

The Nexus between the Khawārij Theological Misconception of *Īmān* (Faith) and Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

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Abstract

In Islam, *Īmān* (faith) is the bedrock and central-point-determinant of the yardstick to evaluate the extent to which a person has complied with teachings and precepts of Islam. The relationship between *Īmān* and ‘amal has been scholastically debated since the demise of the Prophet by the divergent Muslim theological groups (*firāq*). Since the first Islamic century, the debate has led to divisions among the Muslim Ummah giving birth to deviating sects such as the *Khawārij*, *Mu‘tazilah*, *Murji‘ah* and the *Shi‘ah* with conflicting theological and ideological standpoints. Observably, the sects still exist across the Muslim world either in name or form at times with violent tendencies, causing havoc and challenging the inherent peaceful nature of Islam. This paper examined the theological viewpoint of the *Khawārij* and its impact on the Boko Haram insurgent group hatched in Nigeria but later spread to other neighbouring countries. Historical and comparative research methods have been adopted while using content analysis approach on the data collated. The paper discovered that, comparatively, the insurrectionary Boko Haram sect is one of the neo-*khariji* affiliates of the 21st century due to their gross abuse of the concept of Jihad and misapplication of takfir loosely on any Muslim other than them. This ideology is what they use to justify their actions against all others besides them. A group that causes havoc in Nigeria from security to socio-economic and religious instabilities as did the *Khawārij* to the early Muslim community. Therefore, it recommends that the dreaded sect should be combated not only with military force, but also with deliberate and well-articulated intellectual cum ideological counter-narratives to disabuse and de-radicalize the mind-set of its existing as well as prospective members.

Keywords: Islamic theology, *Khawārij*, insurgency, Boko Haram, North-Eastern Nigeria

Introduction

The recent insurgency that engulfed the North-Eastern Nigeria has put the nation in a new scene of global discourse. The Boko Haram activities which have claimed the lives and properties of innocent persons, majority of whom are Muslims, have raised a lot of questions as to whether these deviant acts are truly Islamic. The fact that the terrorist activities have never differentiated the young from the aged, men from women, the rich from the poor, Muslims from non-Muslims, has compelled scholars to search for the fundamental source(s) of this ideology that is claiming to be undertaking ‘Islamic *Jihād*’ despite its series of attacks on *Masājid* (Mosques) wherein many eminent Muslim scholars and worshippers have lost their lives.

A variety of reasons have been identified and advanced by different researchers from Nigeria and abroad as causes of Boko Haram movement in Nigeria. Some attributed the issue to socio-economic factors due to extreme poverty, some linked it with political motive while others look at it from poor or failed governance of Northern state governments¹. Similarly, another group of researchers connect the evolution of the movement to the quest many Nigerian Muslims have for proper implementation of Shari’ah. A right they believed to have been robbed by the European imperialists when they dismantled the Sokoto Caliphate in the early 20th century. Yet, others added that, dissatisfaction with the efforts of some state governors who implemented the Shari’ah when Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, is another plausible factor that led to the emergence of the group.² This research however, looks at the issue through the lenses of ideological theology as the main driver. As such, this driver is supported by some grievances as the fundamental cause of the Boko Haram insurgency driven by their misconception of *Īmān* (belief). What invalidates *Īmān* and subjects a believer to *kufr* (disbelief) is a vital point for debate in this context. In fact, the

¹ John Campbell, *Boko Haram: Origins, Challenges and Responses* (Norwegian: NOREF, 2014), n.p.

² Nasiruddeen Abdulrahim, Ahmad Jungudo Muhammad & Abdul-Ali Idris Mohammed, “Jamā’ah Ahl al-Sunnah li al-Da’wah wa al-Jihād and the Application of *Hakīmīyah* Verse on Contemporary Nigerian Leaders: An Exegetic Analysis,” *Jurnal Usuluddin* 47, no. 1 (June 2019) 177-194.

dispute on what *Īmān* means was the first discord to occur among Muslims, which divided the Muslim community into sects and factions, differing on the application of injunctions derived from the Qur'an and *Sunnah* and began to call one another 'infidels.' The first to enter the scene was the group of people known as *Khawārij* or Khārijites³. Therefore, the Boko Haram ideology of declaring other Muslims infidels and consequently destroying their lives and properties is a direct offshoot of the *Khawārij* ideology. Their misconception of *Īmān* is the genesis of considering every Muslim who committed a 'grievous' sin a disbeliever. This explains clearly the Boko Haram bloody activities in the North-Eastern Nigeria and parts of other neighbouring sub-Sahara African countries where Muslims are the majority such as Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

The paper covers: the Islamic conception of *Īmān*, with a fair discussion on the conflicting standpoints over the theological debate on *Īmān*: It also traces the historical trends of the *Khawārij* theological conception of *Īmān* which resulted to their insurgency. It then dwells on various historical accounts on the evolution of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria as well as making a spectacular glance through the group's ideological makeups. The paper wraps up with analysis substantiating Boko Haram's nexus with *Khawārij*. It then concludes with some practicable recommendations on how to handle the menace of insurgency in Nigeria and elsewhere adopting the PVE-TAN (Preventing Violent Extremism through Alternative Narratives) approach.

Approach of Study

This study adopts descriptive qualitative approach to analytically examine the theological cum ideological relationship between *Khawārij* and Boko Haram. While trying to achieve the objectives of the study, we used library-based method to collate data where relevant classical and contemporary literature from books, journals, conference papers were consulted. In addition, structured personal interview was conducted with repentant followers and sympathisers of the Boko Haram insurgent group to obtain vital first-hand information about the group which would hardly be

³ Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Iman and Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2006), 1.

available elsewhere. Researchers' observation of the unfolding situation surrounding the group's activities in northeast was another technique used in discussing the phenomena. Internet sources in both electronic and print forms were also instrumental in data collection for this research.

Based on the available data retrieved from the sources highlighted above, the researchers used content analysis technique to comparatively analyse the issue at hand establishing the nexus between *Khawārij* and Boko Haram in the light of Qur'an, Prophetic Sunnah and established historical facts.

Being a conceptual paper, this portion analyses some literature on the major issues of concern. Discourse surrounding *Īmān* and its interplay with action is a long-standing issue debated by both classical and modern scholars due to its theological importance. Scholars within and without Nigeria have written extensively on the subject of Boko Haram from the group's history to its activities and recruitment strategies. Varying viewpoints have been expressed on the causes of the menace from different perspectives. Some researchers view the issue from sociological point of view, others through economic lenses. Yet, others consider religious theological and ideological tendencies as causative factors which is the standpoint of this research. Reviews on the issue are made under the following subheadings.

The Islamic Conception of *Īmān*

Īmān (faith) is literally defined as *Taşdīq* i.e. to accept as true or belief⁴. Technically, *Īmān* comprises three major components: verbal testimony, heart conviction and practice i.e. actions and inactions of the organs⁵. Therefore, before a person could be a perfect believer, he/she must establish these three components. The tongue must pronounce the word of testimony and he/she must be convinced in his/her heart while the remaining organs of the body must practice what the testimony contains. Many proofs testify to this; among which is the *Ḥadīth* of Abī Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said:

⁴ Muḥammad Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2013), 133.

⁵ Hibat Allāh Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Lalaka‘ī, *Sharḥ Uṣūl I’tiqād Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama‘ah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2004), 549.

Īmān has over sixty branches, the highest of it is the saying of *Lā Ilāha illā Allāh* (i.e. none has the right to be worshipped except Allah), and the least of it is to remove a harmful object from the pathway. Moreover, modesty is a branch of *Īmān*⁶.

This *Ḥadīth* explains the three aspects of *Īmān* identified above, where the saying of *Lā Ilāha illā Allāh* stands for verbal testimony, removing a harmful object from the road represents the practice of the organs, then modesty which would not be real until it comes from the heart, explicates the heart conviction.

Another proof that *Īmān* contains actions is the Qur'anic verse which says: "And never would Allah have caused you to lose your *Īmān*" [Q2:143]. According to the Qur'anic commentators, *Īmān* here is referring to the prayers offered by the believers while facing Jerusalem⁷. To further buttress how intertwined the concepts of *Īmān* and 'amal are in Islam, Allah (SWT) has, in many verses of the Qur'an mention them together using the phrase: "Verily! Those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous deeds, shall have the Gardens of al-Firdaus (the Paradise) for their entertainment" (Q: 18:107). Similar expressions could be found in these verses: Q: 2:277, Q: 10:9, Q: 11:23, Q: 18:30 and 107, Q: 19:96, Q: 31:8, Q: 41:8, Q: 85:11 and Q: 98:7. These confirmed that actions are part of faith based on the creed of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*.

Theological Debate on *Īmān*: The Conflicting Standpoints

Muslim Theologians debated on various issues regarding the conceptual clarification of *Īmān*. These issues include the relationship between *Īmān* and practice, increase and decrease of *Īmān*, and the position of a Muslim who commits a grievous sin. The impact of this debate influences division amongst Muslims themselves at different times in history.

Ahl al-Sunnah believe that practice is part of faith; hence, never would the faith be a complete one without practice. It increases by the increase of righteous deeds and decreases with

⁶ Muslim bin Ḥajjaj bin Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Cairo: Dār Ibn Haithām, 2003), 58.

⁷ Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī, M M. *Aḍwā' al-Bayān fī Tawḍīḥ al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: al-Tawfikīyya Bookshop, 2014), 76.

sinful acts as established by many Qur’anic verses such as Q: 8:2 which says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا
وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ.

Al-Anfāl 8:2

The believers are those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, and when His revelations are recited to them, they increase them in *Īmān*, and upon their Lord they rely.

Also, in Q: 9:124-125 where Allah says:

وَإِذَا مَا أَنْزَلْنَا سُورَةً فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَقُولُ أَكُنْمْ زَادَتْهُ هَٰذِهِ إِيمَانًا ۚ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَرَادَتْهُمْ
إِيمَانًا وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ. وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا إِلَىٰ رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا
وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ.

Al-Tawbah 9:124-125

Whenever a chapter is revealed, some of them say, “Which of you has this increased in faith?” As for those who believe; it increases them in faith and they rejoice. But as for those in whose hearts is disease, it has only increased them in evil in addition to their evil and they die while they are disbelievers.

However, according to the *Ahl al-Sunnah*, the absence of practice does not invalidate the faith; rather, it renders faith to be inadequate. So, when a believer embarks on sins other than *shirk* (associating partner to Allah), they say he is still a believer but with inadequate faith. In case such a person dies without repentance, he is under Allah’s wish on the Day of Judgment. If Allah wishes, He forgives him out of His mercy and if He so wishes, He punishes him out of His justice⁸.

The *Murji’ah*, *Khawārij* and *Mu’tazilah* disagree with this view. According to the *Murji’ah*, *Īmān* is only heart conviction and verbal testimony, they believed that practice and action are not part of faith and have nothing to do with it. Based on this, they say, the person who commits grievous sins and neglects obligatory acts is still a perfect believer with adequate faith, and such a

⁸ Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭahāwī, *Al-Aqīdah al-Ṭahāwīyyah in Jami’ al-Mutūn al-Tawḥīd wa al-Aqīdah* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Hādī al-Muḥammadī, 2008), 171-172; Aḥmad Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Aqīdah al-Waṣāṭīyyah* (Al-Manṣūrah: Dār Ibn Rajab, 2004), 67-70.

person has equal faith with the person who does not commit sins and practices the obligatory acts. They maintain that both of them are believers and none of them will be punished because deeds are not part of faith⁹.

On the other hand, *Khawārij* and *Mu'tazilah* believe that, practice is part of faith and a necessary clause for its validity. Therefore, without practice, whoever believes in his heart and commits grievous sin is no more a believer. On this note, the *Khawārij* conclude that such a person is a *kāfir* (i.e. a disbeliever), while the *Mu'tazilah* conclude he is neither a *Mu'min* nor a *kāfir*, but he is in a position between *īmān* and *kufur*; this is what they call the doctrine of "*Al-Manzilah bayna al-Manzilatayn*"¹⁰.

The Historical Trends of the *Khawārij* Conception of *īmān*

The term '*Khawārij*' was first used to qualify a rebellious group of about twelve thousand men who separated themselves from 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib's (RA) army and moved towards a place called Harura.¹¹ After establishing their administration in Harura, the rebels declared 'Alī, Mu'awwiyah and those who supported any of the two during the battle of Siffin as *kuffār* (i.e. disbelievers) on the basis that the arbitration that took place between the two groups, which put the battle to rest, was done out of error and therefore, all those who supported the arbitration committed a grievous sin that invalidated their *īmān*¹².

It is paramount to note that the ideology of the *Khawārij* started with *Dhū al-Khuwaysirah*, the man who openly challenged the Prophet (SAW) and accused him of being unjust. His action made the Prophet (SAW) to draw his attention to the fact that if the Prophet of Allah is not just, then who is? Thereupon, the Prophet (SAW) declared that certain group will emerge from this man who will be reciting the Qur'an but will not put its injunctions into practice; they will flee away from Islam as the arrow flees

⁹ Abī Muḥammad 'Alī bin Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā' wa al-Niḥal* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Khaniji, n.d), 37.

¹⁰ 'Abd al-Qāhir Ibn Muḥammad al-Baghdādī, *Al-Farq Bayn al-Firāq* (Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-'Aṣriyyah, 2015), 110.

¹¹ Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh al-Ummam wa al-Muluk* (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Tawfiqiyyah, 2016), 126.

¹² Toshihiko, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Iman and Islam*, 7.

away from the bow¹³. It is on this fact that some scholars hold on to the opinion that the Khawārij activities started during the lifetime of the Prophet (SAW)¹⁴.

The trends of this unguided ideology resurfaced in the regime of the third Caliph of Islam, ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān (RA) who was assassinated by the rebels who declared him unjust leader. This group of people, who after killing the Caliph looted the state treasury, were ‘*Khawārij*’¹⁵ by their action. During this stage; the group were not really organized as an entity with theological opinions. It was during the caliphate of ‘Alī (RA) they became more organized and gained much popularity by their identities as stated bellow.

The *Khawārij* and Insurgency

Prior to the regime of the fourth Caliph, ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (RA), the ideologies of the *Khawārij* were not really to take over the government, they were mere thoughts of the rebels. But after the case of arbitration that took place between the two fighting Muslim groups (i.e. the group of Ali and that of Mu‘awwiyah [RA]), the ideology of the *Khawārij* metamorphosed to an organized identity with its political thoughts and theological ideas.¹⁶ They formed a strong insurgent group and opined that all other persons who did not share their thoughts and ideologies are *kuffār* (infidels). They made it compulsory upon themselves to fight and kill, in the name of religion, anyone who deviated from this creed. Since, they developed the concept that the entire Muslim community had denounced their faith, except those who shared the *Khawārij* conception of *Īmān*, they decided to sneak away from their parents and relatives and went on to capture Muslim communities, took them as hostages, and forcefully subjected them to their harsh rules and dictatorship¹⁷.

¹³ Muḥammad bin Ismā‘īl al-Bukhari, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Mukhtaṣar* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1987), no. 2969.

¹⁴ Tāj al-Dīn Abū al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* (Beirut: Dār al-Maktabah al-Mutanabbī, 1992), 51.

¹⁵ Ismā‘īl Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1997), 17:178.

¹⁶ Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ṣallābī, *Al-Khawārij: Nasha’atuhum wa Ṣifātuhum wa ‘Aqā’iduhum wa Afkārūhum* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2014), 11.

¹⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 17:271.

The *Khawārij* generated serious unrest and tried to make the state ungovernable for ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (RA). They killed a lot of innocent souls, including ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Khabbab (RA), a companion of the Prophet (SAW) who was slaughtered and his heavily pregnant wife ripped open by these insurgents¹⁸. All these atrocities committed by the insurgents were the result of their misconception of *Īmān* that it must be a complete one attained only by doing all righteous deeds and abstaining from all sinful acts. Whosoever neglects any obligatory deed or embarks on any grievous sin has disbelieved¹⁹, and fighting such a person is considered a righteous duty with great rewards.

The link between the *Khawārij* and the Boko Haram insurgency is even more obvious in the former’s core doctrinal ideology which centres on the following:

1. Declaring any person who commits a grievous sin as someone who has committed an act of apostasy and therefore must be killed.

2. Rebelling against leaders and constituted authorities who operate a non-Shari’ah-compliant government is the main feature of the *Khawārij* in any given time and place. Under this, they developed the idea that a leader must be a learned Islamic Scholar with *zuhud* i.e. self-denial of worldly comfort²⁰.

According to this *Khawārij* ideology, any leader who does not possess these qualities is an unjust ruler and should be overthrown. Hence, rebelling against such a leader is a religious duty in which every sound Muslim must take part. Therefore, whoever lives under such authorities or participate in any official assignment and refuses to partake in the rebellious movement has indeed, according to them, accepted the form of governance and therefore, would share the blame and face the consequences. The assassination of the two righteous Caliphs, Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān and ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (RA) was as a result of the *Khawārij* ideology of outward criticism of leaders and capitalizing on their

¹⁸ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 17:272.

¹⁹ Safr bin ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Ḥawālī, *Uṣūl al-Firāq wa al-Adyān wal-Madhāhib al-Fikriyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Safwah, 2016), 20.

²⁰ ‘Abd al-Raḥman Ibn ‘Alī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbis Iblīs* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1998), 117.

‘shortcomings’ to instigate the masses against constituted authorities.

This particular ideology is considered the link and rally point of all rebellious groups throughout the Islamic history, regardless of the titles they proclaim at different times and varying places. However, it is vital to note that many of these groups usually deny strongly the bearing of *Khawārij* even when they share this ideology.

3. Since the *Khawārij* declare other Muslims as infidels, leaders and the led, they opined that blood of such Muslims is lawful to spill and their women are to be taken as war captives while their properties are seized as war booty. This particular ideology is one of the bases of the early *Khawārij* for being rebellious against the government of ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (RA). They accused him of denying them the right to take the women and children of his opponents as war captives during the battles of *Jamal* and *Ṣiffīn*²¹.

Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: A Brief Account

Just like some other movements across the globe, inconsistencies abound the historiographical formation of the originally Nigeria-based 21st century terror group called the Boko Haram. The controversies that trail the historical origins of this dreaded ‘religious’ sect of northern Nigeria, range from the issue of name, the actual founder(s) to period of foundation. Significantly, the movement underwent some metamorphic stages of development. The way its name changes; so also, its activities and approaches to unfolding circumstances. No less than seven different nomenclatures were used to describe the movement over time, all showcasing one or another of its activities or misleading verdicts. For convenience, let us analyse the history of the sect under the formative, strategic, accomplishing and declining phases.

This neo-*Khārijite* ideology featured prominently in Africa about five decades ago and thrived in Egypt under the auspices of *Jamā’atut Takfir wal Hijrah* led by Shukri Mustafa which consequently spread to different parts of the continent. It was through this chain that, according to one account, the alien

²¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbis Iblīs*, 113-116.

ideology was imported into Nigeria by a Sudanese who was based in Kano, although, his advocacy was resisted by the Muslims in Kano. Incidentally, in early 2000, a man called Abu al-Bara' was known to have been nurturing the ideology while staying at Tudun Murtala, Kano. At the initial stage, he introduced two other young men of Borno origin named Muhammad Ali (AKA Ala'u al-Din) and Abu Umar (Usman). Afterwards, the duo influenced other well-spirited youths, by name Abu Dujanah (Yusuf) and Muhammad Koleri with whom they made a formidable team in Kano. With the formation of this small group, the ideology started to be spread out to other places across the north down to Maiduguri, mainly; via what they referred to as *Da'wah sirriyyah* (secret advocacy/propagation) from their Tudun Murtala base, sending both written and audio recorded short messages to Ulama within and outside Kano²². Because of his erudition, most of the writings were said to have been done by Ala'u al-Din.

Subsequently, in consideration of Muhammad Yusuf's antecedents as a growing Muslim cleric, having a teeming followership constituting majorly of youth, with experiences of activism from Zakzakiyya movement to *Jama'ah Tajdid al-Islami* (JTI) before he later joined the *Ahl al-Sunnah* circle in 1999;²³ the duo of Muhammad Ali (Ala'u al-Din) and Abu Umar (Usman) advanced their call to him in the year 2002, after one of his Tafsir sessions which he used to conduct together with *Ta'limat* at Bello Damagun Mosque in Yobe State. After extensive discussion with convincing explanation, Yusuf reluctantly accepted to join them. However, even with the acceptance, he declined to propagate the ideology until 2003, a development which led to his secession with Ja'far Mahmud Adam whom he used to patronize, hence, was dispelled from any activity in Indimi Mosque in Maiduguri, from where he moved to Railway Quarters and continued spreading the ideology further²⁴. Thenceforth, Ja'far continued to preach scholarly at variance with the new ideology exposing its looming

²² Tudun Murtala Muhammad, in interview with author and other group of researchers in "History and Formation of Boko Haram Movement in Nigeria", April Friday, 2019.

²³ Malam Adamu, in interview with author and other group of researchers in "History and Formation of Boko Haram Movement in Nigeria", April Friday, 2019.

²⁴ Tudun Murtala Muhammad, in interview with author, April Friday, 2019

dangers not only on Islam and Muslims but also to the Nigerian state up to his death in 2007.

Principally, it was from this group and many other young men both singles and married together with their wives/children who accepted the ideology that embarked on the first hijrah. This was from Kano and Maiduguri, where they marched secretly to a Riverine area in Gaidam, Yobe State and camped at a bushy area of Tarmuwa called *Dār al-Hijrah*. There, a well-structured leadership was designed, Abu Umar being the Amir of the camp. At the camp, they constructed a Mosque and *Madrasah* of varying levels. While there, scholars and even security agents used to visit the area with no threats of war but dialogue. It is important to note here that, Muhammad Yusuf was not at the camp, because to him, there was no any reason to warrant the migration, but concentrated on propagating the ideology to people in the town. Though, Muhammad Ali too was not residing in the camp, but he used to visit and preach to them occasionally. For a period of three months, they lived peacefully until when security personnel ransacked the camp, killing some including the overall leader Muhammad Ali, others injured and many fled away. This ultimately led to disintegration of the Tarmuwa camp²⁵.

Thereafter, they regrouped and moved for the second hijrah where they camped at Kanama-base in Yunusari LGA, Yobe State in December, 2003 while still bearing the name “Nigerian *Taliban*”²⁶. They continued parading towards prominent Muslim Youth clerics across some northern states notably Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, Gombe, Maiduguri, Adamawa and Yobe States; engaging them in controversial theological and ideological debates. The call was largely accepted in Borno, which later served as the nerve centre of the un/anti-Islamic sect (hereafter Boko Haram) championed by Muhammad Yusuf and his subordinates in the span of 7 years (from 2002/2003-2009, i.e. barely 3 years after the country’s return to democratic dispensation) mainly through preaching. Most of the early advocates of Boko Haram ideology got indoctrinated by the two young men *Ubi Supra* and

²⁵ Tudun Murtala Muhammad, in interview with author, April Friday, 2019

²⁶ Kyari Mohammed, “Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria”, edited by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, *The Message and Methods of Boko Haram* (Ipskamp Drukkers, Enschede) 2 (2014): 12.

subsequently via reading the works of Abdul-Mun'im Mustafa Halim popularly known as Abū Baṣīr Al-Turtusī, a Syrian-based cleric²⁷.

In the formative phase of the sect, it bears the name; 'Yusufiyyah Movement' (designated after the widely-held founder Muhammad Yusuf), who was also confirmed to be a member of the Shi'ite group, according to late Muhammad Auwal Albani Zaria, but later reverted to the mainstream Sunni Islam studying in the study-circles of late Sheikh Ja'far Mahmud Adam Kano and the likes. Consequently, Yusuf began to be so controversial and differing with his teachers on many issues having to do with *īmān* and *kufr* turning to be 'radical' and extremely strange on trivial matters. When he became fully engulfed in the radicalization process, he then continued gathering followership, capitalizing on the overzealousness of the gullible Muslim youth based on real or perceived grievances, who were obsessed by the dwindling and eroding hopes in the hands of corrupt politicians and injustices perpetrated by what they called 'kufristic' democratic government. Having lured many seriously 'sincere' Muslim youth into the movement mainly from neighbouring North-eastern states; he then established a centre with the support of some politicians at Bulabulin Bayan Quarters (Bulabulin, behind Railway Quarters) in Maiduguri known as *Markazu* Ibn Taymiyyah (popularly called Markas)²⁸.

Since at this infant formative stage, a quite number of Muslim scholars, activists and *Da'wah* workers from various organizations unequivocally stood against the emerging dangerous group by engaging in scholarly debates/dialogues with them and enlightening the public as well as the constituted authority on the heinous tendencies and the potential danger of the uprising, but especially the government was heedless of the call. Prominent

²⁷ Isa Ibrahim Ali, "Theology and Jurisprudence in the Ideological Framework of Current Insurgencies: Towards an Alternative Islamic Discourse." *Regional Conference on Islam, Youth Militancy and the Challenges of Peace-Building* (Abuja: Center For Regional Integration and Development, 2015), 4-5; Mansur Muhammad Ibrahim, "Matsayin Karatun Boko Da Aikin Gwamnati a Musulunci", *Presented at Bauchi* (May 08, 2009), 7.

²⁸ Muhammad Umara, "The Ideological Expansion of the Boko Haram Sect in Nigeria, Preventing the Next Boko Haram and its Ideological Expansion" (Minna: Islamic Education Trust, 2015), n.p.

among the Islamic scholars who stood against it through their lectures, *Tafsir*, *Ta'limat* and Friday sermons are: late Ja'far Mahmud Adam (Kano), late Muhammad Auwal Adam Albani (Zaria), AbdulWahhab Abdallah (Kano), Mal. Idris Abdulaziz (Bauchi), Mal. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami (Gombe/Bauchi), Mal. Muhammad bin Uthman (Kano), Imam Ali Gabchiya (Borno), and Sheikh Muhammad Abba Aji (Borno) etc. This move which could better be described as 'de-radicalization and counter narrative campaign' was indeed remarkable and successful to a certain extent. In fact, in mid-2012, a famous lecture delivered by late Sheikh Ja'far at Maiduguri titled *Tafarki Madaidaici* (The Middle Course) in which he discussed with textual proofs, the path of *Ahl al-Sunnah* in both knowledge and practice while refuting the unfounded claims of the Boko Haram which form the core of their ideological framework. The audio CD was massively reproduced and distributed for free to travellers and the general public by the Nigerian Army personnel as well as to other institutions across Northern Nigeria.

Nonetheless, the insurrection could have been knelt down if not because the then PDP government at all levels underrated the worth and power of the Boko Haram insurgents; which allowed the group to transit to the strategic stage of development described by Mohammed as the *Da'wah* (proselytization) stage²⁹. Therefore, Muhammad Yusuf continually amassed followers through his preaching characterized by calls on the necessity of *Jihad* and establishment of an Islamic government against the reigning democratic system of the country. He advocated disregard for any non-Shari'ah/un-Godly (human formulated) laws, prohibition of the modern 'western-styled' system of education (*boko* in hausa) *inter alia*. This fiery preaching by Yusuf and his lieutenants surfaced more around 2005 up to 2009, after his return from self-engineered exile to Saudi Arabia dodging arrest by the Nigerian security³⁰. It was at this stage, the group's *Markas* became the national headquarters serving a lot of purposes such as Qur'anic memorization/competition centre, an asylum for disgruntled

²⁹ Kyari Mohammed, "Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria", 2.

³⁰ Kyari Mohammed, "Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria", 13.

unemployed and disowned youth, debased motorcyclists, some crackdown businessmen, solace for divorcees, an arbitration centre and marriage-making consultation resort as described by Umara. The group's major narratives are in the words of Mohammed:

The main narratives of the sect, as outlined in 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 narratives³¹.

Consequently, even at the accomplishing stage of the group's development, it was still casually called 'Yusufiyya' while calling themselves as "brothers" ('*Yan Uwa* in Hausa); yet, popularly called "Boko Haram"³². The name believed to have been given to the group arguably by the BBC Hausa service³³ which is not unconnected to its apprehensive stand of openly challenging the Islamic legitimacy of the modern 'western-styled' educational system and whatever it breeds. Could this be said to be a misnomer? Certainly no! Because, it depicts what they subscribe to. Noticeably, the group kept on re-strategizing, regrouping and forming crowd across the North-eastern states, constituting state headquarters as minicamps. Within these centres, acquisition of military training alongside Islamic scholarship and indoctrination remained their preoccupation as described below:

Another adverse effect of youths' unrestricted access to electronic gadgets is unwarranted exposure to media violence. This is found in areas where the initial *Boko Haram* members were known to have been acquiring 'training by proxy' through watching videos of the military trainings rendered by some international 'terrorists' organizations and some prominent American War films just to be equipped with war tactics³⁴.

³¹ Muhammad Umara, "The Ideological Expansion of the Boko Haram Sect in Nigeria", *Preventing the Next Boko Haram and its Ideological Expansion*, n.p.

³² Isa Ibrahim Ali, "Theology and Jurisprudence in the Ideological Framework of Current Insurgencies: Towards an Alternative Islamic Discourse", 5.

³³ Muhammad Umara, "The Ideological Expansion of the Boko Haram Sect in Nigeria", n.p.

³⁴ Aliyu Alhaji Rabiu, "Effects of Electronic Media on the Morality of Muslim Youth in Gombe", *Journal of Religion and Culture* (2017), 71.

After some of their members were killed, others arrested and imprisoned by the security operatives specifically the ‘Operation Flush Out’ of Borno and more significantly; the assassination of the group’s leader Muhammad Yusuf on 30th July, 2009, it follows that they apparently became violent. However, the assumption of its self-acclaimed (official) label as “*Jamah Ahli al-Sunnah li al-Da’wah wa al-Jihad*” (Anglicised as People Committed to the Propagation of Prophet’s Teachings and *Jihad*) came after the Bauchi Prison break reprisal attack in September, 2009³⁵.

Evidently, even after Muhammad Yusuf was killed, his followers now under the charge of successor Abubakar Shekau, continued spreading the group’s ideology, attacking places of worship (Churches and Mosques), public places as well as government establishments and structures, all in the name of *Jihad*. This trend by the movement, signals its oneness standpoint with the first Muslim sect in the history of Islam after the death of the Prophet (ASW) - the *Khawārij*. The members thereafter, were simply implementing the masterplan designed by Muhammad Yusuf on which they were programmed and enchanted. In fact, the inciting and radical nature of Muhammad Yusuf’s sermons and preaching is enough evidence to their *Khawārij* approach, even though, they always deny it. It would not be out of place to reproduce a portion of such un-guarded pronouncements made by Yusuf as transcribed by Mohammed thus:

In the process they will abuse you, call you names and some of you may even die. They will shoot some of you, and we will just pray “may Allah give you *al-Jannah*” [Paradise] and proceed without any qualms. Can we endure? We ought to endure. May Allah give us the will to endure? This is how our *Da’wah* is. Patience: this is what we need, brothers. And perseverance upon the truth. Allah is watching us. Victory is certain. What we lack are the helpers. We are not yet primed for victory, but we are working towards getting ready for victory. This is what we are looking for, brothers. This is an incipient *Da’wah*, but it cannot be crushed. It cannot be killed. If we really stand by what the Prophet says we should stand by, even if we die in the process, this *Da’wah* will

³⁵ Kyari Mohammed, “Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria”, 14.

continue – even after a hundred years. Once the truth comes out, you (referring to his adversaries) are in trouble³⁶.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that Muslims remain the significant victims of this un-Godly and, of course, politically-motivated movement, human right groups as well as many Christians within Nigeria, under the umbrella of CAN³⁷, and outside Nigeria continuously blame Islam and Muslims for these inhuman and merciless devilish activities of indiscriminate shootings, bombings and suicide attacks. Interestingly, all of these are antithetical to Islam. Simply put; the unjustifiable massacre of many prominent Islamic scholars such as Ja'far Mahmud Adam and Muhammad Auwal Adam (Albani Zaria) etc. throughout the 'Boko-Haramic' dispensation is a pointer to the anti-Islamic composition of the group, irrespective of whatever seemingly Islamic tenet it claims to be preaching.

With the change of government at the centre in Nigeria, following the March/April 2015 general elections, things have begun to change. Observably, the insurgents are confronted head-on by the joint multi-national taskforce and the civilian JTF. This, coupled with intensified prayers across the nation and efforts by various stakeholders, the efforts amounted to successes so far being recorded in the fight against the insurgency. However, with expanded-frontiers crossing to other neighbouring West African nations, the group is becoming regional rather than the home-based it used to be. The crackdown of the sect's major camp - the Sambisa forest and the dismantling of its petty groups across the affected states by the said army, insinuate the declining phase and optimistically, the excommunication of any sort of insurgencies in the area. This would only be realized with the deployment of constructive counter-ideological narrative approaches by producing convincing explanation on the issues at stake based on sound knowledge from reliable sources. Muslim scholars and researchers should be empowered to add to what the likes of the

³⁶ Kyari Mohammed, "Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria", 15.

³⁷ Kyari Mohammed, "Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria", 20.

Da'wah Institute of Nigeria (DIN) are doing of publications,³⁸ sensitization and production of audio-visual contents on the subject matter in this direction.

In addition to this, the auctioning of the group by Khalif Shekau to ISIS and the subsequent internal crisis that erupted between the Nigerian leader and another factional leader called Abu Mus'ab al-Barnawi further weakens the power of the group³⁹. When the Nigerian Air force Army launched air strike over Camp Zero in the Sambisa Forest on December 29th, 2016 and successfully destroyed the stronghold Boko Haram territory, many of the insurgents were killed in the operation. However, many of them also fled away; who still detonate bombs and wage suicidal attacks especially in Maiduguri and parts of Yobe, hence, the need for serious military re-strategizing and public vigilance. However, even with that development, TVC News Channel reported that, officially there are only 21 reported resurfacing Boko Haram attacks between January and February 2017 on which security experts and social analysts interpret as marking the beginning of the end of Boko Haram.

A Glance through Boko Haram's Ideological Make-ups

Despite the politico-economic underpinnings surrounding the Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria and even beyond, ideological inclinations are the major drivers especially at the embryonic stage of the movement. Listening to sermons, preaches as well as reading through some write-ups of the leaders of the movement notably, the book written by Muḥammad Yūsuf "*Hādhihi 'Aqīdatunā wa Manhaj Da'watinā*"; one will clearly understand the group's ideological standpoints. In the book, he expressly spells out the theological and ideological compositions of the movement as well as its proselytization approach. There are also other books written by Muhammad Ali such as *Al-Fitnah al-Kubrā*, *Haqīqah al-Īman* and *Hukūmah Islāmiyyah* that laid the foundation for the group's ideology. However, the books are not

³⁸ Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *Is Boko Haram? Responses to 35 Commonly Raised Religious Arguments Against Conventional "Western Education"* (Minna: Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, 2017), n.p.

³⁹ Malam Adamu, in interview author and other group of researchers in "History and Formation of Boko Haram Movement in Nigeria" (April Friday, 2019).

easily accessible up till now.⁴⁰ While the scope of this article would not allow for the exhaustion of the ideologies and beliefs of the group, the paper identified and discussed some major areas of contention. As pointed in some areas above, the group's ideologies majorly, though not absolutely, evolve and revolve around the following issues as succinctly grouped by Mohammed viz:

- i. The concept of *tāghūt* (idolatry or polytheism), enveloping issues to do with secularism, democracy, and partisan politics;
- ii. Western education and Westernization;
- iii. Working for an un-Islamic government;
- iv. Repudiation of the charge of *Kharijism* labeled against them by other contemporary *Ulama*;⁴¹
- v. Excessive use of the terms *murtad* (apostate) and *kāfir* (infidel) against Muslims.

On the first ideology, the Boko-Haram's standpoint of labelling anything 'western' as *tāghūt* is usually supported by some Qur'anic verses but more often Q: 2:256, where Allah says "...Whoever disbelieves in Tāghūt and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break ..." though quoted out of context and grossly misapplied. In addition to this, they condemn in *toto* democracy as a system of government against the Caliphateship mainly due to its state's secularization ideology which contradicts Shari'ah principle of governance. Other issues include the electioneering process of majority carry the vote at the expense of credibility, the supremacy of the constitution and its judicial system against the Qur'an; conferring legislative powers and sovereignty to humans which are Allah's exclusive prerogatives, among other things are the identified grey areas by the group.

The group's condemnation of modern 'western' education (*Boko* in Hausa) and anything 'western' is not far-fetched. This ideology represents their strong-hold argument of prohibiting the modern conventional system of education on account of some subjects' un-Islamic contents and how the system is run. Their

⁴⁰ Tudun Murtala Muhammad, in interview with Aliyu Alhaji and other group of researchers Rabi'u in "History and Formation of Boko Haram Movement in Nigeria" (April Friday, 2019).

⁴¹ Kyari Mohammed, "Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria", 15.

basic reservations include the curricula of Law, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Geography, Political science, Sociology etc. Specific areas the Boko-Haram declare *kufir* include evolution theory, Darwinism, water cycle, Big bang theory, Photosynthesis, using the phrase; “my lord”, to refer to a judge in the court, going to Court in Nigeria,⁴² philosophy and free thinking and the compulsory one year national service via the NYSC scheme (due to its ill translation in Hausa as *Bautan Kasa*). They also called this system *haram* (prohibited) due to *ikhtilat* (free mixing) between opposite sexes and other immoralities associated with the structure. The group’s attitude in this regard is inseparable from the colonial and Christian-missionary origins of the educational system as introduced by the European imperialists. So, for them “*Boko Haram*” (Western education is prohibited). Equally, the western promiscuous dress code, nudity and other reprehensible aspects are the reasons for prohibiting westernization. To drive this point home, the following submission of the group’s leader during his intellectual encounter with Sheikh Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami on the status of ‘western education’ is worth noting where he submits that:

Western education is the body of knowledge that came to us through European colonialists and includes medicine, technology, geography and physics etc. And of course, the English language. They can all be used if they do not clash with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and we can teach these subjects to our own children in our own schools, so long as they do not contradict Islamic teachings. If they do, then we should discard them⁴³.

Furthermore, their ideological reproach on working for an un-Islamic government and what makes it illegitimate is based on their misinterpretation of Q: 4:140 which reads:

And it has already been revealed to you in the Book (this Qur’ān) that when you hear the Verses of Allah being denied and mocked at, then sit not with them, until they engage in a

⁴² Isa Ibrahim li, “Theology and Jurisprudence in the Ideological Framework of Current Insurgencies: Towards an Alternative Islamic Discourse”, 9.

⁴³ Kyari Mohammed, “Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria”, 17.

talk other than that; (but if you stayed with them) certainly in that case you would be like them. Surely, Allah will collect the hypocrites and disbelievers all together in Hell.

Hence, in their understanding of the highlighted area, they have this to say through their mouthpiece, Muhammad Yusuf:

Our call refuses employment under the government which does not rule by what Allah has revealed 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*⁴⁴.

Moreover, the above viewpoint of the sect is among the key diverging issues debated by prominent scholars in the country. This gesture displayed by the scholars made the sect members to declare them as venal '*Ulama*'; as such, apostates and targeted to be exterminated.

The fourth ideology; refuting their Kharijite-bond and the fifth, loosely labelling Muslims as apostates and infidels as outlined above are overlapping. It was the latter that reaffirms their connection to the former. Islamic books on scholastic theology and the surrounding debates on the relationship between *Īmān* (faith) and practice are full of *Khawārij* doctrinal beliefs which are the replica of what constitute the Boko-Haram ideology. The last two ideologies would be appreciated as described by Mohammed thus:

The charge of *Kharijism*, labeled against them by the local *Izāla* group, was the most painful and apparently distasteful to Boko Haram. The spirited attempt to repudiate this charge was perhaps the main reason that compelled Muhammad Yusuf to write his book *Hadhihi Aqīdatunā wa Manhaj Da'watunā...* It is remarkable to note that the charge of *Khārijism* was mainly a local affair. However, the ease with which they label other Muslims as unbelievers, the lack of distinction between sin and unbelief, the quarrelsomeness and predisposition to easily kill for even minor infractions – all these mirror *Khariji* inclinations⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ Kyari Mohammed, "Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria", 17.

⁴⁵ Kyari Mohammed, "Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria", 18.

Boko Haram's Nexus with *Khawārij*

The pages of literature on Islamic history are still fresh on the narratives of the theological composition and doctrinal inclinations of the seceded Muslims sect - the *Khawārij*. This is simply because, the ideologies and approaches of the sect have, at different times and places, been resuscitated by some elements irrespective of the name they bear. The Muslim world has experienced a number of such uprisings each identified with unique nomenclature but with similar ideologies and tactics like *al-Shabāb* in Somalia, *Jama'ah al-Takfīr wa al-Hijrah* in Egypt, Taliban, al-Qā'idā, ISIS in Iraq and Syria and Boko Haram in Nigeria. Though, the detailed information about the initial *Khawārij* has been highlighted above, this section identifies and discusses the nexus that exists between them and the Nigerian insurgent group - the Boko-Haram which emanate from the cardinal principle of their belief system-*aqīdah*:

1. Labelling Other Muslims as Unbelievers

Like the *Khawārij*, Boko Haram also believes that any Muslim who commits sin, by their own categorization, is a *kāfir*. Imam Al-Nawawi mentioned in *Rawdat al-Talibin* that: "The Kharijites are a group of heretics who believe that a person who commits a major sin is an unbeliever and will thus be punished in Hellfire for all eternity..." That is why in many of their preaching and speeches Boko Haram leaders, especially Abubakar Shekau, constantly describe other Muslims as *arnā*, i.e. infidels. So, as did the early *Khawārij* to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his Muslim subjects, Boko Haram is also not free from this scandalous act of tagging other Muslims *kuffar* majorly on account of committing sin and differing with their ideological framework or preach against it.

2. Disregard of Any Man-made Law/Judgment

In fact, this is the bottom line of the early *Khawārij* belief based on which they rejected 'Alī's decision as an act of disbelief tantamount to capital punishment. This is a stand maintained by Boko haram also to condemn constitution and laws of the land while believing that any person who abides by such is an unbeliever. This features prominently also in their sermons and lectures distancing themselves from such laws as *tagut*.

3. Disrespect to the Constituted Authority Other Than Theirs

The *Khawārij* since their full emergence at the time of the fourth ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (R.A) did not recognize and respect his leadership based on tenuous allegations.⁴⁶ This unscrupulous and affront attitude has impacted the Boko Haram sect as they revolted against the civic rules of the Nigerian government at different levels thereby constituting a government of itself. This is a point that the group leaders kept echoing in their sermons as contained in the widely spread open letter of Muhammad Yusuf to several authorities of Nigerian government on 12th June, 2009.

4. Isolation from the Larger Community of Muslims

Just as their name implies, *Khawārij*, they seceded from the unified Muslim *Ummah*⁴⁷ claiming as an article of faith, they migrated (*hijrah*) from what they described as *dār al-harb/kufr* to *dār al-Islām*. So also, the Boko Haram members proved to be separatists by withdrawing from their respective communities and regrouped themselves at outskirts and later regrouped and constituted a nation in Sambisa forest in Borno State and other minicamps at different places across the African sub-continent region.

5. Being Contentious and Confrontational in Approach:

These qualities at best describe how the *Khawārij* related with the companions of the Prophet (SAW), the scholars among the *Tābi’īn* as well as the subsequent Muslims. Similar is the treatment the Muslim *Ulama/Ummah* in Nigeria and other affected areas in West Africa received from the Boko Haram members.

6. Excessiveness in Devotional Activities:

This is how the Prophet (SAW) described them in the hadith of Muslim⁴⁸ saying; your prayer, fasting and recitation of the Qur’an, is nothing compared to theirs. Interestingly, the real Boko Haram members are nothing more/less than this depiction when it comes to excessiveness in worship.

⁴⁶ Abdulrazaq O. Kilani, *Islamology* (Lagos: Jetins International Ltd, 2014), 178.

⁴⁷ Abdulrazaq O. Kilani, *Islamology*, 176.

⁴⁸ Muslim bin Ḥajjāj bin Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Cairo: Dār Ibn Haithām, 2003). Book 5, No. 2446.

Table 1: Manifestations of Boko Haram activities from its inception to date

Date	Event	Place	Casualties
2002	Organisation of the group under Muhammad Yusuf	Maiduguri	None
Dec 2003	Attacks on multiple police stations in Yobe State	Yobe	Unknown
Jul 2009	Uprising in Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Yobe	Northeast	700 Boko Haram died
Jul 2010	Abubakar Shekau's emergence as the new leader of Boko Haram	Northeast	None
Sep 2010	Attack on prison in Bauchi by 50 Boko Haram members	Bauchi	700 inmates released
May 2011	Boko Haram detonates three IEDs near barracks in Bauchi	Bauchi	10 people died
Aug 2011	Attack on police station in Gombi and two banks	Adamawa	12 people died
Aug 2011	Attacks on United Nations building in Abuja	Abuja	23 died, 75 injured
Nov 2011	Multiple attacks with IEDs in Yobe and Borno	Northeast	More than 100 died
Jan 2012	Splinter group known as Ansaru emerged	Northeast	None
Jan 2012	Coordinated attacks on police stations and barracks	Kano	200 people died
Mar 2012	Attacks on police station in Gombe	Gombe	23 died
Aug 2012	Claims on peace talk with government debunked by the sect	Northeast	None
Feb 2013	A French family of seven kidnapped in Northern Cameroon	Cameroon	Seven
Apr 2013	Shekau mocked the Government's amnesty plan	Nigeria	None
Apr 2013	Battle with multinational taskforce in Baga	Borno	More than 200 died
May 2013	Announcement of military offensive in Northeast	Northeast	Uncertain

Jun 2013	Government proscribed Boko Haram as a terrorist group	Abuja	None
Jun 2013	Multiple attacks in churches on Sunday in Northeast	Northeast	More than 50 died
Aug 2013	Ministry of Defense announced the dead of top member	Maiduguri	1
Aug 2013	Nigeria's Army claimed Shekau died but he debunked it	Nigeria	None
Sep 2013	Attack in checkpoint in Benisheik	Borno	More than 143 died
Sep 2013	Shekau appeared in a video claiming he is healthy and alive	Northeast	None
Nov 2013	United States declared Boko Haram and Ansaru as terrorist	USA	None
Jan 2014	Shootings in market in Kawuri	Borno	45 died
Feb 2014	Militants attacked village in Konduga	Borno	23 died
Apr 2014	Boko Haram abducted 276 teenage girls in Chibok	Borno	More than 200 gone
May 2014	Shekau claimed the abduction of Chibok girls	Borno	None
May 2014	Attacks on three villages in Borno but the villagers resisted	Borno	200 Boko Haram died
May 2014	Twin bomb blast in a market in the city of Jos	Plateau	118 died
May 2014	United States sent 80 troops to Chad	Chad	None
May 2014	The US Security Council added Boko Haram as terrorist	UN	None
Jun 2014	Raids by Boko Haram in Borno	Borno	About 500 died
Jun 2014	More young women were kidnapped by Boko Haram	Borno	20

Jun 2014	Boko Haram abducted 60 women and killed many in Kumaza	Borno	30 men killed
Jul 2014	Abducted girls from Kumaza escaped	Borno	None
Jul 2014	Damboza was raided by Boko Haram	Borno	66 died 15000 fled
Oct 2014	Announcement of ceasefire by Nigerian Government	Abuja	None
Nov 2014	Shekau in a video denied the announced ceasefire	Borno	None
Jan 2015	Baga town taken over by Boko Haram	Borno	More than 2000 died
Jan 2015	Multiple explosion in Borno	Borno	20 killed 18 injured
Mar 2015	Two people were beheaded by Boko Haram suspected as spies	Borno	2 died
Mar 2015	Boko Haram pledged allegiance to ISIS	Borno	None
Mar 2015	ISIS announced the acceptance of the pledge by Boko Haram	Iraq	None
Apr 2015	Massive killings in Damasak	Borno	More than 400 killed
Apr 2015	Nigerian troops rescued many civilians from Boko Haram	Borno	450 rescued
Jul 2015	Boko Haram militants raid three villages in Borno	Borno	145 killed
Sep 2015	Nigerian military rescued many civilians from Boko Haram	Borno	241
Sep 2015	Attacks in a market in Kerewa	Cameroon	30 died 145 injured
Sep 2015	241 women rescued by Nigerian military from Boko Haram	Borno	241 rescued
Feb 2016	Attacks on two villages in Northeast	Northeast	30 killed

Feb 2016	Suicide bombing in Northeast	Northeast	58 died
Apr 2016	CNN posted a live video of the kidnapped Chibok girls	Northeast	None
May 2016	One of the Chibok girls rescued by Nigerian military	Borno	1 rescued
Aug 2016	ISIS announced Musab Al-Barnawi as the new sect leader	Borno	None
Aug 2016	Chibok girls video released by Boko Haram	Borno	None
Oct 2016	A negotiation led to the release of 21 Chibok girls	Borno	21 released
Nov 2016	Chibok school girl found by Nigerian Army	Borno	1 discovered
Jan 2017	Another Chibok girl found	Borno	1 found
Jan 2017	Nigerian fighter Jet mistakenly hit civilians	Borno	About 100 died
May 2017	82 Chibok school girls released	Borno	82 released
Feb 2018	A faction of Boko Haram raided Gov't Girls Science and Technical College, Dapchi	Dapchi	110 students kidnapped
Mar 2018	Boko Haram militants attacked a displacement camp in Rann	Borno	3 Aid Workers killed, 3 injured & 3 ICRC workers abducted
Mar 2018	Securing the Release of the Dapchi School Girls	Dapchi	104 Abducted Girls Released
Apr 2018	UNICEF report on the number of kidnapped victims of Boko Haram since 2013	northeast	More than 1000 children
May 2018	The Multinational Joint Task Force rescued some Boko Haram Captives from Malamkari, Amchaka, Walasa and Gora Villages	Bama LGA	More than 1,000 women & children

Jan 2019	The UN Refugee agency recounting the effects of escalating attacks further displacing people	northeast	More than 250,000 people
Apr 2019	On the fifth anniversary of the kidnapped Chibok girls, President Buhari reiterated his bid to rescuing the remaining girls	Abuja	Chibok Girls

Source: CNN Library 2019 (compilation in tabular form by the authors).

As comprehensive as the report in table 1 above by the CNN Library looks, it did not capture the initial actors who originated the movement and nursed the ideology. Such actors as Muhammad Ali, Abu Umar, Abu Dujana etc. Rather, it described Muhammad Yusuf as the founder, a popular narrative which this research has challenged. Nonetheless, one cannot dispute the idea that, the group was brought to public view under Yusuf’s leadership. Again, considering the affected areas as highlighted in the report, it is a discerning evidence to solidify the assertion that Muslims are the most affected victims of Boko Haram venom. Additionally, this compilation as rightly observed by Sule et’al, the report contains only the major events and attacks by the militants because there were many not captured by the report. Such left out assaults include the famous Nyanya twin bomb blasts, Abuja which killed more than 100 people, the Kano mosque attack which killed more than 200 people and host of others in Borno, Yobe, Gombe, Adamawa, Bauchi, Kano and Plateau.⁴⁹ Therefore, the sampling technique adopted by the agency could be best explained by it, the reasons for which are still unclear. Though, the report is still useful as it brings to fore the heinous approaches of the insurgents in causing havoc to the Nigerian society and beyond. It also described the length and breadth of the group in terms of coverage, criminality and the dimensions of its damage.

⁴⁹ Babayo Sule et al., “Strategies of Combating Insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria: A Non-Traditional Approach”, 2019.

Recommendations

In order to successfully combat insurgency of any kind in Nigeria, we make the following recommendations that:

1. In Islam, the issue of faith/creed is central in all religious endeavours; therefore, Muslim organizations or groups should intensify efforts in teaching members the correct notion of belief to narrow the chances of being misled by groups with erroneous belief such as Boko Haram.
2. Muslim parents should be watchful and closely supervise their children to ascertain the credibility of whom they associate with physically and over the cyber space. This is due to the encroachment of misleading ideologies such as Boko haram into the Muslim Ummah and their devastating effects on the Muslims' belief.
3. The Muslim youth in Nigeria should be very cautious and considerate as to from whom they seek religious knowledge and the content as well as the kind of interpretation they are subjected to.
4. It is high time Muslim organizations such as JIBWIS and *Sufi* orders in Nigeria began to set out strict rules as to who speaks what in their names and block the free-to-air licence they accord to their young-shall-grow *Tullāb al-'Ilm* who remain the sole targets of radicalizers as in the case of ill-indoctrinated Boko Haram members.
5. There should be a policy or law enacted by Nigerian government at all levels to form a regulatory advisory body to sensor religious activities including the preaching of religious bodies and independent clerics to sync with what Islam stands for. However, this could only be successful if all stakeholders are actively involved throughout the decision-making process considering the saying: "*Nothing about Us without Us*".
6. That there should be deliberate educational policies on curriculum development to include sound Islamic subjects on countering extremism and employ professional Islamic studies teachers at all levels of education in Nigeria to tutor. In line with this, there should also be well-designed uniform curriculum by the federal and state ministries of education for Islamiyyah schools run by individuals and organizations to ensure proper monitoring and evaluation.

7. That military force alone cannot engage ideological insurgencies such as Boko Haram, but there should be a synergy between government and scholars to map out sound intellectual counter-narratives to be documented and circulated in form of books, pamphlets, sermons, radio and TV programs, jingles and documentaries to be made available in public domains and educational institutions.
8. Intellectual dialogue is one thriving counter-extremism mechanism that should also be employed to engage the insurgents as the learned Abdullah ibn Abbas did engage the Khawārij during the time of Khaliph Aliy (RA). In replicating this, versed Islamic scholars in Nigeria should continue to intellectually engage the Boko Haram members and others with similar tendencies.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that *Īmān* is the bedrock of the Islamic belief system. This concept has been theologically debated since the first century of the Islamic history to present. The result of the debate therefrom has brought nothing to Muslims except factionalism and sectarianism creating groups such as the *Khawārij*, *Mu'talizah*, *Murji'ah* and the *Shī'ah* all with differing ideologies and theological arguments. These sects are observed to have impacted some contemporary Muslims across the globe who either bear their name, take their form or both. Over a decade now, the North-eastern Nigeria has been bedevilled with the activities of a violent-irreligious group called Boko Haram, which based on this research are highly influenced by the Khawārij extremist ideologies against the moderate middle course preached by the mainstream Islam. The nexus between the duo groups, in spite of the difference in time and space of their existence, is justifiable by the common traits, doctrines and worldviews they shared which is further solidified by the actions and utterances of the neo-khariji-Boko Haram members across borders. These commonalities in faith as explained in the paper could be established based on their shared-beliefs in declaring Muslims to be unbelievers, rejecting lawful obedience to the rulers and justifying violence against Muslims and innocent people in the name of jihad on the premise of unguarded *takfīr*.

It is important to note also that many deviant groups like the Khawārij always claim that they are *Ahl al-Sunnah* and often quote scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah, though, mostly out of context to support their unguided actions. Despite this, they hardly proclaim *Salafiyyah*, the path of Muslim pious predecessors from amongst the *Ṣahāba*, *Tābiʿīn* and those who follow their footsteps. Ibn-Taimiyyah stressed that, deviant groups such as the *Khawārij* and the *Rawāfiḍh* never proclaim following the path of the *Salaf*, due to the fact that these groups passed the judgement of disbelief (*Takfīr*) on many of the pious predecessors including those who follow their footsteps. Therefore, attributing the unguided actions of such sects to *Salafiyyah* is a clear falsehood and absolute irrationality. This falsehood could only gain recognition where sound knowledge is missing and ignorance prevailed.⁵⁰

However, based on our findings, most of the Boko Haram members moved from mainstream to extreme, violently and unjustifiably killing innocent souls irrespective of gender, age, religion, indiscriminately destroying government and public establishments, places of worship and abduction of young men and ladies, forcefully converting them to join the group. Due to these and other facts established in the paper, we realized that Islam and Muslims suffered and are still suffering the most from the inhuman activities of the monster insurgent group, Boko Haram; leaving millions of persons internally and externally displaced; hence, Muslims should not be blamed for what some insignificant elements perpetrate in their name. It is our ardent hope that heeding (though not limited) to the above recommendations would help greatly in curbing or outlawing insurgency in Nigeria and other affected areas across the globe.

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⁵⁰ Taqī ad-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā* (Madinah: Mujamma’ Mālik Faḥd, 1995), 153-157.

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