Religious Insurgency and Quest for Sustainable Peace in Nigeria: The Islamic Model as a Panacea

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Abstract: *The religious insurgency championed by the Boko Ḥarām movement has threatened Nigeria's quest for sustainable peace for more than a decade despite the counter-insurgency measures of successive governments. This paper examined Nigeria's turbulent decade of religious insurgency, its position within the Islamic context, and Islamically-inclined practicable solution to the threat. It used analytical research method based on existing secondary literature and primary Islamic law sources. The paper reveals that a turbulent decade of Boko Ḥarām insurgency has wreaked havoc on the peace and tranquillity previously existing among Nigeria's diverse ethno-religious entities. The analysis of Quranic texts, aḥādīth and opinions of notable scholars also indicates that religious insurgency associated with Boko Ḥarām is inconsistent with Islamic doctrines. Tolerance among religionists, proper religious teachings and interpretation of divine scripture, genuine inter and intra-faith dialogues, Islamic leadership-cum-governance paradigms, among others, were the identified Islamic-modelled panacea to the insurgency. The paper concludes that if the identified Islamic model can be embraced and considered in the scheme of things by religious and political leaders, as well as their ardent followers, the current religious insurgency would be drastically curtailed, thereby advancing sustainable peace in Nigeria.*
Keywords: ***Boko Ḥarām; Islamic Model; Religious Insurgency; Sustainable Peace***

Abstrak: *Pemberontakan agama oleh gerakan Boko Haram telah mengancam upaya Nigeria untuk mencapai perdamaian berkelanjutan selama lebih dari satu dekade. Artikel ini mengkaji dekade pemberontakan agama yang penuh gejolak di Nigeria, posisinya dalam konteks Islam, dan solusi praktis terhadap ancaman tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian analitis berdasarkan literatur sekunder dan sumber primer tentang hukum Islam yang ada. Artikel ini mengungkapkan bahwa pemberontakan Boko Haram selama satu dekade telah mendatangkan malapetaka pada perdamaian dan ketenangan yang sebelumnya ada di antara beragam entitas etno-agama di Nigeria. Analisis terhadap teks-teks*

Al-Quran, hadis dan pendapat para ulama terkemuka juga menunjukkan bahwa pemberontakan agama yang terkait dengan Boko Haram tidak sejalan dengan doktrin Islam. Toleransi di kalangan umat beragama, ajaran agama yang benar dan penafsiran kitab suci, dialog antar dan intra-agama yang sejati, paradigma kepemimpinan-cum-pemerintahan Islam, antara lain, adalah obat mujarab model Islam yang diidentifikasi untuk mengatasi pemberontakan. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa jika model Islam yang teridentifikasi dapat dianut dan dipertimbangkan oleh para pemimpin agama dan politik, serta para pengikut setia mereka, maka pemberontakan agama yang ada saat ini akan dapat dikurangi secara drastis, sehingga memajukan perdamaian yang berkelanjutan di Nigeria.

Kata Kunci: Boko Haram; Model Islami; Pemberontakan Agama; Perdamaian Berkelanjutan

INTRODUCTION

Religious-motivated insurgency since the terror attacks by Al-Qaeda and its affiliates in the 1990s and 2000s until recently, has been a recurring topic of discussion around the world. The discourse has mostly centered around the connection between Islām, Muslims and these attacks and related devastating acts of terrorism globally. A study conducted by Bar discovered a link between current global terrorism and Islām.[1] However, Shehu state that linking Islām with the global trend of terrorism may be due to the actions of misguided youths, who perpetrate violence in the name of *Jihād* and kill people for no just cause, thereby presenting a false perception of what Islām represents.[2] Apparently, several groups in contemporary times have manipulated Islām to commit heinous acts, resulting in a surge in religious uprisings around the world with disastrous consequences for peace and development.[3] Hence, religious differences, intolerance, and extremism have arguably been at the heart of conflicts in Iraq,

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[1] Bar, S. (2004, June 1). The religious sources of Islamic terrorism. Hoover Institution. https://www.hoover.org/research/religious-sources-islamic-terrorism

[2] Shehu, S. (2020). Islamic perspective of justice and peace. Paper presented at Peace Symposium on "Justice and Peace: The Role of Religion" organized by Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Kano in collaboration with Aminu Kano Center for Democratic Studies and the Resource Centre for Human Rights & Civic Education (CHRICED), 10th October.

[3] Orija, O. A., & Dauda, K. O. (2019). Religion, identity crisis and the manifestation of insecurity in Nigeria: Exploring the nexus and implications. Paper presented at the COSMAS 2019 Conference on "Issues of Peace and Security in Contemporary Nigeria" held at 2012 TETFUND Hall, TASUED, Ijagun, Ogun State Nigeria, 7–10 October.

Syria, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Somalia, Sudan, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and a slew of other places.[4]

Since 2009 and until the recent time, living in or visiting Nigeria's northeastern region has been extremely dangerous due to the religious insurgency linked to the *Boko Ḥarām* movement, a radical religious group thereby putting the region in peril.[5] The group has been implicated in numerous bombings, suicide bombings, kidnappings, murders, arsons, and willful destruction of property in Nigeria and her neighboring nations. Overall, its violent attacks have led to the loss of lives, increased fear and instability, vandalized property, and people fleeing their homes.[6] Evidently, the religious insurgency had persisted for more than a decade despite various counter-insurgency measures, such as the military campaigns, joint task force (JTF) operations, intelligence gathering, non-kinetic approach, overwhelming funding, humanitarian interventions, and international collaborations, implemented by Nigerian successive administrations.

Sadly, the *Boko Ḥarām* movement has made use of Islām as a primary identity and mobilization tool. Nonetheless, Islām outright condemns all acts of terrorism, savagery, anarchy, and devastation (see Qur'an 2:195; 5:32; 6:151; and 16:93, as well as a number of the noble Prophet's [PBUH] sayings and traditions). It promotes the acceptance of principles that help build a society that is tranquil, secure, and stable. Regardless of ethnicity, religion, tribe, social background, or political status, Islām incorporates the laws of justice, welfare, and the protection of human rights and dignity for all individuals (see Qur'an 5:8). It establishes a

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[4] Maregere, T. P. (2011). Religion: A source of conflict and a resource for peace. Conflict Trends, 1, 17–23. https://www.accord.org.za/publication/conflict-trends-2011-1/

[5] Akinbi, J. O. (2015). Examining the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria and the quest for a permanent resolution of the crisis. Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 3(8), 32–45. Akubo, A. A., & Okolo, B. I. (2019). Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: Implications for national security and restorative justice. African Journal on Conflict Resolution (AJCR), 19(2), 109–132.

[6] Felter, C. (2018, August 8). Nigeria's battle with Boko Haram. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/nigerias-battle-boko-haram

unique way of living for all Muslims, one that includes a set of principles, concepts, and values necessary to uphold the sanctity of life, protect property, and foster peaceful coexistence. The foregoing has made observers questioning the connection between Islām, Muslims and the group's insurgency goals.

However, various scholars have conducted investigation into the evolution, causes, patterns, and impact of the *Boko Ḥarām* insurgency, as well as the government's efforts, strategies, and interventions in containing the insurgency, but little attention has been focused on interrogating theological analysis and solution from Islamic perspective that can bring about total annihilation of the insurgents' attacks on the populace and lasting peace in the affected region. This paper in an attempt to fill this gap aims to identify an Islamic-modelled panacea to more than a decade *Boko Ḥarām* insurgency in Nigeria. The introductory segment is covered in the first section. The second section is based on a literature review on religious insurgency and sustainable peace. The third section explains the research methodology. The fourth section concentrates on results and discussion. The last section provides the conclusion of the study.

In recent years, religion has turned into a risk factor in human interaction. This is because manipulating religious doctrines for selfish purpose has grown to be a major source of motivation for violence. Around the world, religious identity continues to play a crucial role in igniting violence towards others who practice different religions. Some religionists in their quest at propagating radical religious-ideological viewpoints are determined to manipulate some aspects of religion thereby making such religion susceptible to conflict. In essence, religion when combined with push and pull factors like politics, ethnicity, poverty, marginalization, and geopolitical and regional cleavages, has continued to be a source of potential insurgency across the world, Nigeria inclusive.[7]

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[7] Oviasogie, F. O. (2013). State failure, terrorism and global security: An appraisal of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria. Journal of Sustainable Society, 2(1), 20–30. Egharevba, M. E., & Iruonagbe, C. T. (2015). Ethnic/religious insurgencies and nation-building in Nigeria. International Affairs and Global Strategy, 29, 39–52. Nkwede, J. O., Udu, L. E., & Dauda, K. O. (2019). Religion and political violence in Nigeria: Secularization or colouration?. IOSR Journal of

In the work of Dauda, Hashimi and Lawal, there is a growing tendency of religious-motivated insurgencies with a violent goal to fight the application of law, a system of government, or against constituted authority by a group of people motivated by petty ego, politics, and/or fanaticism. Okoye posit that insurgency is specifically carried out with the intention of overthrowing a constituted authority through destructive acts not only directed at the authority but also through acts of terrorism directed against the government structure and populace in order to render the territory ungovernable for the government. Nkwede, Dauda, Moliki and Orija also viewed insurgency as the organized and violent subversion of the law with the goal of securing geographical autonomy, advancing a revolutionary agenda, improving the socio-economic conditions of the weak, combating economic and infrastructure backwardness, corrupt leadership, unemployment, and a lack of opportunities, and defending religious, ethnic, and cultural identities.

Flowing from the foregoing, religious insurgency is described as illegal, unethical, and unreligious. It includes extreme groups using violence that is motivated by religion to further their own political, religious, or ideological agendas. With their strict dogmas, religious rebels aim to topple the current administration and replace it with one that is more in line with their politico-religious goals. They use intermittent violence to dehumanize "others," or those who do not share their religious ideas and ways of life. Due to radical readings of religious scriptures, religious zealots frequently turn to violence to make their complaints known. They believe that extreme actions are especially required to uphold specific religious principles without taking into account their effects on peaceful coexistence.

In attempts to experience relative peace, eliminate discrimination based on religion, and achieve self-sustainability regardless of ethno-religious status, achieving sustainable peace is an undeniably important process. However, sustainable peace is both a goal and process. It is a goal because it is essential to sustainable development. Peace and progress are inextricably linked. Development cannot take place without peace. This is why Goal 16 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aspires to promote peaceful and inclusive societies by ensuring that everyone has access to justice and that effective and accountable institutions are formed at all levels. In order to achieve this goal, cooperation between national governments, intergovernmental organizations (INGO), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and faith-based communities is necessary in order to find long-term solutions to cycles of conflict and insecurity as well as to make sure that all types of violence (including armed violence, insurgency, and banditry) and conflict-related deaths are significantly reduced.[8]

As a process, sustainable peace is a procedure that includes steps for both conflict resolution and prevention. The preamble of the resolutions passed by the UN General Assembly and Security Council on April 27, 2016, A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282, states that "sustaining peace encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of violent conflict," which calls for a comprehensive, coordinated, and coherent strategy that includes inclusive dialogue, reconciliation, and the development of national and subnational conflict management capacity. Although the INGOs, NGOs, and faith-based groups must provide consistent support, accountable, responsible, and responsive leadership is ultimately needed for steering the process.[9]

It is therefore important that all strategic actors are integrated in order to enhance sustainable peace process that could bring a lasting solution to armed

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[8] Joint SDG Fund. (n.d.). Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies.
https://www.jointsdgfund.org/sustainable-development-goals/goal-16-peace-justice-and-strong-institutions
[9] UN Peacebuilding Support Office. (2017, January 17). Peacebuilding; Sustaining peace.
https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/tags/sustaining-peace&sa

conflict such as the *Boko Ḥarām's* insurgency, motivated by economic, social, and environmental injustices, alienation, poverty, illiteracy, a lack of employment opportunities, poor governance, ineffective leadership, mismanagement of national resources, corruption, and religious extremism or intolerance. Because they operate as middlemen and promote peacebuilding in communities they operate, religious leaders and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) have emerged a crucial civil society actor in an attempt to mediate disputes.[10] In addition, a collaboration among relevant stakeholders is required to create inclusive, transparent, efficient, and responsible institutions necessary to bring about the lasting peace and development Nigeria so richly deserves.

METHOD

This article employed analytical research method. This method involves relying on data sourced from existing literature without the need to carry out fieldwork. It relied on information derived from existing secondary sources from journal articles, published and edited books, printed and online newspapers, government publications, archival and website materials, conference proceedings, as well as reports from United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), Council on Foreign Relations' (CFR), Statista, and UN Peacebuilding Support Office. The primary sources of Islamic law, including the holy Qur'ān in translated form and Ḥadīth or Sunnah, as narrated in Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Saḥiḥ Muslim, Sunan Ibn Mājah, Jami' at-Tirmidhi, Musnad Aḥmad, and Musannaf ibn Abī Shaybah, were also used. The information obtained from these sources were analyzed using content analysis approach. The analyzed contents and identified themes were appropriately applied in this work. The rationale for choosing this research method is because of its relevance to the current study and its cost-effective nature.

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[10] Uysal, N. (2016). Peacebuilding through interfaith dialogue: The role of faith-based NGOs. In S. Roy & I. S. Shaw (Eds.), Communicating differences (pp. 265–278). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
A Decade of Religious Insurgency in Nigeria, 2009-2019

Boko Ḥarām as the deadliest terrorist group in Nigeria was formed by a radical Muslim preacher, Mohammed Yusuf, around 2002 in the suburb of Maiduguri in Borno State, North-East Nigeria. Until recently, the group's official name is Jamā'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda'awati wal-Jihād, which means, "Brethren committed to the propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Holy War". By 2015, the group was factionalized into two, with a faction known as Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) was led by Abu Musab al-Barnāwi after he reportedly pledged allegiance to Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), while the other faction, which retains the name "Boko Ḥarām" is under the control of Abubakar Shekau.[11]

Omenma, Onyishi and Okolie traced the emergence of the group to late 1990s when it existed in various forms primarily with religious motives and subsequently utilized a low-intensity violence.[12] In respect to the context, character, strategies and motivations for terrorism and insurgency, they considered *Boko Ḥarām* as both a terrorist and insurgent organization. Based on General Rodriquez's report that established links of "communications, training and weapons, between Boko Haram and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen, al-Shabab in Somalia, and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the group was designated a terrorist organization by the national governments, such as United States of America (2013), Canada (2013), Australia (2014), United Kingdom (2014), and international organizations, including United Nations and European Union in 2014 respectively. Following the pronouncements, Nigeria proscribed it as a terrorist group in 2014.

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[11] Amao, O. B. (2020). Decade of terror: Revisiting Nigeria's interminable Boko Haram insurgency. Security Journal, 33, 357–375. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-020-00232-8

[12] Omenma, T. J., Onyishi, I. E., & Okolie, A-M. (2023). A decade of Boko Haram activities: The attacks, responses and challenges ahead. In J. T. Omenma, I. E. Onyishi, & A. M. Okolie (Eds.), Ten years of Boko Haram in Nigeria (pp. 1–21). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-22769-1_1

Since 2009, *Boko Ḥarām* notoriety has transformed to high-intensity group of assassinators, suicide bombers, kidnappers, with sophisticated weapons, including improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and arms and ammunitions of varying degrees, to carry out its deadly acts of bombing, killing, conscription and territorial occupation in the North. (The onslaughts by the sect have mainly targeted the government's infrastructures, especially security agencies' facilities and stations, United Nations' building, churches, mosques, schools, motor parks and markets, while countless number of security agents and innocent persons have borne the brunt of *Boko Ḥarām* acts of devastation.

However, there are counter-insurgency measures put in place by successive administrations to contain *Boko Ḥarām* activities. These measures include promulgation of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act (2011) (as amended in 2013), use of specialized anti-insurgency organizations, such as South Africa's Specialized Tasks, Training, Equipment and Protection (STTEP), military campaigns and Joint Task Force (JTF) operations, and Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Others are failed dialogue, negotiations, enactment and adoption of the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) in 2014 (amended in 2016), intelligence gathering, overwhelming funding, humanitarian interventions, and international collaborations. There are also de-radicalization and peace-building programmes and initiatives through the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), the Presidential Initiative for the North East (PINE), the Presidential Committee on the North East Initiative (PCNI), among others.

Unfortunately, most of the aforementioned counter-insurgency strategies have been ineffective in curtailing the religious insurgency. This is confirmed in the series of studies and reports by scholars and experts of note. For instance, Omenma, in their contemporary overview of a decade of *Boko Ḥarām* activities averred that *Boko Ḥarām* has created situations where violence has dominated the political landscape but the military campaigns have failed to end the threat. This is equally established in the reports published by Global Terrorism Index (GTI)

between 2013 and 2020. The impact analysis of *Boko Ḥarām* attacks from 2013 to 2018 as done by Omenma *et al.* shows that the year 2014 recorded astronomical rise in the number of terrorism attacks (22.13%), fatalities (38.17%) and injuries (27.96%).

Similarly, in a CNN report, which reveals that *Boko Ḥarām* in 2015 overtook ISIS as the world's deadliest terrorist group with 6,644 deaths in 2014, an increase of 317 percent from the previous year, while ISIS was responsible for 6,073 deaths.[13] The two groups share similar ideology (i.e. *Salafi Jihādism*) and were responsible for more than half (51%) the deaths attributed to terrorism in the world in 2015. Available data from the Council on Foreign Relations' (CFR) Nigeria Security Tracker (NST) documented 2,021 incidents involving *Boko Ḥarām* in which 37,530 people were killed; the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project recorded 3,346 incidents in which 34,261 people were killed from June 2011 to June 2018.[14]

Furthermore, Amao analyzed a decade of terror of Nigeria's interminable *Boko Ḥarām* insurgency using historical approach. The scholar averred that successive Nigerian governments have failed to nip the insurgency in the bud. Although, he attributed this failure to the emergence, growing and unchecked influence of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad region, and the unresolved ill-equipped state of the Nigerian military. This can explain the reason why in 2019 alone, 1,493 people lost their lives in terrorist attacks of *Boko Ḥarām*, while over two million people have been internally displaced between 2009 and 2019.[15]

Equally, investigations carried out by Onuoha, Nwangwu and Ugwueze (2023) on counterinsurgency operations of the Nigerian military against *Boko Ḥarām* insurgency highlighted the successes recorded by the Nigerian military in

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[13] Pisa, K., & Hume, T. (2015, November 17). Boko Haram overtakes ISIS as world's deadliest terror group, report says. CNN. https://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/17/ world/global-terror-report
[14] Campbell, J., & Harwood, A. (2018, August 20). Boko Haram's deadly impact. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/paper/boko-harams-deadly-impact
[15] Varrella, S. (2021, January 22). Deaths from Boko Haram attacks on military targets in Nigeria, 2018–2019. Statista. https//www.statista.com/statistics/1197732/deaths-from-boko-haram-attacks-on-military-targets-in-nigeria/

the dislodge of *Boko Ḥarām* terror activities. Particularly, the achievements were made in the areas of recovery of some previously seized territories, freeing of captives, and interdiction of the group's logistics. This infer that, as noted by these scholars that cases of shortages of arms and ammunition at the battlefield due to the embezzlement of huge allocations to the defence sector had invariably induced cases of soldiers' low morale and by extension, battlefield absconds. Consequently, *Boko Ḥarām* remains irrepressible and continues to launch daring attacks on military personnel, armor tanks and bases.[16]

It can be deduced from the foregoing that *Boko Ḥarām*'s turbulent decade of religious insurgency had unfortunately succeeded in destroying the lives and property of the people, and wreaked havoc to political and socioeconomic stability and development hitherto enjoyed by the people, as well as daunted the peace and tranquillity that previously existed among diverse ethno-religious groups in Nigeria. The suicide bombing attacks by the deadly group might have been drastically reduced as various reports have shown, but the group continually terrorizing the populace around its camps with worrisomely increasing proportion of deaths.

Analysis of Scriptural, Prophetic Sayings and Scholarly Opinions on Religious Insurgency of *Boko Ḥarām*

It is a commonplace fact that the way Muslim scholars perceive religion is different from non-Muslims. Islāmic jurists derive their conceptions of religion from the sources of Islamic guidance: *Qur'ān* (the Holy Book), *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah* (the sayings/traditions or known practices of Prophet Muḥammad [Peace and Blessings of Allāh be Upon Him]), *Ijmā'a* (opinion consensus), and *Qiyās* (analogical reasoning). From the Islāmic point of view, religion denotes the

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[16] Onuoha, F. C., Nwangwu, C., & Ugwueze, M. I. (2023). Counterinsurgency operations of the Nigerian military and Boko Haram insurgency: Expounding the viscid manacle. In J. T. Omenma, I. E. Onyishi, & A. M. Okolie (Eds.), Ten years of Boko Haram in Nigeria (pp. 69–94). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-22769-1_4

absolute belief and total submission to the will of Allāh, the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth and all that are within and between them; emphasizing the absolute Unity of God in His Being, in worshipping Him and in His Attributes; and to believe in His Divine Justice, Command, the Divine Revelations, the Angels, the Messengers, the Judgment Day, and the Predestination.

The word "religion" is mentioned ninety-two (92) times in the holy Qur'ān, in addition to different derivatives found in three verses, mainly with these meanings: Islām, obedience, law, worship, unity, *Sharī'ah* (regulations), limits (put by Allāh), tradition, punishment, accountability, and nation.[17] Religion is also perceived as a "source of goodness and happiness in this world and the hereafter," "divine law," "being accountable to the Creator and creature," "total reliance on God," "treating people with love, compassion and fairness," and "source of peace". This suggests that religion is more than bowing, prostration, surrendering, and worshipping; it is a complete code of understanding ways of living a perfect and peaceful life and not otherwise, as recent events related to *Boko Ḥarām* movement, have shown.

However, religious insurgency of *Boko Ḥarām* has brought about unprecedented killings in the nation's trajectory and remains one of the deadliest terrorist groups in the world. The terror campaigns by this group in Nigeria had claimed thousands of lives, and left many people injured and property worth Billions of Naira wantonly destroyed. The group's increasing bombing attacks had resulted in heightened tension, anxiety and a sense of insecurity hitherto unknown in this part of the world.[18] The group had laid siege on mosques, churches, government facilities, schools, security institutions and forces, and killed worshipers, Islamic clerics and Pastors, students, security officials, traditional leaders and innocent souls. It has equally carried out abduction of girls, female students and women from their various schools, homes and on the streets.

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[17] Bayram, F. (2010, March 11). What is religion? Last Prophet Info. http://www.lastprophet.info/what-is-religion?

[18] Muzan, A. O. (2014). Insurgency in Nigeria: Addressing the causes as part of the solution. African Human Rights Law Journal, 14, 217–243.

The group is vehemently opposed to western education. Much as this thesis may look attractive, it lacks substance because this cannot be justified within the tenets of Islām, which emphasizes on education and knowledge acquisition irrespective of location. The following Ahādīth justifies this position:

> Narrated Anas ibn Mālik: that the Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim." Sunan Ibn Mājah 224.

In another narration,

> Narrated Abu Hurairah: that the Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Whoever takes a path upon which to obtain knowledge, Allah makes the path to Paradise easy for him." Jami' at-Tirmidhi 2646.

However, the fanaticism of the group is represented in its claims to advancing the teachings of the Prophet [PBUH] and a just cause of Islām, whereas in all intents and purposes, Islām strictly forbids unjust killing, forceful conversion, extremism, radicalism and insurgency. Allāh, the Almighty, in Qur'ān 5:32 warns against killing a soul unjustly in the following verse:

> ...whoever kills a soul unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.... Yusuf Ali trans.,

This verse states that unlawful killing of a human being is *akin* to killing the entire people in the world. This verse is used in Islamic jurisprudence to condemn and denounce unjust killing. This means that every soul is important, and loss of one to any form of violence, such as religious insurgency of *Boko Ḥarām*, is quite unacceptable. Human life is sacred and for this reason, God Almighty deems saving a life a virtue as supreme as saving all humanity and considers ending a life a crime as serious as killing all human being, because a single human represents their species. In the glorious Qur'ān, Allāh [SWT] warns that: *Do not kill a soul which Allāh has made sacred except through the due process of law* (Qur'ān 6:151).

Likewise, Islām cherishes when one desires or provide shelter rather than killing innocent soul. Muslim Jurists agree that the lives, blood, wealth and honor of non-Muslims living among Muslims are sacred which means it is prohibited

and unlawful to kill them without a just cause (al-Qaradāwī, 1985). Moreover, the holy Qur'ān forbids any coercion to religion of Islām. For instance, Qur'ān 2:256 says: *Let there be no compulsion in religion; Truth stands out clear from Error….* This verse emphasizes that people should not be forced to accept religious belief. In other words, embracing Islām as a divine faith cannot be imposed by compulsion. That is, people cannot be yoked forcibly into accepting the religion. Similarly, Qur'ān 16:93 provides that:

> Had Allāh so willed, He would have made you all one single community. However, He lets go astray whomsoever He wills and shows the Right Way to whomsoever He wills. Surely you shall be called to account regarding what you did

The above verse reveals that God does not command or enjoin Muslims or any *Jihādist* to possibly whether by use of force, threat or sanction to convert any other person to Islām. This also means that it would be wrong for any champion of Allāh's [SWT] religion to arrogate to himself the use of every sort of method and means irrespective of whether they are right or wrong to propagate Islām or try to destroy opposite religions.

No doubt, *Jihād*, i.e. strive in the cause of Allāh [SWT], is duly encouraged in Islām. It is the individual and collective duty of Muslims to struggle against all forms of evil, corruption, injustice, tyranny, oppression and even unbelief committed by or against Muslims or non-Muslims. It was a divine justice to allow Muslims to defend themselves against the injustice, oppression and aggression of the infidels. Qur'ān 2:191 which states that: *And kill them wherever you find them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you...*, and verse 193 which provides: *And fight with them until there is no persecution, and religion should be only for Allāh…* (Qur'ān 2:193), have been misinterpreted by religious bigots, extremists, and terrorists, to perpetrate violent attacks against non-combatants and the state.

As Rashid has observed, the "them" in Qur'ān 2:191 are those terrorists (such as modern day ISIS or *Boko Ḥarām*), who persecutes people for their faith, exiles them from their homes, and pursues to kill them dishonorably. However, the above verses were revealed in Makkah during the time when Muslims were

persecuted and expelled from their homes (Makkah) on account of their faith. Moreso, Qur'ān 22:41 reveals that war is permissible for those who have been driven out of their homes due to their proclamation of Oneness and Unity of God. Allāh [SWT] ordered His Messenger [PBUH], and by extension all Muslims to perform *Jihād* with holy Qur'ān itself, by using wisdom, good admonition and gentle persuasion, and not by coercion. In view of this, Allāh [SWT] says:

> Invite [call] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best (Qur'ān 16:125).

This implies that calling to the True Path (Islām) with wisdom and using texts and evidence from the Qur'ān, is the most precious kind of *Jihād*. This is why Rashid avers that Islām has only justified fighting against those who wage war against Muslims. The permission to fight is established on clearly outlined rules of self-defense. God Almighty enjoins Muslims to accommodate peace and harmony in their family, neighborhood, community, socio-religious, business or political organizations, local government, state, nation, and the world at large (see Qur'ān 2:208). The Prophet of peace and mercy, Muḥammad [PBUH] is reported to have said:

> O people! Do not aspire for a war with the enemy and pray to Allāh for peace and security in the world. If perforce you have to fight the enemy, then adopt patience and perseverance and then remember that Paradise is under the shadow of the sword (*Saḥīḥ Bukhārī*, 2861; *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, 1742).

The above Prophetic admonition shows that amicable resolution of conflict is better than taking up arms against the enemy. In fact, patience and peace are emphasized in both the Qur'ān and *aḥādīth* as one of the greatest virtues Muslim must imbibe (see Qur'ān 3:200; 103:3). Silah reported that ʿAmmar ibn Yasir [may Allāh be pleased with him] said:

> Whoever has three qualities has completed the faith: a sense of fairness in yourself, spending in charity despite difficult circumstances, and offering peace to the world (Musannaf ibn Abī Shaybah, 30440).

Al-Bara' ibn ʿAzib reported that the Messenger of Allāh [PBUH] said:

Spread Peace and you will receive Peace. (Musnad Aḥmad, 18059). Similarly, ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr reported that the Messenger of Allāh [PBUH] said:

> Verily, the worst transgressors to Allāh are those who kill in the sacred Mosque, those who kill whoever did not fight him, or those who kill with the vindictiveness of ignorance (*Musnad Aḥmad*, 6643).

These Prophetic sayings have clearly shown that *Boko Ḥarām* which made it religious duty to bomb mosques and churches, and kill thousands of Muslims and Christians, among other innocent persons, are not in tune with the teachings of the Prophetic *Sunnah* and Qur'ānic injunctions. Any war waged against the enemy that is not within the Islamic doctrine leads to hell-fire. This equally implies that the claim by *Boko Ḥarām* is far from truth. It can be deduced from the foregoing that the activities of the extremist group cannot in any possible way represent the doctrine of Islām or the character of Muslims. In Qur'ān 3:110, Allāh [SWT] describes Muslims as thus:

> Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allāh. If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors.

In the above verse and related verse: Qur'ān 9:71, Allāh [SWT] specifically refers to Muslims as the Best of Mankind because they are meant to encourage people towards doing the right thing and refraining from doing bad, and most importantly, the belief in Allāh. Shaykh Rehan Ahmed Raza Al-Azhari (Raza, 2013), opines that enjoining what is right includes good and righteous conduct and deeds; forbidding what is wrong is to avoid all unlawful acts of vice, evil and transgression; and believing in Allāh [SWT] is to fear Him in every dealing and relationship with fellow human being and other creatures, obey Him and His Messenger, establish five compulsory prayers, and give alms to the poor and the needy.[19]

Thus, forbidding evil in the society does not in any way imply that people take up arms against their Governments, because this is purely against the letter and spirit of the holy Qur'ān and Prophetic teachings, while part of good deeds is to encourage religious tolerance and maintain good relationship with other religious followers, and avoid religious militancy or insurgency. The foregoing

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[19] Raza, R. A. (2013, May 1). Enjoining good and forbidding evil. Minhaj-ul-Qur'an International UK. http://www.minhajuk.org/index.php/resources/171-papers/792-enjoining-good-and-forbidding-evil

shows that terrorizing the civilian population, whether by individual extremist or radical group, such as *Boko Ḥarām* sect, can never be termed as "legitimate war" and cannot be reconciled with the teachings of Islām.

The Islāmic Model as a Panacea to Religious Insurgency of *Boko Ḥarām* in Nigeria

In light of the foregoing, the following are the Islāmic model relevant in curbing religious insurgency of *Boko Ḥarām* and preventing resurgence of related conflict in contemporary Nigeria:

Religious tolerance

Religious tolerance signifies mutual respect for other faiths and peaceful harmony between the religionists. Islām is the religion of mercy, kindness, compassion, tolerance and ease. It supports religious tolerance at its optimal level and basic dignity of all human beings. If the Prophet Muḥammad [PBUH] ought to have exhibited intolerant behavior towards other faithful he met in Madīnah, the ability of different ethno-religious entities – the Jews, Christians and Muslims – to live together peacefully in such a larger civilizational context, would have been difficult if not impossible. His message would not have widely been accepted, and the genuine motives of gaining new converts would have been grossly defeated.

The underlying message of the Qur'ān is that mankind was created to different communities in order to coexist peacefully, and to acknowledge, recognize, love and respect one another, irrespective of religion, ethnicity or race. The holy Qur'ān itself acknowledges religious pluralism (see Qur'ān 16:93; 109:1-6); humanity created out of one soul so as to live together in tranquility (Qur'ān 4:1); recognizes individual differences (see Qur'ān 6:165; 43:32); creation of all human beings and their God-given qualities (see Qur'ān 2:31; 17:70; 23:14; 32:9); and warns against conversion of other religionists using force (see Qur'ān 2:256).

When the Prophet [PBUH] migrated to Madīnah, distinct laws of governance (otherwise known as the Charter of Madīnah) was designed to ensure harmony, stability and peaceful coexistence of Muslims with the Jews, Christians and polytheists, hence the lives of the practitioners of other religions were given protective status.[20] The Prophet [peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him] warned against any maltreatment of people of other faiths as follows:

> Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on a non-Muslim minority, or curtails their rights, or burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muḥammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgement. (*Abū Dāwud*).

The above traditions aided adequate protection of non-Muslim rights and welfare, religious freedom, and effective leadership in governance. No wonder the Prophet Muḥammad [PBUH] is described as the mercy of God to all of creations (see Qur'ān 21:107). Therefore, Muslims' concerns should focus on how to peacefully coexist with other religious groups in Nigeria.

Proper religious teaching and interpretation of divine scripture

The holy Qur'ān is the divine revelation containing divine messages and a central religious text of Islām with promulgated codes and laws, that Allāh [SWT] ordained for Muslims and mankind in general. Wrong interpretation of holy Qur'ān and other religious texts by religious leaders and preachers, has influenced some adherents to embracing extreme or radical religious views and ideology. Extreme interpretations of the Qur'ānic texts, and the movement of Islāmic Revivalism, have significantly influenced the emergence and progression of violent *Jihādism* in the contemporary world, *Boko Ḥarām* in Nigeria inclusive. These insurgents oftentimes legitimize their actions as *Jihād* permitted by God in the holy Qur'ān to preserve the will of God in establishing Islāmic communities.[21] To guarantee peaceful coexistence in Nigeria, religious leaders and preachers

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[20] Abdulsalam, M. (2020). The tolerance of the Prophet towards other religions (part 1 of 2): To each their own religion. https://www.Islamreligion.com/papers/207/viewall/tolerance-of-prophet-towards-other-religions/

[21] Venkatraman, A. (2005). Religious basis for Islamic terrorism: The Qur'an and its interpretations. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 30(3), 229–248. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610600781612

should deem it fit in their religious teachings, by focusing on the need to encourage religious tolerance and proper interpretation of religious scripture, and to shun religious bigotry in their deeds and actions.

Genuine inter-faith and intra-faith dialogue among the youth

Youths are an essential component of advancing the culture of peace in a multi-religious society. Inter-faith dialogue refers to cooperative effort, and deliberate and planned interaction between people of different religious traditions (e.g. Muslims-Christians). On the other hand, intra-faith dialogue involves deliberation and negotiation that occurs among people of different sects or denominations of same religion (e.g. *Shi'a-Sunni, Ahlus Sunna-Izāla,* etc). From the Islāmic point of view, intra-faith and inter-faith dialogue enables the youth to distinguish between the lawful and forbidden acts in Islām, identify dissenting views about monotheistic religions, remove misunderstanding and accept religious differences, and improve their knowledge on inter-faith relations with the aim of generating a positive climate of peaceful coexistence and harmonious relations.

The essence of dialogue in Islām is to provide amicable solutions to the problems affecting people living in multi-religious communities, and by spreading the message of peace, justice and safety to all.[22] The increased level of religious intolerance and violence in Nigeria today, calls for urgent need for genuine intra-faith and inter-faith dialogues among the youth with the aims of inculcating in them the need to shun being recruited into extremist or terrorist group, avoid youth militancy, embrace tolerance, peace and harmony, good neighborliness, good character, good will for one's country, and build sense of belongingness, leading to a deeper understanding of one's faith and the other's beliefs. The

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[22] Meraj, A. M. (2019, May 18). The Quranic calls for inter-faith dialogue. Morocco World News. https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/05/273296/quranic-interfaith-dialogue-Islām/

religious leaders in the two dominant religions in Nigeria - Islām and Christianity - should be the conveners and moderators of such dialogue in collaboration with the government at all levels.

Islāmic leadership and governance paradigm

Islām is against bad leadership, tyranny, dictatorship and bad governance. Qur'ānic wisdom, and the life, deeds and sayings of Prophet Muḥammad [PBUH] offer the most essential and marvelous leadership principles that if followed by contemporary Nigerian leaders would translate to good leadership, good governance, and encourage sustainable societies devoid of insurgency. Islām emphasizes on faith (*Īmān*) as one of the greatest leadership principles as commonly shared by all Muslim great leaders. Without this quality, a leader will become hollow, empty and endangered species, who may be overwhelmed with darkness (see Qur'ān 2:257).

Fear of God (*at-Taqwah*) is another virtue of a good leader. Possessing the quality of *Taqwah* will restrain a good leader from behaving unjustly, arrogant and act immorally. Accountability (*Iḥtisāb*) must always be the watchword of our leaders as commanded in Qur'ān 59:18-20. Mutual consultation (*Shūrah*), as emphasized in Qur'ān 42:38 and Qur'ān 3:159, is one of the critical ingredients of Islamic leadership models. Other Islāmic leadership models, include adequate knowledge of governance (*'Ilm*), wisdom to rule (*Ḥikmah*), modesty in the position (*Tawadu'u*), patience (*Sabr*), justice (*'Adāla*), Trust (*Amānah*), compassion (*Raḥmah*), and sincerity (*Sidq*).[23]

Be that as it may, if Nigeria is to achieve sustainable peace and tranquility, the political and religious leaders must see themselves as the vicegerents of God (*Khalīfah*) on earth before Whom they will render an account of their stewardship on the Day of Judgment. 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar reported that Prophet Muḥammad [PBUH] said: *Each one of you is a Shepherd. And each one of you will be asked about your flock...* (*Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* 893). This reveals that every leader will be

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[23] Lawal, M. A., & Dauda, K. O. (2016). Islamic leadership paradigms: Universal remedy to bad leadership and sustainable democratic dispensation in Nigeria. ICSHER Journal, 2(2), 39–53.

questioned on the people they are privileged to govern. Therefore, Nigerian leaders should be sincere, responsible, responsive and accountable to the people being governed. They should also encourage mutual consultation in their decision-making process and government policies, and embrace useful advice in regards to the decisions pertaining to the affairs of their subjects.

Reducing extreme rich-poor gap (inequality)

Unequal distribution of wealth has unfortunately assumed a negative narrative in Nigeria. Islām identifies that Allāh [SWT] is the Ultimate Owner of Wealth (*Amwāl*) and the Best Provider, and recognizes that He bless whosoever He wishes (see Qur'ān 2:30, 20:6; 34:40). According to Qur'ān 16:71:

> And Allāh has favored some of you over others in provision. But those who were favored would not hand over their provision to those whom their right hands possess so they would be equal to them therein. Then is it the favor of Allāh they reject?.[24]

The above verse explains that while some are fortunate and favored with more wealth, others are less-privileged. But the problem is that the rich who are favored have refused to give to support the poor so as to improve their wellbeing with the fear that their wealth may finish. The wealthy citizens are therefore enjoined to contribute towards alleviating sufferings of the poor masses in order to reducing the extreme inequalities in Nigeria.

Workable poverty alleviation program

Poverty (*Faqr*) is a calamity; it is a test as well as a blessing from the Almighty. Qur'ān 16:71 shows that human beings are of two classes – the rich (*Agniyāu*) and the poor (*Faqīru or Fuqarāu*). Some individuals are destined as poor, while others are favored with wealth. Those who are favored must acknowledge the fact that they are only favored by God above others (which does

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[24] Ali, A. Y. (1985). The holy Qur'ān: Text, translation & commentary. Kashmiri Bazar, Lahore: Shaik Muhammad Ashraf.

not mean that they are the Best in the sight of Allāh), and as such, should spend their wealth to please God [the Owner of wealth], and help others in need [the less privileged] in order to solve the problems of poverty and starvation in the society. Thus, Islām advocates for effective strategies towards alleviating poverty. One of such is for Muslims to pray against the menace and its consequences. The Prophet [PBUH] stated that poverty is a threat for both individuals and societies, hence enjoined every Muslim to protect him/herself by praying against it thus:

> O Allāh! I seek refuge in you from evils of disbelieve, poverty and the punishment in the grave, there is no other god except You (*Ibn Mājah* 4; *Ibn Ḥanbal,* II/231, 250).

However, Islām frowns at illegitimate acquisition of wealth, abuse of power, corruption, greed, extravagance, pride, arrogance, stinginess and oppression of the poor. It encourages that wealthy individuals should help, protect and provide shelter for poor people. The poor are also encouraged to work hard to meet their daily needs. Dignity of labor is given propriety in Islām (see Qur'ān 4:32). The government at all levels must prioritize institutionalizing anti-poverty measures at both the urban and rural communities so as to ensure that poor people have access to short and long-term palliatives to ease their sufferings and improve their standards of living.

Youth empowerment and employment

In Islām, youthful age is seen as the most threatening phase of life that if directed properly, can be a means of immense positivity and good, but if misdirected can be of destructive and tragic consequences for self, family and nation as a whole. Youth engagement in social vices and security-threatening activities, such as cultism, ritual killing, cybercrime or internet fraud, etc, in the recent time, is not only dangerous, but harmful and unhealthy for peaceful coexistence. The noble Prophet Muḥammad [PBUH] took cognizance of the potentials of the youths by empowering them, teaching them how to be immensely useful to themselves and their societies, and expanding their abilities toward occupying leadership roles and piloting religious advancement.

Few of these youths were 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Zayd ibn Ḥārithah, Zayd ibn Thābit, Mus'ab ibn 'Umar, and Usāmah ibn Zayd. The Prophet [PBUH] empowered the young Zayd ibn Thābit with scholarship having known him to have possessed sharp intellect. Zayd later became an expert in the holy Qur'ān – interpreter and scribe for the Prophet, and a scholar of the highest calibre. The Prophet [PBUH] entrusted young Mus'ab with enormous responsibilities. He became the first Muslim Ambassador to Yathrib (modern day Madīnah), and succeeded in converting many Arabs to Islām. Young Usāmah was appointed by the Prophet [PBUH] to lead a large army to Syria. Although some people felt uncomfortable with his generalship, but with his bravery, confidence and a sense of direction, he was able to build and raise the generation of youth that propagated Islām throughout the world.[25]

With the level of unemployment rates in Nigeria, one can conclude that youth empowerment programmes of successive administrations have failed due to politicking, lack of continuity in government policies, ineffective coordination, poor monitoring, embezzlement and corruption. N-Power was birthed by the current Buhari-led administration in 2016 and since then over 500,000 youths have been empowered. However, it later came to show that after spending more than two years, the government could not offer the beneficiaries permanent job after their abrupt disengagement in June 2020 thus compounding the unemployment woes in Nigeria. No doubt, adequate provision of employment opportunities for Nigerian youths cannot be ignored if the government is to rescue the nation from abyss of rural banditry, cybercrime, ritual killing, ransom kidnapping, insurgency, extremism and terrorism. Moreover, providing gainful employment for the teeming youth will make them love their country, protect her

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[25] Ahmed, Z. (2019, August 29). Three young companions empowered by the Prophet (PBUH). About Islam. https://aboutIslam.net/shariah/prophet-muhammad/a-mercy-for-all/prophet-empowered-youth-two-stories-part-3/

name and territorial integrity, promote peaceful coexistence and build a long-lasting relationship imperative for sustainable development and well-being of citizens.

CONCLUSION

Religious insurgency has indeed assumed a dangerous form of conflict that is ravaging the world, including Nigeria. It is established that the religious insurgency by the *Boko Ḥarām* movement has threatened not just the lives of the people in Nigeria, but also their peace, coexistence and general well-being for over a decade. Hence, killing in the name of defending one's faith or perpetuating violence in the name of God, as the analysis of *Boko Ḥarām* insurgency in this work has revealed, do not represent the doctrines of Islām or the character of Muslims. This article subscribes to the view of Chief Edwin Clark, who submits that Islām preaches peace and lays much emphasis on "the sanctity of human life, the chastity of peace and love, and above all, the fear of God. Those terror mongers do not know God, do not love God and do not fear God". This statement affirms the teaching of Islām and refutation of various postulations of some non-Muslims about Islām and generality of Muslims that the activities of the religion and its adherents encourage *Boko Ḥarām* terrorism in Nigeria's Northeast. Therefore, the identified Islāmic model serves as potential and practicable solutions to the current insurgency and resurgence of related conflicts if they are taken into consideration by religious and political leaders, their ardent followers and other stakeholders critical to the quest for peace in the affected regions.

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