur. In spite of portraying a strategy influenced by al-Qaeda, courting the AQIM in Mali and posturing as an internationally linked faction, it did not possess either the leadership tenacity or focused and principled religious niche to persist. So the faction became moribund towards the end of 2013 and most of the leaders likely found their ways back to Boko Haram or to jihadi groups outside Nigeria. Incidentally, Khalid al-Barnawi was captured by the Nigerian military in April 2016 and is probably the highest ranking former member of Boko Haram in the nets of the security authorities.

Around the end of July and early August 2016 news started filtering in about another split in Boko Haram. It was speculated that there has been a splint in the group and now there was a faction not controlled by Shekau. While the situation in this regard was fuzzy initially, further events including reported gun battle between the two in mainstream Nigerian media in early September 2016 showed the foray of the IS into the mix with the emergence of Wilayat West Africa. However, there is nothing really strange in this development. Comolli (2015) has shown that splintering remains a dominant process towards the emergence of new groups within radical Islamism. She cautions that splintering does not necessarily infer a change in ideology and methodology as it could be the outcome of the desire of some elements within the parent organization to build a niche for themselves, that is, a prominent and emerging commander may decide to branch out in order to build a name and niche for himself. But equally interesting is that splintering and factions are common fares within Islamist groups all over the world. The splitting of the sect into Wilayat and Boko Haram seem to have been blown out of proportion in terms of its real significance possibly because of the involvement of the IS.

The situation is that the ISIS has named Abu Musab al-Barnawi as the new leader of its faction of Boko Haram or Wilayat West Africa in an interview in its online weekly magazine, *Al-Naba*. A development which prompted Shekau to quickly release an audio message in both Hausa and Arabic languages accusing al-Barnawi of plotting a coup against him and dismissed al-Barnawi, "as an infidel who condones living in an un-Islamic society without waging jihad" (The Punch, 16 August 2016: 9).

As has been stated, the split which led to the emergence of Wilayat led by the son of the late founder of the sect, Mohammed Yusuf even though instructive should not be celebrated or interpreted as a form of weakening of Islamic fundamentalism. Therefore, even though the emergence of Abu Musab al-Barnawi and the Wilayat West Africa entails the shrinking of the power and influence of Abubakar Shekau, it means ironically a growth in Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria cum West Africa for a couple of reasons. In the first place, one should be cognizant of the fact that al-Barnawi was recognized over and above Shekau by the IS as the governor of Wilayat West Africa (see Zenn 2018), an affiliate of the IS. This means the formal and announced entry of the IS into the Islamic fundamentalist

mix in Nigeria and which also entails enhanced logistic support, networking and funding for the activities of the group. However, al-Barnawi is often seen as radically different from Shekau in terms of stand on the need of the sect to avoid killing of other Muslims (a core principle of the IS enshrined by years of experience, especially lessons learnt from Islamic fundamentalist crusades in Algeria and Egypt, where antagonism towards ordinary people and Muslims eroded the popular support necessary for successful campaign) and most recently his handling of the kidnapping of the Dapchi, Yobe state school girls in February 2018.

These school girls who were predominantly Muslims have been handed over to the government of Nigeria in-tact after about a month in captivity. Though there are speculations that ransom running into millions of Euros was paid by the government, al-Barnawi is still considered a better person to deal with than Shekau who thrives in media publicity and orchestrates a much more viral and ruthless fundamentalist campaign. Second, and in spite of whatever positives anyone sees in the above, the emergence of al-Barnawi with the muscle and support of the IS ultimately doubles the security and military challenges to the state in Nigeria who would now be compelled to deploy resources and fight on two fronts. Third, the emergence of Wilayat has meant some form of specialization and delimited focus for each of these sects. Thus, while Wilayat controls Yobe state and its surrounding areas and the Cameroun, the Shekau-led Boko Haram focuses on Borno state, Adamawa state and surrounding areas all the way to the Lake Chad Basin. Moreover, familiarity with the history of sects, as already implied would indicate that splitting among Islamic sects may imply proliferation and does not preclude the possibility of collaboration and joint actions by the sects concerned.

In other words, what is really new now is the official recognition of al-Barnawi by ISIS which suggests a double standard or some serious disagreement with Shekau since Shekau's pledge of allegiance to ISIS in 2015 was duly accepted. It also points to the irreconcilable difference between Boko Haram ideology (which focuses essentially on domestic issues and scene in Nigeria) and the goals of the ISIS which is essentially a global or worldwide effort to enthrone Islam and Shari'a.

The above points lead to the fact as any serious-minded analyst would agree that Boko Haram like any other Islamic fundamentalist group in the world today (including the IS) is not and has never been, especially

after the demise of Yusuf, a wholly united and close-knit organization. Therefore, "Boko Haram is not a uniform movement and I have already alluded to factionalization, especially in the post-Yusuf phase. The most obvious and concerning example of this phenomenon was the emergence of an off-shoot, *Jama'atu Ansaril Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan* (Supporters of Muslims in Black Africa), normally referred to as Ansaru" (Comolli 2015: 65). In evaluating the whole scenario with regards to the worrisome Chibok girls' saga, one would believe that had it been that it was the Wilayat that abducted the girls, al-Barnawi would have ransomed them for money or some other things long ago.

Currently, the leader of the now largely moribund Ansaru (different from the Wilayat West Africa) is reportedly being held in a military cell in Nigeria awaiting trial for a string of abductions and killing of foreigners. Obviously, as has been made explicit here, Ansaru saw Islamic fundamentalism as an opportunity for criminal activities and source of quick money through ransom payments. Ansaru's proclivity towards kidnapping for money, distinguished it from Boko Haram and must be seen as one of the sources of the initial split in the first place. Equally remarkable is that Ansaru in spite of a stated aspiration towards a Caliphate that would include the whole of the Black race in Africa (reference to Sudan as emblematic of this) did not elucidate any peculiar form of ideology or religious principles and cared nothing about spiritual and doctrinal angles to its operation. The above creates the impression that it was more or less a roughly united brigade of overzealous but greedy jihadi fighters who saw an opportunity for financial gains in the general uncertainty created by the Boko Haram insurgence in the Northeast.

Going Global or Seeking Sympathy Beyond the Borders?

There are various views on whether Boko Haram can be legitimately linked to international terror networks, especially the likes of the IS and the Taliban or even al-Qaeda. However, I believe that in terms of the influence of the international terror community on Boko Haram, there is apparently no doubt about this influence which is borne out in the tactics

of the sect. For instance, the use of IEDs, televised/videotaped executions, press releases by Boko Haram leadership and so on testify to this influence. Besides the above, it would also be naive to suggest that Boko Haram was not influenced by global terror networks which have influenced the behaviour of even the ordinary citizens in the street since the late 1990s. I dare say it is also naive again to totally eliminate the possibility of a genuine link between Boko Haram and other global terrorist groups. The forays into other West African countries like Chad, Niger and even Cameroon in Central Africa caution against quickly dismissing the global connection or reach of Boko Haram.

Be that as it may, one uncontested fact is that besides the open admission of loyalty to the ISIS by Boko Haram leader Shekau in 2015 and the seeming appropriation of some idiosyncrasies of the ISIS by Boko Haram, there is still to emerge concrete evidence or proof of the operational and structural linkage between Boko Haram and ISIS. In other words, only anecdotal evidence links Boko Haram to a group like the ISIS. However, a respondent argued that Boko Haram enjoyed both considerable home support and the support of the international terror groups. Thus, "the people of Borno state were supporting Boko Haram and saw the military as strangers. The sect always enjoys the support of other terror group such as Al Qaeda, ISIS etc. who train and equip them with high-powered bombs and armament. There are reports that most of the Boko Haram arms were imported to Nigeria from Libya."[9]

Another seems to corroborate the above sentiments arguing, "an average Kanuri man has soft spot for Boko Haram as such they rapport with them and enjoyed their support until Boko Haram started killing them and got many of them displaced. In terms of logistics, Boko Haram is enjoying support of other militant Islamists around the world particularly the ones in Mali and Libya that provide Boko Haram training and tactical support."[10] Even the FGD participants were unanimous in the fact that the sect received considerable international support. In fact, the consensus was, "the major reason behind the tenacity and survival of the sect over these years is its connection to other jihadist groups outside Nigeria. Most of the terrorist organisations in the Islamic world are rich and well-trained. They also have enough arms to donate to the likes of Boko Haram in order to spread their evil mission."[11]

The strictly limited objective or goal of Boko Haram separates it from the likes of the ISIS. Despite occasional claims to connection or linkage to other jihadist organizations or Islamic fundamentalist organizations, Boko Haram has focused solely on a fundamental opposition to the Nigeria government and symbols of modernity in Nigeria. In other words, it has not acted on any wider regional or international objective. The forays into other neighbouring countries to Nigeria have been more a strategy of survival and evading the Nigeria armed forces than a broadening of objectives.

At best, Boko Haram as shown in its avid copying of the tactics of the ISIS, especially in the use of social media (YouTube particularly), a desire to be seen as prominent even if it is in Nigeria only. The printed and video propaganda materials deployed by Boko Haram bear uncanny resemblance to the ISIS. Even the preferred garb of Shekau and other commanders are all good imitations of those of ISIS and the Taliban and IEDs and even the vehicle-borne IEDs (VIEDs) for its suicide mission has at best what can be called an aspirational link to the ISIS.

In spite of the above, Abubakar Shekau made a formal broadcast of the pledge of loyalty to the Islamic State in 2015. This was contained in a message released in the internet. As reported by the London Daily Telegraph[12] (2015a, b) the IS acknowledged and accepted this pledge of loyalty a few days later. This pledge of loyalty or "bay'ah" was affirmed by a spokesman from the media arm of the IS, Al-Furqan. However, the timing of the pledge raised a few eyebrows since it came shortly after the tide of the war turned against Boko Haram beginning with their dislodgement from Gwoza in March 2015. It would appear that the pledge was a cry for help. After this pledge, Shekau and his group upped their aping of the IS media style releasing much slicker videos that showed both the military operations and execution of prisoners. Interestingly, these new videos were issued under the brand of the so-called Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).

The speculation is that despite an open declaration of allegiance by Shekau in 2015 and which was accepted by the IS, the terrorist group may have found Shekau un-amenable to its control and largely unpredictable. According to a US Department of State Release in 2013 on the existence of likely links between Boko Haram and al-Qaeda, "there are

reported communications, training, and weapons links between Boko Haram, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, which may strengthen Boko Haram's capacity to conduct terrorist attack" (US Dept. of State 2013). The belief of the State Department in the authenticity or existence of the above links may have persuaded it to eventually announce a significant $7 million reward for information that would lead to the capture of Abubakar Shekau.

Boko Haram depends on a coherent and so-called learned interpretation of Islamic texts which in spite of the disregard of other Muslims it argues is the only valid form of Islam. It adopts what can be called the Salafist Sunni ideology which it shares with the IS. It is little wonder that with respect to law, punishment and methods of execution of so-called infidels and enemies, both the ISIS and Boko Haram are influenced by seventh-century practices and the teachings of a thirteenth-century theologian Ibn Taymiyhah, a pioneer of Salafism. Both groups are violent, authoritarian and uncompromising. However, there are also noticeable differences between the two groups. Very significant in this regard is that Boko Haram, unlike the ISIS, does not believe in holding territory as the basis for establishing a universal caliphate. Boko Haram also appear to have a much more diffuse leadership and structure. Finally, unlike the ISIS which often attracts foreigners who are inspired by the teachings of Al-Baghadi to volunteer to go abroad (from the USA, the UK and other areas of Europe) and fight, Boko Haram does not attract foreign fighters.

But given the way Boko Haram has operated in terms of its sophisticated arms, funding and ease of operation over the borders of the West African sub-region it would appear that it has some significant international support. In fact, both erstwhile President Jonathan and his former army chief of staff, Azubuike Ihejirika had alluded to this foreign support many times. However, they saw the support as beyond weapons or arms supply but even in terms of the al-Qaeda and unnamed foreign powers intent on destroying the sovereignty of Nigeria.

While there is the emergence of what one can call global uniformity in actions of terror groups all over the world and similarity of narratives, concrete evidence of real linkage or collaboration in the case of Boko Haram remains uncrystallized. However, there is no doubting the very

likely and seeming connection between Boko Haram and other fundamentalist sects in the continent.

For a lot of discerning observers, Boko Haram may have expanded ties with jihadist groups outside Nigeria including the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Simons (2015) takes a leap of faith and argues that such manifestations of violent extremism and terrorism like the arrest of Umar Abdul Mutallab aka 'underwear bomber' abroad Northwest Airline Flight 253 en route to Detroit from Amsterdam (Mutallab had contact with American born Muslim cleric and al-Qaeda leader Anwar al-Awlaki killed by a US drone attack in September 2011 in Yemen) and the gruesome daylight hacking to death of British soldier Lea Rigby in London on 22 May 2013 by two young men (Michael Adebowale and Michael Olumide Adebolajo) born of Nigerian parents are indicative of the externally driven radicalization of young Nigerian elements even before the prominence of Boko Haram. Without doubt, these two incidents are really instructive and point towards the emerging globalization of terror and fundamentalist radicalization of young people on a global scale. However, their linkage to both Boko Haram and even the credentials of the sect as a group with external links remains largely tenuous.

International Connection and the Label of Terrorism: Is Boko Haram Fair Game?

While the general notion that Boko Haram is focused entirely on Nigerian domestic issues remains largely incontrovertible, it should, however, be properly nuanced against the group's perception of a general enemy in modernity and its agents even beyond the borders of Nigeria. This perception may likely account for the tendency of the group to imitate and even follow the paths of the IS, especially in terms of the usage of common symbols (like flags), combat dressing, televised (via YouTube) executions and so on. Also, beyond the above, the group had carried out one of its most formidable attacks against a global institution like the United Nations. The attack on the UN headquarters occurred on Friday 26 August 2011 through a vehicle-borne bomb in which 23 people and also

the suicide bomber were killed. This attack in some ways calls attention to the fact that while Boko Haram remains undoubtedly focused on Nigeria's domestic matters, there is no gainsaying the fact that the group gained impetus from global terrorism and could go beyond its narrow Nigeria focus.

There apparently arises the need to interrogate the labelling of Boko Haram as a terrorist group. In this sense, few questions rear their heads, namely, in the case of Boko Haram are we falling into the convenient slip of equating anti-state political violence with terrorism? Does the history of Boko Haram emplace it as a terrorist group? Was there a radical or fast-paced transformation of the sect from a clear fundamentalist sect to an extremist violent sect or terrorist group? In particular, is the fact that Boko Haram does not tick all the boxes in terms of the classical definition of terrorist organization a pointer to some other structural deficiencies of the state in Nigeria? Even though one recognizes the plethora of definitions of terrorism, one of the most popular and clearly conceptualized (though still contested) definition is from the European Union. In this case, the European Union's Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism of 2002 defines terrorism thus, "criminal offences against persons and property that, given their nature or context, may seriously damage a country or international organization where committed with the aim of: seriously intimidating a population; or unduly compelling a Government or international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act; or seriously destabilising and destroying the fundamental political, economic or social structure of a country or an international organization" (Council Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism—2002/475/JHA).

A critical fact that emerges from the above definition is that Boko Haram is largely a spatially limited organization. In spite of the occasional forays outside the Northeast, Boko Haram has focused its activities mainly in the Northeast, especially the Borno-Adamawa-Yobe states axis. Therefore, the regional focus of Boko Haram may be seen as undermining the employment of the concept of terrorism on the group. But it must be pointed out that in spite of the lack of agreement on precise definition, terrorism connotes some general features underlined essentially by the utilization of unmitigated violence, real and psychological terror

towards achieving or advancing some political and or religious goals. Also, there are undoubtedly different types of terrorism ranging from vigilante terrorism, ethno-nationalist terrorism and left-wing terrorism to insurgent terrorism, jihadist terrorism and cyber-terrorism.

In other words, the conceptual space of the concept has been largely incompatible with values and institutions emanating mainly from the West. But of special interest here is the idea that terrorism can be acutely depicted through the dominant narratives employed by different groups. In this case, one garners insight from the contention that, "in conceptual terms, terrorism is being expressed through eight narratives: i) as expression of religious constructions; ii) as a protest and rallying symbol (ideological); iii) as instrument of policy (political); iv) as violent criminal behaviour (organised crime); v) as a warfare implement (spatiotemporal swathe); vi) as propaganda tool (visual warfare through media); vii) as vengeance (norm); and viii) as vigilantism (state functionalism)" (Feyyaz 2013: 96).

Therefore, Boko Haram possibly qualifies as a terrorist organization, that is, as an insurgent cum jihadist terrorist organization. However, there is a temporality to the definition of Boko Haram as a terrorist organization and the scope of Boko Haram is spatially limited even in the Northeast where it is most visible. Temporality captures the fact that the sect can only be described as a terrorist organization with strict reference to its transformation through time, that is, up until 2010–2011 it would be dubious to label it a terrorist organization. Interestingly, a significant number of the respondents, especially those who can be seen as sympathetic to the sect, hold contrary views on the terrorist credentials of the group. According to one of the respondents, "you know most of the leaders of Boko Haram are indigenes of the communities in the North east and so it was easy for them to get the sympathy and equally get to recruit young people to pursue their cause. So they mostly depend on the support of the community and politicians who equally rapport with them to perpetuate themselves in power. The fact that most people in these communities are poor and illiterate and neglected by the government was also a big advantage to the Boko Haram."[13] Another supported the above view contending, "the sect is very popular particularly among the Kanuri which has the majority population in Borno state and predominantly

Muslims. They are giving the sect both financial and logistic support which aided the survival of the sect at the initial stage before it started enjoying the support of terror groups outside Nigeria."[14]

Notes

1. Personal interview with Imam Ishaq, 53-year-old Imam of a Mosque in Gubio Maiduguri (14 July 2016).
2. Personal interview with Ustaz Adamu, an Imam of a mosque in Gwoza in his fifties (28 April 2016).
3. Personal interview, Abubakar (Gwoza, 18 April 2016).
4. Personal interview, Captain Sotonye, field Commander, Operation Lafiya Dole (Gwoza, 23 April 2016).
5. Personal interview, Shamsudeen Adams, 37-year-old Boko Haram sympathizer (Maiduguri, 11 August 2016).
6. Personal interview, Ahmed Zanna, 45-year-old teacher (Gwoza, 27 April 2016).
7. Apart from the popular Sambisa Forests (also known as the Sambisa Game Reserve which was the name and purpose of the stretch of forests. Though not much in the name of game can be realistically found there, it still remains a wide and extensive no-man's-land), the Gwoza Hills surrounding the ancient town of Gwoza has functioned as a strong fortress and refuge for the BH. The convenience of the hills and their ready-made fortress-like features has turned them into camps for the BH and explains why it was easy for the group to overrun the town.
8. A case in point here is the so-called Dasukigate. One of the earliest cases of corruption tackled by the Buhari government on assumption of office in 2015 was that of over $2 billion meant for the military's engagement with the insurgents. The huge amount of money was reportedly misappropriated and diverted by the former National Security Adviser (NSA) to former President Jonathan. The former NSA was arrested on 18 November 2015 for this.
9. Personal interview, Corporal Adeola, member of the Operation Lafiya Dole (Gwoza, 15 August 2016).
10. Personal interview, Captain Sotonye (Gwoza, 23 April 2016).
11. FGD session with adult males (LGEA Primary School, Madimagari, Maiduguri, 17 August 2016).

12. On 2 August 2016 electronic media in the country had it that the government of Nigeria has fingered the London-based Daily Telegraph as boosting the Boko Haram. This must be, from government's standpoint, a reference to the fact that the newspaper has been in the forefront of covering the activities of the terror group in recent times.
13. Personal interview, Salif Bunu, 40-year-old politician in Gwoza (18 April 2016).
14. Personal interview, Linda Yakubu, 28-year member of the ECWA Church (Gwoza, 28 April 2016).

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12

Conclusion: Beyond Religion and Emergent Socio-political Counterpoints

The Character of the State and Boko Haram's Growth

There is no gainsaying the fact that the structural character of the Nigerian state has fed the Boko Haram insurgence. The extant literature on Boko Haram calls attention to some of these characteristics of the Nigerian post-colonial state ranging from ineffective/unresponsive federal government, political patronage, regionalism/ethnicity, inequity in resource distribution, corruption, unemployment to poverty and decadent political elites (see River Editors 2015; Loimeier 2012; Adesoji 2010; Aghedo 2014). However, while these factors have acted out mainly with reference to the central government, the replication and further entrenchment of these factors at the sub-state level may have created a formidable niche for the growth of Boko Haram.

The above state of affairs makes it highly probable that Boko Haram at some point enjoyed significant popular support among ordinary citizens and more crucially made it possible for the group to have access to willing young men and women often recruited as foot soldiers and suicide bombers for the organization. Given rapidly deteriorating socio-economic

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conditions in the Northeast and the apparent inability of the government (at all levels) to arrest the situation or offer reliable prospects of a better future, especially for young people, Boko Haram at the early stages of its development and even up until the Chibok incident in 2014 may have won considerable popularity among poor and ordinary citizens of the Northeast of Nigeria. In other words, Boko Haram emerged as an alternative repository of hope outside the formal state.

The Boko Haram episode like the Maitatsine movement before it and the unfolding Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) drama has positioned the state in a dilemma over its ideal role in relation to religion and violent manifestations of religion. This dilemma has not been helped by the fact that in spite of being defined as a secular state constitutionally, the state in Nigeria has regularly mediated and facilitated the religious aspirations of people. In other words, the state has often functioned in the capacity of religious agency which weakens its capacity as a political and economic agency focused on non-secular affairs. However, as has been argued, "the meta-conflict over the meaning of the July 2009 Boko Haram uprising in northern Nigeria is between competing discourses which are characterized by different conceptions of the state: the state as provider of development, the secular state, the state as provider of order, and the state as protector of the moral order" (Roelofs 2015: 128). These conceptions of the state incidentally imply an incapacity to deal frontally with cases like that of Boko Haram since it is certainly mired in confusion over its ideal role.

The Debate with Religion: Appraising the Legitimacy of Boko Haram's Claims to Islam

One general but misleading perspective on Boko Haram is to relegate the religious angle of the insurgence to the background. In this sense, "the role of religion in the conflict is acknowledged but presented as epiphenomenal and relatively unimportant" (Roelofs 2015: 137). In other words, there is the desire often to see religion as a minor causative factor

in the insurgence and rather point fingers at the role of socio-economic deprivation, state neglect and corruption. As important as these seem, my own findings indicate that it would be wrong to assume that religion plays a minor role.

Any analysis of the insurgence, no matter how well intentioned, that casts it as marginal to the religious quest of the key actors in the sect and their supporters misses the mark. Thus,

> The sect adopted a legitimate approach which is jihad. I challenge any Islamic scholar to prove the sect wrong. There are very clear provisions in the Qur'an and Hadiths which permit (and in some case made it obligatory) for Muslims to defend themselves when attacked in the course of practicing Islam. In this case, the leader of the sect was killed, our Masjids destroyed, sect member tracked and murdered, and the aggression continued. The only option we had was to defend ourselves and to the glory of almighty Allah, we have done very well.[1]

Another like-minded respondent opined, "the sect had a legitimate cause. They only responded to the killing of their members. The poor and illiterate people neglected by the government became cheap human resources for the sect to wage an attack on the government."[2] Equally, a confessed former member of the sect contends,

> The punishment for any Muslim that refuse to fight in jihad is severe. When the government of Nigeria started murdering our members and destroyed our Masjids the only legitimate thing to do was for us to defend ourselves and I don't think I have any regret about our actions. Our approaches were targeted at the government and her security forces using bombs and guns attacks. But along the line, the leadership of the group lost focus and direction and started targeting Masjid and even Jumat services and Eid grounds that is when so many of us including myself became dissatisfied and worried but unfortunately members of the Shura Councils who summoned courage to speak against the unnecessary killing of Muslims were assassinated. For me, I know the punishments for killing a Muslim brother and the only option I had was to defect to the civilian JTF to protect myself and my brothers and sisters from the sect.[3]

In addition to the above, another respondent argued, "The sect rendered the agitation illegitimate. They had a genuine cause at the begin-

ning with regards to the government attacks on Islam and mosques but the sect is also guilty of the same thing now."[4]

The contention that the group had immense support at the onset remains valid in spite of the resolve of moderate Muslims to distance themselves from the group and sponsor narratives that the group is not in any significant sense Islamic. Also emerging from the interviews and FGDs is the view that Boko Haram is an inversion of Islam. In other words, while a good number of people see Boko Haram as initially and primarily religious, they contend that the group is no longer a correct idiom of Islamic response to either spiritual or temporal problems. For these people, Boko Haram thus represents a religious youth agency driven by a critical misconception and misperception of Islam which appeals to young people who are either driven by frustration or lack of alternative knowledge about Islam.

A good number of the respondents saw the methods of Boko Haram as illegitimate in Islam and contrary to the protocol for expressing genuine grievance in a formal state. Therefore, "There is no legitimacy whatsoever even in Islam for any group to wage a war against a sovereign state. No matter the grievances of any group or individual, taking up arms against the people and country amount to a serious crime for which the group or individual must be punished. Why do we have courts? Disputes are part of human existence and there are so many peaceful approaches for any one or group to make a case, resorting to violence is unacceptable"[5].

It may be analytically more beneficial to see the Boko Haram incidence in the context of the Northern region of Nigeria as the geographical location of attempts at jihad starting from the Uthman dan Fodiyo movement of the early nineteenth century and equally reflective of the global pattern of violent resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism and Islamism. In this sense, the global narrative of grand conspiracy championed by the West against Islam which calls upon all believers to take up the jihad has further given breadth to the violence of the type of Boko Haram in various parts of the world.

Even though one confronts the worrisome embroiling of religion in politics nowadays in Nigeria, it is important to note that the two world religions in Nigeria have often exploited the intractable nexus between

belief systems and politics for diverse goals. In the case of Islam, even the much-exalted jihad of dan Fodiyo was not a total religious pursuit since it sought to overthrow and supplant a political authority as well as leverage political support of the dominant Hausa population for its religious pursuit. Religion was also used in the process for advancing the good and perceived superiority of the Fulani ethnic group over the Hausa (see Comolli 2015).

Another structural impetus to Boko Haram has been the much-touted role of the political class. In indicting politicians for the pursuit of Shari'a by Boko Haram and the appeal of this to the populace, Mohammed (2015) argues that the inability of the states that pronounced Shari'a to implement the law in full has led to the rejection of the Zamfara model by Boko Haram, who insist on full Shari'a. The quest for the imposition of full Shari'a has remained a consistent and major plank of Boko Haram's ideology over time. In this sense, the Boko Haram insurgence represents some form of popular attempt to fulfil the aspiration of Shari'a cast asunder by political elites who saw it as a vehicle for political victory and had no capacity to really function in the vanguard of a real re-emergence of Shari'a in its pre-colonial mode.

Just War and the Pillorying of Modernity

Apparently straddling what may be taken as the ideology of Boko Haram is the often portrayed rejection of modernity and Western values, especially democracy and education. While a close reading of the writings and speeches of Mohammed Yusuf call attention to a nuanced appreciation of the stance of Boko Haram on these, there is no gainsaying the fact that the relationship between Boko Haram (leadership) and the so-called evil western values is at best ambivalent and even oscillating from one end (total rejection) to another near end (rejection of some and acceptance of others). In this sense, the Boko Haram case resonates with the observation that, "despite their seemingly absolute rejection of Western values and their claims to be purely Islamic in inspiration, several Islamist leaders and thinkers were strongly influenced by and indeed borrowed considerably from modern Western political ideologies and movements

such as nationalism, communism and fascism, in particular their techniques of organization (the establishment of front groups and parallel hierarchies), propaganda, ideological indoctrination and mass mobilisation" (Bale 2009: 85).

What has certainly emerged regarding Boko Haram's relentless violence and wholesome slaughter of people is the sense of a just war. This is not just related to the 'justness' of the jihad or the quest for pure Islam but also the brutality of the security forces in 2009 in the Maiduguri face-off. Two incidents seem particularly offending and unacceptable to the group, namely, the slaughter of their founding leader by security agents even after surrendering and the burning down or destruction of their treasured Ibn Tamiyyah mosque in the old Railway Quarters. At times, the members of the group see their activities as retaliation for the above injustice and the denigration of their holy place of worship. In fact, when six members of the sect implicated in the bombing of a Catholic church in Suleija Niger State were brought to trial, one of them told the court that they were simply avenging the death of Yusuf at the hands of security agents (Vanguard, Newspaper, Nov. 25, 2011). The above sentiments were equally corroborated by the views of those I interviewed.

Boko Haram views its actions in spite of how odious and heinous as motivated by some form of just war principle. Thus, "a 'just war' narrative justifying violence in response to the Boko Haram's perceived persecution by the government and Christians has been resonating among the militants since 2009 with no sign of losing its appeal" (Comolli 2015: 11). In line with the above, one may not see or imagine Boko Haram as simply another terrorist group in the frame of the ISIS, Taliban, al-Qaeda and al-Shabaabs of this world. While there is no contesting the overriding common denominators (quest for pure or unadulterated Islam, full Shari'a, perception of the West as common enemy, justification of violence in order to achieve the desired Islamic society or establish the Caliphate) among these groups and Boko Haram, each of them also embodies peculiar features.

Therefore, in the case of Boko Haram the temptation to simply characterize and deal with it as a terrorist group may obscure our understanding of the dynamics of this unique social formation or more crucially limit the ability of Nigeria to achieve a sustainable defeat of not only

Boko Haram but other emergent extremist groups. Boko Haram is not your run-of-the-mill terrorist organization but is motivated by overwhelming domestic issues pertaining to marginalization and exclusion from socio-economic and political processes in Nigeria. As evident from our discussion here, Boko Haram embodies not only the quest for a desired Islamic society, but also represents the economic and socio-political aspirations of the ordinary citizens of the Northeast to a better society, and escape from nothingness and hopelessness.

While the oratorical prowess of Yusuf and coercive reach of Boko Haram remain undoubted, these cannot totally explain the massive loyalty which the group gained, at least until 2014 among the young people in the Northeast. Much like youth militants in the oil-rich Niger Delta of Nigeria, the tenacity of Boko Haram should be sought in the unvoiced and tacit popular support or at least endorsement of the group among the ordinary people of the Northeast. In fact, as our FGDs reveal, the ordinary people identify with the position of Boko Haram including even the quest for a better Islamic society and Shari'a (not a Shari'a targeted at socio-economically marginal members of the society). However, the major difference is that a good number of people while unhappy with the state of affairs do not approve of or support the methods of Boko Haram.

Concluding Thoughts and Defining Characteristics of Boko Haram

It is important to realize that Boko Haram has been able to thrive not only because of the incendiary preaching of Yusuf or the demeaning socio-economic conditions in the Northeast as important as these are, but because of a constellation of factors. These factors can also be implicated in the emergence of earlier Islamic fundamentalist groups in the North before Boko Haram and may even be conducive to the emergence of new groups from the ashes of Boko Haram in the future. These factors include a thriving and historical tolerance of radical Islamic ideology in the North, an environment that is heavily permeated with such social pathologies as massive youth unemployment, political corruption, widespread frustration and hopelessness, especially among young peo-

ple, transient labour engagements (high underemployment) and poverty all of which create a very conducive environment for recruitment of followers of radical groups that promise solutions and even offer immediate palliatives. Groups like Boko Haram thus embody manipulative leadership style in which religion is craftily attuned to both existing social problems and the solutions to these problems as well as the ability of the leader to provide like in the case of Yusuf, immediate economic and social benefits and palliatives made alluring by poor social provisioning by the government and its institutions and massive political corruption.

These factors may be seen as critical in the case of Boko Haram. The whole message about "boko" (forbidden) of Western influences and institutions achieve traction when people see that these institutions as unresponsive to their needs and that even those who have acquired these influences like formal education (political elites) are the prime producers of the rot in the system.

It would be in order at this juncture, to tease out what can be identified as peculiar and critical features of the Boko Haram insurgence. These features which can be seen as definitive of the sect *inter alia* include:

1. **Robust Historical Antecedents:** One crucial historical reality that helped Boko Haram's cause is the long history of Islamic fundamentalist conflicts in the North of Nigeria. These conflicts which are often sparked by different socio-political factors can be seen as more or less recurrent decimals in social life in the North of Nigeria in general. However, Boko Haram seems to have much more in common with the Maitatsine insurgence of the 1980s than any other. In this sense, it has been equally encompassing, violent and has lasted for a good number of years. The existing climate of religious protest and violent expression of discontent, especially among the less privileged class or *talakawas* in the North, may have made it easier for Boko Haram to sprout and quickly gain formidable grounds mainly in the Northeast.
2. **Popular Support Pre-2014:** In spite of current unpopularity and the tendency of people even from the Northeast to lampoon the sect, it started as a popular revolt or movement that attracted followers from all rungs of the Northeast society and had the sympathy and willing connivance of the elite political class. As the results of the field work

have shown, Boko Haram was popular not only because of the Kanuri factor but because the narratives of the founder of the sect, Mohammed Yusuf resonated with the lived realities or experiences of the people.

Moreover, Yusuf displayed a canny and penetrating knowledge of the Qur'an and was always willing to put these to test through debates with noted clerics in the North. The unpopularity of Boko Haram contrary to much of conventional wisdom did not begin after the 2009 face-off. Even after the 2009 incident, the popularity of and sympathy for the group soared among the local populace and made it difficult for security agencies to do a proper mop-up of the then fleeing remnants of the group. It was therefore unsurprising that the sect soon regrouped in 2010 under a new leader and launched vitriolic attacks against all those perceived as enemies including Islamic clerics and local politicians it accused of either having collaborated with the government or of having informed on the group to the security agencies.

The real waning of the popularity of the group began in 2013 and 2014 but peaked in 2015 and coincided with the change in national leadership in Nigeria. In fact, it is probable that the change in leadership that occasioned a more vigorous and tactical approach coupled with international support (which was hitherto not forthcoming) was the tonic needed to address Boko Haram. Also, critically undermining the popularity of the sect is the increasing number of Muslims that were being slaughtered by the group as it reeled from the military siege. The wanton destruction of human settlements, mass killings and indiscriminate use of IEDs led even those with initial sympathy for the group to reassess the legitimacy and original claims of the sect, vis-à-vis what it has become.

3. **Immediacy of Jihad:** In addition to what many mainstream Muslims perceive as the slanted interpretation of the Qur'an and the Hadiths, Boko Haram also differed in terms of believing in what can be called the immediacy of jihad and primarily conceived jihad like many other global jihadi groups as the violent liberation of one from oppression and persecution as well as the forceful conversion of unbelievers. In this case, like other extreme sects in the Salafi tradition it placed overarching emphasis on the lesser jihad which in the Qur'an talks about striving and struggling to overcome oppression and persecution and

conveniently remained mute about what the Holy Prophet Muhammad saw as the greater jihad, that is, self-mortification which conquers the sins of the flesh and untoward earthly ambition in everyday life of the believer.

Therefore, unlike many Muslims who believe in the imperative of the jihad, the sect saw the jihad as long overdue and requiring immediate action and energy on the part any true believer. Its own principle of 'takfir' is anchored on the immediacy of violent jihad and saw those who did not subscribe to this as unworthy of the faith and guilty of apostasy. There is no doubt that many Muslims generally subscribe to the notion of the jihad as an article of faith, especially its connotation to commitment to spreading of the message of Allah to all the earth and the striving to set oneself beyond worldly evils and ambitions. However, another difference is the method(s) for achieving this goal. While Islamic fundamentalist sects are wont to re-enact the violent crusades (post-Medina) of the early years of the faith, many mainstream Muslims believe that the message can be spread through many other ways in modern society.

4. **Youth Driven:** There is no doubt that Boko Haram whether seen as a religious sectarian movement or as a terrorist organization has been privileged by the agency of youth. In this case, the group has benefitted from the large number of young people cast adrift by economic hardship and social privation in the Northeast of Nigeria. Therefore, as readily agreed upon by the respondents, the group has been populated by young people who are mostly unemployed, uneducated, poor and generally deprived. The violent bend and tenacity of the group have often been linked to demographic age of a majority of the members. In this sense, the group has been influenced by both youthful exuberance and inexperience or lack of knowledge of conventional affairs and the religion of Islam. However, the generally accepted youthfulness of the majority of the members raises questions regarding the structure of opportunity (for young people) and distributional justice in the larger Nigerian state.
5. **Tenuous Connection to Global Jihadi Groups:** Even though Boko Haram has been influenced by the dominant narratives of global jihad, it has consistently focused on domestic issues and has not found it expedient to frame itself unlike the Somali al-Shabaab within the

ambit of any global jihadi movement. In spite of a precipitous pledge of allegiance to IS by Shekau in 2015 and the undeniable support of continental terrorist groups like the al-Shabaab and the AQIM in training Boko Haram fighters and even logistic support, the sect has remained largely a Nigerian defined movement. In fact, the allegiance in 2015 coincided with the weakening of the group's military capacity as a result of a better-coordinated offensive from the Nigerian security agencies and allied continental forces. Even the forays into neighbouring West African countries like Niger, Chad and Cameroon (in central Africa) has been motivated largely by the need to escape the wrath of the Nigerian state, regroup and perhaps re-strategize and not really the extension of any form of terror hegemony. However, the above may change in the coming months, especially with the involvement of the ISIL in recognizing a faction of Boko Haram, Wilayat West Africa.

6. **Revival of the Shari'a:** In spite of the fact that 12 states in the north of Nigeria are already practicing the Shari'a, that is, having it as their legal code, Boko Haram saw this Shari'a as nothing but a bogey. For the sect, the Shari'a in place is nothing but a mockery of real Islam and a tool for subjugation of the less privileged by the powerful political elites in the North. Resonant of Boko Haram's narrative, the existing Shari'a in these states has had its most celebrated victims from the lower socio-economic rungs of the society. To this end, Boko Haram was not just bad-mouthing the system of Shari'a in existence but pointing out what is perhaps largely incontrovertible about how it has worked so far, that is, only potent against the poor and economically marginal members of the society while seemingly oblivious of the elite-driven massive corruption in the society.

A Combination of Theoretical Explanations and Resolution Strategies

Given the fact that quite a good number of young people marginal to the socio-economic spheres of the society are found in Boko Haram and that the Northeast emerges one of the worst zones in all critical social indicators in Nigeria, the relative deprivation theory easily emerges a

good explanatory framework. This is especially the case where the situation of young people in the zone is a stark contradiction of the situation of political elites in the zone and even more telling, that of young people in other zones in Nigeria.

Thus, the young people in the Northeast are aware of their relative deprivation, vis-à-vis the political elites and young people elsewhere in the country. But the resolve to engage in violent acts, especially large-scale and wanton letting of blood, can only be explained through a perspective that recognizes that mere awareness of one's deprivation in comparison with significant others does not result in acts of terrorism and that terrorism is neither impulsive nor a one-step process. It is rather a series of processes with peculiar idiosyncrasies and features at each step as made explicit in the staircase model of Moghadam (2009). In other words, there are critical processes or steps from the radicalization to the mobilization continuum. This entails that cognizance of one's position as a Muslim and even as religiously different from significant others do not automatically produce terrorist yearnings or hatred for these different others.

Even as one tries to comprehend and grapple with the reality that is Boko Haram, it is important to benefit from the insight of one of those who have made efforts to de-radicalize former Boko Haram members. Thus, Atta Barkindo who had worked in the above capacity for the Nigerian government opined that there are generally,

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

One can query the meaning of being led by 'fate' into Boko Haram used here, since it on face value ironically build into some of the narratives from the group about the immutable role of divine fate. Also, there have been reports of conscription by force where those who are members

of communities invaded by Boko Haram are given the option to join the group or die horrendously—a main staple of many of the videos from the group. It may equally be possible that many of those I interacted with during the fieldwork for this book belong to the rank of the erstwhile 'salaried' members of Boko Haram, since the overriding logic in the Barkindo classification is that the ideologues remain undaunted, unbowed and recalcitrant to the end.

A much-proffered solution to the challenge of religious insurgence and fundamentalism globally is the use of de-radicalization as a process to reclaim the mental and cognitive tendencies of those who had been hitherto radicalized by fundamentalist sects. The need for this option is especially critical against the overwhelming sense of just war with which many sympathizers of the sect perceive the insurgence. For a lot of them, the sect and its members are victims of the high-handedness of the government and its security agencies. Thus, they feel that a starting point of any sustainable resolution of the conflict is for the government to apologize to the sect. In the view of one of such people, "the sect deserves an apology from the government first. Then, let the government be sincere, and request for a dialogue with the leaders of the sect, that is the easiest solution to the crisis"[6].

While de-radicalization seems a good addition to Boko Haram response, there is need to caution, especially against the background of corruption in Nigeria, that the programme should be allowed to run as ideally conceptualized. Apart from the fact that it should be driven on credibility and legitimacy, it needs to be run outside of the normal state bureaucracy and anchored by recognized experts and those with the technical knowledge needed. In other words, it must not be an all-comers field or where those with vested interests stake a claim and unwittingly undermine the process. This fear is immanent about Nigeria as it is about any other area of the globe where efforts have been invested on counter-radicalization or de-radicalization. Thus, what one finds is that, "the introduction of policies designed to 'counter-radicalise' has been accompanied by the emergence of a government-funded industry of advisers, analysts, scholars, entrepreneurs and self-appointed community representatives who claim that their knowledge of a theological or psychological radicalisation process enables them to propose interventions in Muslim communities to prevent extremism" (Kundnani 2012: 3).

Despite the difference between counter-radicalization (aimed at implanting new ideas in the individual in the bid to displace old notions and views that generate hate) and de-radicalization (shorning the individual of extremist and or radical views that privilege hate violence), in practice both efforts coalesce and yield a thorough-going process of reforming and changing the individual. In effect, what has gone on so far in Nigeria with regards to the Boko Haram challenge embodies elements of both processes. However, the extent to which such efforts have been successful remains largely unknown. While a good number of former Boko Haram elements have denounced the organization and have been welcomed with open arms by the government and its agencies, there is need to understand that one can disengage from terrorism and even self-de-radicalize without the formal process stated above. In this sense, quite a good number of those who have left the fold of Boko Haram are either in the above category or are those who were forced against their will into the organization in the first place.

Also, the programme on de-radicalization needs to be properly nuanced, especially with reference to its approach. For instance, there is a need to appreciate that the programme should target the causes of radicalization itself. Hence, radicalization can be located on three main levels, namely, the micro or individual level (identity problems, integration, alienation, marginalization, fear of significant others, etc.), meso (immediate wider milieu or organization, e.g. the church, sects, fellowships, brotherhoods, etc.) and macro (government/state, larger society—caused often by exclusion, majority-minority relations, collective memory, perceived injustice on one's group or religion, etc.). The above means that the process of de- or counter-radicalization should also be approached from the above three layers, that is, the process must embody actions at these different levels. So far, the efforts in the Boko Haram case have been mainly on the micro or individual level.

Actions on the macro level are especially imperative when one realizes that Boko Haram can to a large extent be framed as an insurgence resulting from dissatisfaction of a large number of people with the distributional system of the state and the structure that sustains such a system. In other words, the insurgence resonates with glaring issues of distributive justice and socio-political exclusion. This then calls attention to the

need to fundamentally address some of the salient issues raised by Boko Haram. While it may be convenient for the government in Nigeria to simply see the insurgence as an out and out case of religious terrorism, there is no denying the fact that Boko Haram was not the first case of Islamic fundamentalism in the North and may not, unfortunately, be the last.

As some of the respondents pointed out there are already in gestation groups like the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) that are very similar to Boko Haram. In the opinion of one of the respondents, "they call themselves Islamic Movement of Nigeria. The Shia is more dangerous than Boko Haram in terms of extremism and links with elements outside Nigeria. The JNI which I am a member is fully aware of this and has been co-operative with the authorities in this regards. So, I am urging the authority to handle Shia with care and follow laid down rules to avoid another violence in Nigeria"[7]. In addition, the way the de-radicalization process goes in Nigeria now seems like the consummation of a self-fulfilling prophesy scripted by the government. In other words, de-radicalization becomes increasingly a process of enthroning a worldview prompted by the government which is largely oblivious of the salient issues in the insurgence.

Another way of dealing with Islamic fundamentalism which for whatever reasons has not been used in Nigeria is a proactive policy of containment. This would entail containing the menace of Islamic fundamentalism before it becomes a large-scale security threat. For instance, both the Maitatsine and Boko Haram existed for many years within which period their leaders actively engaged in provocative ranting and inciting public speeches or sermons before the onset of violence. Thus, Maitatsine's antecedents and legacy of trouble making and threat to public peace started even before the independence of Nigeria, yet security agencies and government watched docilely and left him for decades to acquire large followership and unleash terror on Nigerians for another decade.

The same pattern repeated itself in the case of the current Boko Haram. The movement started circa 2002 and from inception, the leader of the movement made no pretence about his disdain for authority and desire to use warfare to expunge the rot of westernization from Nigeria. Yet he

was given free rein for over seven years before the movement struck. The lack of proactive containment creates room for these movements to amass supporters and make inroads into political and power structures thereby garnering supporters in high places. These position them to engage in long drawn terror and violence.

Another approach that needs to be fully exploited is the regular and even forceful reinforcement of secularity by the federal government. In this sense, any threat on the nation's secularity should be dealt with in a decisive and unequivocal manner. The inability of the central government to respond effectively to the initial imposition of blanket Shari'a by the Zamfara state government created the room for other states in the North to follow suit. The re-emergence of Shari'a as it were feeds into historical Islamic fundamentalist orientation in the North which has been a prominent challenge on Nigeria's secularism through time. The federal government should have insisted from 1999 that Shari'a be kept at the level of the customary courts where it had been located in 1900 by the colonial administrators and in the 1979 Constitution of Nigeria. This still remains a workable approach in curtailing the recurrent threat of Islamic fundamentalism in the country.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the contemporary history of Nigeria as a fragile state and the immense role of religion in both interpersonal and intergroup relations (Anugwom 2003) call attention to a much more thorough-going examination of the remote and immediate drivers of the insurgence than is presently the case. In a nutshell, my findings persuade me like other discerning researchers on Boko Haram (see Higazi et al. 2018) that it will only be counter-productive, naïve and illogical to frame Boko Haram as simply ordinary terrorism driven by international jihadi influence. Boko Haram is much more complex and commands peculiarities honed by internal socio-historical and political processes in Nigeria. Therefore, in spite of the temptation to adopt a blanket notion of terrorism in the Boko Haram response, history of recurrent religious conflict in the North, an undying civil war nationalism in the East, distributional struggles in the Niger Delta and general influence of centrifugal forces demand fundamentally nuanced and responsive reactions to the salient issues raised in the insurgence.

Notes

1. Personal interview, Ja'afar Mala (Gwoza, 21 April 2016).
2. Personal interview, Muhammad Hamza (Maiduguri, 30 July 2016).
3. Personal interview, Ustaz Mahmood (Gwoza, 16 August 2016).
4. Personal interview, Usman Biu, 47-year-old business man from Biu but resident in Maiduguri (16 August 2016).
5. Personal interview, Barrister Mahmood (Maiduguri, 19 July 2016).
6. Personal interview, Ahmad Ibn Anas (Gwoza, 14 August 2016).
7. Personal interview, Wakil Imam, 45-year-old member of the JNI (another popular Islamic sect) (Gwoza, 2 June 2016).

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Glossary of Terms

Achapa Commercial motorcycle operator; the motorcycle is the most common mode of transportation in most of the north of Nigeria

Almajirai (Almajarai; Almajiri) Generally refers to itinerant students of the Qur'an; an elaborate informal apprentice system in which children are sent to learn the Qur'an and Arabic language mainly through citation under known Mallams or authorities in the religion

Amira al-Mumiriin Leader of the Islamic faithful in Nigeria. Ruler and commander of the faithful

Bida'h Denotes illegal innovation in Islam. Jihadi sects nowadays see the fight against other Muslims as also fight against innovation and thus a very thorny issue in Islam

Boko Literally refers to strange, sham, deceitful, counterfeit, not the real or good thing

CJTF Civilian Joint Task Force; a civilian equivalent of the military task force composed mainly of youth, hunters and repented former Boko Haram members. The vigilante group has been instrumental in turning the tide against Boko Haram and in restoration of peace and trust in the communities hitherto ravaged by Boko Haram violence

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Hadiths (Sunnah) The words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammed which derive importance from the fact that they show how to put the guidance of the Qur'an into practice

Haram This refers to action which is seen as unlawful or forbidden and definitely attracts punishment if performed. It connotes what is defined as contaminated and contaminating from the perspective of Islam, therefore undermines the purity of the believer. Incidentally, Boko Haram does not emphasize the outlawing component as much as it prioritizes the punishment for such things

Hudud Refers to criminal law under the Shari'a; offences with prescribed punishment in the Qur'an such as adultery, theft, apostasy

Hijra Following the example of Prophet Muhammad a movement or flight from place of persecution or non-Muslim environment in the bid to seek a more conducive place to practice the religion in its true form

Istikbar Arrogance seen in the Qur'an as a sin of Satan (Holy Qur'an, 2:34)

Jihad Duty imposed by Qur'an on all believers to struggle against evil and bodily temptations while walking the path of God. It is thus both the inner struggle to overcome sin and outer struggle to promote and protect the faith. Often the former is seen as the bigger jihad, while the latter is the lesser jihad which imposes a duty on all Muslims to fight against oppression and persecution against the faithful. The jihad now made popular by Islamic fundamentalists refers more to the lesser jihad than the fundamental meaning of the concept

Joint Task Force (JTF) The joint military task force; combined military task force including the police that was used in confronting the Boko Haram; became quite popular in Nigeria after being used in confronting erstwhile Niger Delta militants

JTF-ORO Joint Task Force – Operation Restore Order

Mahdi (Mahdi al-Muntaz) A messianic figure who will appear towards the end of time and would lead the Ummah and restore Islam to all ends of the world as the only and true religion. It is expected that the Mahdi would soon after be followed by Isa (Jesus). His appearance signals the end of time

Mallam Teacher of Islam; someone officially recognized as possessing very good knowledge of the religion

Mujahidden Believers engaged in armed struggle or jihad in order to defend the faith. A favoured name amongst today's jihadists

Sabon Gari Literally means strangers' quarters. In the north of Nigeria, residential areas predominantly occupied by members of other ethnic groups apart from the Hausa-Fulani are designated and described as 'Sabon Gari'

Salafi Religious movement founded by Muhammad Abduh which advocates back-to-basics or fundamentalist orientation to Islam. Nowadays, Salafi in addition to fundamentalism also connotes aggressive stance towards both traditional or mainstream Islam and the West

Shari'a/Shari'ah Literally the path; way to the watering place. Based on the Qur'an and precedents set by the Prophet. All-encompassing and comprehensive set of laws and rules see as the norm and ideal for all true Muslims. It includes family law, criminal justice, business and trade obligations as well as rules of warfare. These laws are divine and anchored on justice

Sufism Mystic brand of Islam built mainly on introspection and contemplation which promotes brotherhoods each of which is devoted to a saint in Islam

Tajdid Renewal

Talakawa Commoner (generally applied in the north of Nigeria); the peasant class who are seen as either marginal or excluded from the socio-economic and political spheres of the society

Taqiyah Discretion, that is, the freedom to exercise discretion in relation to beliefs, especially for Shiites who live amongst Sunni Muslims

Tawhid The oneness of God

The Khalifah Vice-regent on earth. The Holy Qur'an refers to Khalifah as a manager but not proprietor; a keeper of all generations

Taymiyyah (Taqi al-Din ibn) Renowned Islamic scholar frequently cited and used as inspiration for neo-orthodox groups nowadays. In spite of how he is portrayed Taymiyyah was neither as ultra-orthodox and divisive as those who now adopt him as inspiration

Ummah Community of believers in Islam

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

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