

# A HISTORICAL FOUNDATION OF *BOKO HARAM* TERRORISM IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

The study attempts to trace a historical foundation of *Boko Haram* terrorism in Nigeria's Northeast region. The researcher relied on existing secondary data to trace the history of how successive administrations had tolerated the activities of pro-Islamist groups such as *Maitasine*, the institution of *sharia* legal code and its adoption as state religion in twelve states in Nigeria and how this has eventually laid the foundation for *Boko Haram*. This has been captured within the theoretical underpinnings of clash of civilizations theory as propounded by Samuel Huntington. Using Huntington's theoretical postulation: one which assumes among other things that Islamic and Western civilizations are in constant clash with one another, the researcher traced how Islamic religion has not only been used to manipulate the Nigerian political system or as a means to ascendancy into political offices but recently also as a justification for engagement into terrorism. This claim is justified by *Boko Haram's* opposed position to Western education in Nigeria. The study therefore concludes that the tolerance of the successive administrations in Nigeria over the foregoing gave impetus to Islamists to adopt terrorist means to dismantle Western education and install *sharia* law. The researchers therefore recommend among other things for stakeholders to commit resources into re-orienting disoriented Islamists who engage in *Boko Haram* terrorism and to renew the political will towards tracking and stopping terrorist funding in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Terrorism, Ideology, Islam, Boko Haram

## **Introduction**

The dissatisfaction with the colonial system in Nigeria led to a clarion call for independence in Nigeria in 1960. Hardly had Nigerians settled to consume the benefits arising from independence that it started feeling cracks arising from the spread of Islam and its in-roads into the secular constitution of Nigeria. Though these political attempts were successful especially in terms of institutionalizing *sharia* system in the body politics of Nigeria, some of the proponents of Islamism felt the process was rather too slow to lead to the desired changes set forth by Islamists. The new strategy then became to tap into the global wave of political Islamic ideology using Islamist (religious) terrorism to seize territories and effect other desired political, economic, social, legal and cultural changes.

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For the fact that most of what happens in Northern Nigeria is religious terrorism, there is credence in defining religious terrorism as distinct from other forms of terrorism. This study therefore adopts Hoffman's definition of religious terrorism as the basis for understanding the foundations of Islamic terrorism in the region. According to Hoffman (2006), religious terrorism is motivated either in whole or in part by religious imperatives, where violence is regarded by its practitioners as a divine duty or sacramental act, emphasizing markedly different means of legitimation and justification than that committed by secular terrorists, and these distinguishing features lead, in turn, to yet greater bloodshed and destruction. Examples of religious or Islamist terrorist groups include *al-Qaeda*, *Hamas*, *Boko Haram*, *al-Shabaab*, *Taliban* and the Islamic State among others. As Islamist terrorist groups, they believe they are taking their rightful place as defenders of the faith.

Though terrorism has always posed a challenge to nation states, but the spate of Islamist terrorism around the world since the September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks on the United States in general and in Northern Nigeria in particular by *Boko Haram* has been unprecedented. According to Kapel (2002), Warner (2013; 2016), Cook (2015) and Gabriel (2015; 2016) in an effort to purify Islam and return it to the path of glory, Islamists engaged in over 19,000 terrorist or jihadist attacks around the world since 9/11 to 2012 alone. Accordingly, Global Terrorism Index (GTI) (2015), (based on 2014 terrorist incidents) ranked Nigeria first among 162 countries with 6644 fatalities showing an unprecedented increase by 317 percent over 2013 fatality figures. *Boko Haram* is not merely responsible for these fatalities, the group over-ran and took over more than ten local government areas in Borno and Adamawa States and referred to them as Islamic caliphates (characteristic of the ideals of Islamist terrorists). Winsor (2015, p1) and Olufemi (2016, p.1) reported that in an effort to tackle this quagmire, the Nigerian state has spent an estimated N4.62 trillion (\$23.2 billion) in the conflict that claimed an estimated 11,000 lives. The conflict also has far-reaching effects leading to social, economic and psychological instability in the country. The study therefore investigates the foundations Islamist terrorism which led to the rise and sustenance of *Boko Haram* terrorism in northern Nigeria.

## **Definition of Terms**

### **Islamist Ideology**

It must be noted that the concepts of Islamist ideology, Islamism and Political Islam are used interchangeably in literature by scholars. However these concepts are used, this study defines them as sets of ideas, ideals and beliefs promoted by movements and parties in the Muslim world who seek to preserve or purify, restore and fix Islam's authoritative role in politics. Like other scholars, the researcher has also used the concepts interchangeably in the course of the study.

It should be noted that the study makes conscious efforts to focus its investigation only on Islamist ideology as defined above and not on any one of its associated concepts such as Islamic fundamentalism, radical Islamism, Islamic extremism; all of which shades into Islamism.

***Boko Haram***

*Boko Haram* which is translated to mean “Western education is forbidden”. It is an Islamist terrorist movement composed of like minds who utilize terrorist means to create caliphates where Islam can be preserved or restored and its authoritative role in politics established with the strict application of *Sharia* law.

**Theoretical Considerations: Clash of Civilizations Theory**

Formulated in 1992 and later developed in some of his works in 1993, 1996, 2003 and 2010, the main thrust of this Samuel Huntington’s thesis is that people’s culture and religious identities are the primary sources of conflict in the post-Cold War world. The theorist believes that while the age of capitalist and communist ideologies evolved, the world is now faced with cultural conflict rooted in civilizations. He contended that cultural conflicts have replaced ideological conflicts that preceded the post-cold war era. The theorist opined that fault lines between civilizations have dominated global politics as they shall be the battle lines of the future so that conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world.

While Huntington identified different civilizations which he believes are distinctive on the lines of languages, tradition, history, culture and most importantly, religion, he submitted that Islamic and Western are opposed to each other. Huntington wrote that the view that all civilizations should adopt Western values infuriates political Islamists and leads to bloody clashes between Islamic and Western civilizations.

For a balanced analysis, it cannot go without saying that empirical tests of Huntington’s theory are hampered by the fact that the term ‘clash’ is nowhere clearly defined in his work and so, depending on the pair of civilizations viewed, it may mean many different things to him and of course to different people (Neumayer and Plumper, 2009). The theory has also been accused of making strong generalization that “Islam has bloody borders” as it may seem grossly unfair to suggest that regional conflicts such as those in Kashmir, Palestine, Bosnia are fault lines of Muslims, where Muslims are sometimes the minority often facing discrimination. This moot point may seem however endless if subjected to arguments.

Huntington’s contention brought diverse reactions and responses from the academia and policy analysts. It was as shocking and appealing as it was bleak and pessimistic when it first made an in-road. It was also ultra-conservatively dissected, analyzed, criticized, accepted, rejected, attacked and derided. The stir of controversy arising from the theory according to Sajjad (2013) was perhaps more than any other political proposition before it. Regardless of the foregoing, the thesis has gone main-stream, owing in large part not only to the tremendous attention it received when it debuted but also because of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on US which verified and proved true what critics had found highly debatable and contentious.

This theory also comes in handy because like Wimmer, Coderman and Min (2009) stated, the twentieth century has not been as Marx predicted; a period

of revolutionary struggle but rather of ethno-national and we dare say religious conflict. The researchers hold the hunch that the Nigerian situation may in addition to clash of civilizations be predicated or triggered by real or perceived socio-economic inequality, political domination and or exclusion.

While this study agrees that bad socio-economic indices like high poverty, low life expectancy among others trigger terrorism in Nigeria's Northeast, it insists that clash of civilizations theory which situates the conflict within the context of clash between Islamic religion and culture against Western civilization is more substantial and therefore more applicable to this discourse as exemplified in Mohammed Yusuf's (the founder of Boko Haram's) Last Sermon. This is even more justified within the context of the fact that most terrorists come from relatively rich backgrounds and indeed the fact that the poorest countries of the world do not make the list of the most terrorist infested countries. For instance, none of the five world's poorest countries (Liberia, Niger, Central African Republic, Burundi and Malawi) (Gazette Review, 2016) made the list of ten most terrorist infested countries in the world between 2011 and 2016. *Boko Haram* terrorism is deep seated. No hasty approach to uprooting it stands a chance of success. Policy pundits and stakeholders must first acknowledge and appreciate this. It is on this basis that the instrumentality of this theory becomes authentic in explaining the foundation of Islamist terrorism in northeast Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

To understand the history and foundation of *Boko Haram*, the researcher conducted a qualitative analysis of secondary sources of data available to the public. Some of these include books, journal articles, online interviews, terrorist databases and specialized websites.

### **The Evolution of Islamism in Northeast Nigeria**

To understand the emergence of Islamist terrorism in the northeastern Nigeria, it is important to consider the makeup of the region. The Northeast consists of three distinct ethnic group. There are Hausa-Fulani, the Kanuri and the minority ethnic groups. The Hausa-Fulani group over time has been the curator of Islam in the region. The Kanem-Bornu axis of the northeast which is the oldest continuous Islamic establishment in Africa is not considered as a political minority due to the fact that they are a seemingly similar cultural group with the Hausa-Fulani. But they were rooted in Islam and *Sharia* law long before the advent of the British masters (Osaghae, 1998b). Despite this early and long standing contact with Islam, Borno and indeed the entire northeastern region did not utilize its connection to Islam to better their economic lot and so the region wallows in a political economy of poverty especially as compared to other regions in the country

Though there is no evidence that the Islamic revivalism which happened elsewhere specially in Egypt in the 1980s had connections with the turn of events in Northeast or indeed in other northern parts of Nigeria, Olomojobi (2015) asserted that the practice of political Islam during the First Republic

was very high. Such height was attained as a result of the policies of Ahmadu Bello. According to Hunwick (1992), between 1963 and 1964, Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of Northern region, in a drive to achieve this dream of Islamizing also embarked on conversion campaigns among the people of the Middle Belt area and others who were non-Muslim Hausa.

In line with Hunwick (1992), Dudley (1968) had earlier stated that the charismatic leader, Ahmadu Bello, was responsible for the religious positioning of the popular Northern People's Congress (NPC). He did so by instigating that NPC represented the consensus of the society. He cautioned that not accepting the party would amount to a rebellion from community. Hunwick (1992) further averred that the most important achievement of the leader was the founding of an Islamic civil society, the *Jama'atu Nasir Islam* (JNI), (the society for victory of Islam), which united the *Qadiriyya* and *Tijaniyya* brotherhoods (Kenny, 1996).

The success of JNI led to the establishment of *Jama'atu Islam* (Group for the victory of Islam) in 1962 on the advice of Abubakar Gunmi. This became another most important tool crafted by Ahmadu Bello to gain control of popular consciousness (Hunwick, 1992). Ahmadu Bello's political Islamic project is captured in his words:

This New Nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great grandfather, Uthman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent change of power. We use the minorities in the north as willing tools, and the south, as conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us, and never allow them to have control over their future (Bello, 1960).

The seeming political exploits of religion by Ahmadu Bello led to the landslide victory for the party in the Federal Elections. At this point, the separation between religion and politics in the north completely vanished (Reynolds, 1999). By 1966 however, Maj. C. K. Nzeogwu, an Igbo man from the southeast led the coup that killed the Sultan of Sokoto, the Prime Minister and other prominent northerners. The killing was considered an attack against the Islamic and political establishment in the North. Indeed, it was also considered as an attack on the Islamic religion as high ranking officers of northern extraction were killed by the Igbo coupists (Olomoboji, 2015). This too, further increased the tension between Christians and Muslims.

Because the coup succeeded partially, the most senior military officer, Maj. Gen. Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo was decorated as Head of State. Once he was at the helm of national affairs, Ironsi eradicated the mandatory Hausa language test for employment into the northern civil service. Ironsi also was accused of failing to try the coup plotters and this created ill-feelings among the northern Muslims. These added up to Ironsi's political and sensitive mistake of establishing a unitary system of government and abolishing the federal structure. Violence struck the country three days after this pronouncement and Igbo people were targeted more. The cities of Kaduna, Sokoto, Bauchi, Zaria, and Kano among others were caught in this violent outbreak until June 6, 1966.

What followed after the violent outbreak and contention was a counter coup by a group of northern military officers that led to the killing and overthrow of Ironsi. Though the likes of Lt. Col. Murtala Mohammed were huffed with the emergence of Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, a Christian that eventually took over the management of Nigeria due to their role in the coup, it became urgent on the high ranking military officers and other northern leaders to cue behind him to prevent the secession move by Biafra (Olomoboji, 2015).

Osaghae (1998) remarked that the victory of Nigeria over Biafra saliently satisfied the quest of the Hausa-Fulani to continue to exploit Islam to further entrench their hegemony against the rest of Nigeria. He noted that since after the victory against Biafra, there has been unprecedented control of the military by the Hausa-Fulani and the marginalization of the rest of Nigeria as a result of overarching solidarity of religion among Muslims. Gen. Gowon's reign as Head of State was also terminated as a result of the bloodless coup staged by his deputy, Murtala Mohammed in 1975. Murtala became the first Muslim head of State. Murtala's time in office was also cut short by yet another coup that brought Olusegun Obasanjo in as Head of State. A Christian, Gen. Obasanjo fulfilled his predecessor's promise of returning Nigeria to civil rule which ushered in Shehu Shagari, a Fulani Muslim as the President.

Though not much in terms of political Islam was witnessed at the twilight of the First Republic, it is needless to say that the politics of the First Republic spilled into the Second Republic in more than a single ramification. Olomoboji (2015) confirmed that it goes without saying that Islam like in times before, to a large extent, defined the character of politics and political parties between 1979 and 1983. This claim is reiterated by Hunwick (1992) who postulated that governance at the federal level was controlled by northern-based and Muslim-led political parties during both the First and Second Republics.

As if the Second Republic was ill-fated, hardly did it set out to work than it was caught in the controversy of inclusion or non-inclusion of *Sharia* in the 1979 constitution. The *Sharia* controversy which preceded the inauguration of the Second Republic at the constitutional drafting stage, especially at the Constituent Assembly (CA) set the religious tone of the short-lived civil rule. Kenny (1996) observed that, the deletion of the provision of *Sharia* in Federal Court of Appeal resulted in the withdrawal of 88 Muslim members of the CA. This remained the state of affairs until compromise was achieved to make the *Sharia* Court of Appeal a chamber in the Federal Court of Appeal.

It leaves many to think that the agitations for *Sharia* may have laid the foundation for what later befell the Second Republic: the *Maitasine* riots of 1982. The riot occurred and quickly spread to northern cities. The eruption of *Maitasine* riots was significant not only as another tool for manipulation of Islam for political gain; it also demonstrated the mobilizing capacity of Islam in Nigeria.

### **The Intensification of Political Islam in Nigeria**

Military rule in Nigeria had continued to breed and entrench Islamism in the Nigerian polity immensely. Under Muhammadu Buhari, a Fulani Muslim from Daura, Olomoboji (2015) opined that his government, like those of most other

Muslim leaders was said to be Islamic in its general sympathy. It was also accused of being the military arm of the ousted NPN government. In support, Falola (1998) conceived that the mission of Buhari's administration and its policies were based on NPN manifesto of 1980.

In August 1984, Ibrahim Babangida, a Nupe Muslim from the Middle Belt upturned the Buhari administration and became the Head of State. Once in office, Babangida displayed the Islamic political card by dragging the Nigerian State into full membership of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This spurred Dr. Lateef Adegbite's expression that "Nigeria became a member of OIC through the back door" (Adegbite, 1990, p.32). This ostensibly led to post OIC riot as most citizens had accused the government of imbibing Islamist ideology to Islamize the supposed secular Nigerian State.

Like other political Islamic organisations in Nigeria, the OIC further established a ground for Muslims to agitate for advancement Muslim ideals in the secular Nigerian State (Kenny, 1996). While this move was frowned at by some Nigerians, the other segment of the Nigerian state had argued that since Nigeria has diplomatic relations with the Vatican, its membership of OIC is therefore not objectionable (Olomoboji, 2014).

Perhaps, in an attempt to cut the perceived Islamization of Nigeria and as well as the political clout of Muslims in Governance, Ihonvbere (1991) observed that Maj. Gideon Orkar, a Tiv from Middle Belt, in a military coup attempted to undo the military administration of Babangida on April 22, 1990. In a speech by Orkar, Nigerians understood that the coup was premised on deepening socio-economic, religious and political contradictions arising from programmes which he argued created divisions, conflict, pressure and insecurity in Nigeria. Ihonvbere further indicated that Orkar, in a national broadcast complained that the 'northern aristocratic class' (has a history) replete with numerous uncontrollable instances of callous and insensitive dominatory, repressive intrigues.

Accordingly, they see themselves as those who are privileged to rule Nigeria to the exclusion of the people of the Middle belt and the South' (Ihonvbere, 1991, p.616). The content of Orkar's coup speech was depictive of contestation of religiosity. It is a matter of opinion for one to hold that had Orkar's coup succeeded, history may have repeated itself, but with severe consequences; a protracted religious war.

Another attempt by Babangida to further entrench Islam in Nigeria was during the transition to the Third Republic. In an effort to produce a new constitution for the Third Republic, Babangida convened a constitutional debate: a forum that led to yet another request for *Sharia* in 1989. Eventually, the 1989 constitution provided jurisdiction for *Sharia* at Customary Courts of Appeal at the state level but only to matters relating to Muslims.

The Third Republic was shut down with the nullification of the presidential election allegedly won by Moshood Abiola. Though a Muslim, Maier (2000) claimed Abiola was fore-stalled from office due to considerations that stemmed from his originality in core Islam and Islamic agenda since he was not a northerner. This was despite the fact that Abiola won even in Bashir Tofa's

(his opponent's) home in Kano. Maier explained further that the Muslim-Muslim ticket of Abiola and Baba Gana Kingibe (a Kanuri from Borno State) won due to overarching trans-ethnic identity and deeply rooted bond in a common religion. It is germane to state that Babangida's cancellation of the election may have been faulted for incongruent, paradoxical and contradictory reasons; reasons that obviously satisfied the majority of northern Muslims and their march towards a northern Muslim hegemony. When it became utterly clear that public ovation stalled on the administration of Babangida, he found an interim president in Chief Ernest Shonekan whose short administration was shoved aside by SaniAbacha in November 1993.

It is worthy to note that SaniAbacha's administration like that of Babangida was impeccable representative of political Islam in Nigeria (Falola, 1998). However laden with dictatorship, the Abacha's regime can be described as one that carried some powerful northern Muslim elites along. After Abacha's death in 1998, AbdusalamiAbubakar (a Nupe from Niger State) took over and arranged for return to civil rule in 1999 (Maier, 2000). Abdulsalami's disposition to political Islam or otherwise can be hardly determined as his term in office was not only short but transient.

### **The Institutionalisation of Islamist Ideology in Nigeria through the Implementation of *Sharia* Law**

Once Olusegun Obasanjo took power on May 29, 1999, Islamism made even more pronounced in-road into the Nigerian body polity. *Sharia* budged from mere disagreements, walkouts and political grand-standing to actual implementation in September 19, 1999 in Zamfara state under the watch of Ahmed Yerima (Olomjobi, 2015). The Zamfara leadership was followed by eight other states in the north and eventually twelve states adopted *Sharia* in their body polity. In other words, similar proclamations instituted *Sharia* as a main body of civil and criminal law (fully) in nine state in 2000. The nine states were Zamfara, Kano, Sokoto, Katsina and Bauchi. Others were Borno, Jigawa, Kebbi and Yobe respectively. The three states which instituted *Sharia* in part were Kaduna, Niger and Gombe States. It had already been mentioned that while it may be needless to bring to fore the riots in cities like Kano that greeted the implementation of *Sharia* law, it is worthy to note that the introduction had watered down its believers' faith and may have further laid a foundation for the current level of political Islam or religious or religious orthodoxy in Nigeria since 2000 (Danjibo, 2011).

While Yerima argued for the implementation of *Sharia* within the context of the 1999 constitution (which provides for the right to freedom of religion), Olomjobi's (2015) contention is among other things hinged on the speedy implementation of *Sharia* without consultation with the Federal Government - an act he describes as "political grouse by some disgruntled elements of the northern elites in reaction to Obasanjo's Yoruba and non-Muslim background."

This viewpoint was reiterated by Dickson (1999) who concurred that the political elites' support and spread of *Sharia* was an offshoot of Nigerian Muslims' desire to reemphasize their political prerogative in what they perceived as a new found southern non-Muslim political hegemony. On another



note, Steiner (2002) and Ostien, (2002) asserted that, the implementation of *Sharia* could be understood in the context of a system constructed by Muslim reformers to curb the breakdown of morals and to arrest the rapid inculcation of Western culture in Northern Nigeria. Put differently, the rise in *Sharia* according to Danjibo (2011) was as a result of the replacement of the *Sharia* with an imported system of government based on Western values. This, according to him, has ostensibly resulted in corruption, poverty, unemployment, deprivation, want and the combined suppression of 'true' Islam in northern Nigeria and elsewhere. It is Sheikh Siraj's opinion that it is only *Sharia* that can liberate man and this is the reason why Muslims are obliged to strive for the full implementation of *Sharia* (Steiner, 2002).

There is also a politico-economic dimension of Islamism in northern Nigeria (Maier, 2000). This dimension claims that deepening of Islamism in northern Nigeria was in response to financial incentives of over N80 billion as gift to any of the northern states who adopted the *Sharia* legal code by a League of Arab Countries. Like Olomjobi, Maier, *New York Times* (2007) and the Polgreen (2007) in December 2007 adhered to the fact that *Sharia* was utilized as a process to cement the on-going Islamization and to hijack the ecclesiastic message of Islam for political manipulation. To add credence to the above assertion is to bring to fore *New York Times'* (2007, n.d) quotation:

The shift reflects the fact that religious law did not transform society. Indeed, some of the most ardent *Sharia*-promoting politicians now find themselves under investigation for embezzling millions of dollars. Many early proponents of *Sharia* feel duped by politicians who rode its popular wave but failed to live by its tenets, enriching themselves and neglecting to improve the lives of ordinary peoples.

The foregoing quote from the *New York Times* is so upheld by the researcher because it has pointed clearly to the fact that most so-called believers of Islamism protect the ideology for the purpose of exploiting and manipulating same system they try to change for their political motives which reflects their economic ends.

### **The Justification and Rationalization of Islamist Ideology as the Basis for Terrorism in Northeast Nigeria**

There is a body of evidence that *Sharia* law was administered between the 12th and 15th century in the Kanem Bornu Empire and Hausa states before the Nigerian state was created by the British colonialists. The law paradoxically also had found its way into the Native Authority between 1950s-1960s. Even before the consideration of *Sharia* by the native authority, Reynolds (1999) stated that *Sharia* Law was substituted by the Penal Code on October 1, 1960 on the advice of the Willinks Minority Commission of 1957. At this time, *Sharia* law applied only to civil cases, while the Penal Code was applied only to criminal cases. He argued that the resurgence of *Sharia* in some northern states was as a result of the willingness to revisit and recapture Islamic sensibilities, which had been in existence before the British conquered the region, but deprived by the colonial advice of the Willinks Minority Commission of 1957.

By Naniya's (2002) arguments, the colonial administration de-emphasized *Sharia* law for the Penal Code for economic reasons especially on issues relating to banking and the charging of interest, which is contrary to *Sharia* law. He made clear that this was vital for protecting British interests and investments in the region.

The implementation of *Sharia* law in 12 states of the north has since called for the determination of its constitutional legitimacy. Hence, legal and intellectual adepts are occupied with interrogating the implementation of *Sharia* law vis-a-viz the provision of the Nigerian constitution. This debate has since then been contending. Minchakpu (2008) and Olomjobi (2015) on the one hand, insist that the implementation of *Sharia* in 12 northern states contravenes section 10(3) of the 1999 constitution. One major provision reads:

No government in Nigeria shall adopt a law peculiar to any religion'. They further justify their position with section 10(7) which states that: any state that breaches section 10 of the constitution shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the federation and therefore, shall after due process, be denied Federal Allocation of funds until it purges itself of its effrontery.

On the other hand, in an effort to balance the argument, Olomoboji (2015) opines that the implementation of *Sharia* law is a declaration of the rights of a state under federal principle of democratic governance, where the majorities are Muslims. This is perceived to be in tandem with the argument and provision of the 1999 Constitution, section 38 (1) which reads as follows: 'every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion....' The scholar established that since this section borders on the political will of people to choose the religion they wish to adhere to, majority of the people of the north therefore align with Islam. Islam is in turn regulated by fundamental principles and compliance with *Sharia Law*, hence the implementation of *Sharia Law* in Northern Nigeria.

It must be emphasized as mentioned earlier that the persistence of the *Sharia* idea in the body polity is clearly not accidental. The desire for *Sharia* is more and primarily political, rather than for the religious needs for the people of the North. Bienen (1986) indicated that it was necessary for northern leaders to entrench Islam in order to maintain northern unity. In his words Bienen (1986, p.55) explained that: "Islam in the north has acted powerfully as an integrative mechanism through which demands for equality are made".

Olomobiji (2015) harped on Bienen's narration and explains that beyond its utility as a basis for the rationalization of the in-egalitarian and oppressive status quo and social order in the north, Islam is employed both as a mechanism for unity and to gain political legitimacy. The debate has continued to rage about the political struggle between elites from different regions and religious groups in Nigeria.

### **The Manifestation of Islamist Ideology in Religious Terrorism in Nigeria**

Like previous Islamist movements, *Boko Haram* is an Islamist terrorist movement and the most recent means utilized by Islamists to entrench Islamism in northern Nigeria. *Boko Haram* which literally means Western education is forbidden or sinful, believes that an imported system of government based on Western values has resulted in ostensible corruption, poverty, unemployment, deprivation, want and the combined suppression of true Islam in northern Nigeria (Danjibo, 2009). The group therefore commits itself to removing these societal ills and replacing same with an Islamic code based on the *Sharia* which they believe is the only answer to the current “rot” in northern Nigeria and indeed in the rest of the country. Their modus operandi remains terror against the state, its symbols of authority, the people and even the international community (with the bombing of United Nations headquarters in Abuja and the attacks visited on neighboring countries). Their spate of violence intensified from 2009 to date and the Government is still jostling with strategies of containing the violent conflict in the region.

It should be recalled that the activities of *Boko Haram* came at the heels of the pursuit of Islamist ideology by the likes of Osama bin Laden and his cohorts. In 2003, Bin Laden called Nigerian Muslims and urged them to ‘incite and mobilize the Islamic nation to break from slavery of those regimes who are slaves to America’. He categorized Nigeria’s administration among the unjust and infidel regimes alongside Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen and Pakistan (Cambell, 2010). The call is in line with *Salafist* ideology which believes in violent jihadism and the tradition of returning to (what its adherents believe to be) true Islam.

This is evident in the recent pledge of allegiance (*bayat*) of *Boko Haram* on March 7, 2015 to Islamic State (IS) group and its recognition of the leader of the group, Abukr al-Baghdadi as the Caliph of Muslims. The group as well changed their name to Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) (Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortuim (TRAC), 2015; GTI, 2015). This is the background from which *Boko Haram* emerged in Nigeria and the group’s activities have continued to constitute security challenge to Nigeria’s interest both at home and abroad.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The foundations of *Boko Haram* terrorism in Northern has been orchestrated by both organized groups and institutions such as *Boko Haram* and the state. Both engage in this with the belief that they have a divine duty of creating Islamic Caliphates where Sharia code can be the basis for administering the people. Though the foundations for Islamism in northern Nigeria may have been laid since the colonial incursion in Nigeria, suffices to state that the dimension of religious terrorism it has adopted as a strategy to implement its ideology only started unveiling after the 9/11 terrorist attack on the United States.

It is therefore safe to say that with the foregoing foundation earlier laid in northern Nigeria by political Islamists, it had become easier for believers to seize the moment and accept foreign support to unleash terror on the northeast.

To see to the end of *Boko Haram* terrorism, governments and other non-state actors and stakeholders must understand that the conflict is motivated by ideological beliefs and sustained by societal ills such as bad leadership and poverty. Among other things therefore, stakeholders must work towards re-orienting the psyche of the Islamists with a view to abandoning the pursuit of ideologies that to antithetical national peace and stability. Government is also expected to monitor sources of funds (especially foreign funds) of these pro-religious groups as these has proven to be the major source of funding for religious terrorism in Northern Nigeria among others.

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