CHAPTER 5

Muslims in Northern Nigeria: Between Challenge and Opportunity

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Introduction

Nigeria is a sovereign nation state located in West Africa. It is Africa's most populous country and is seen as a major player in the region. As of the end of 2014, the population of Nigeria was estimated to be 177,155,754 people and more than 250 ethnic groups.[1] Up-to-date official statistics on the religious composition of Nigerians are not available, but a report from the Pew Research Center on religion and public life in Nigeria stated that in 2010, 49.3 percent of Nigeria's population was Christian, 48.8 percent was Muslim, and 1.9 percent were followers of indigenous and other religions, or unaffiliated.[2] Nigeria's North is predominantly Muslim, with the Hausa and Fulani being the dominant ethnic groups. The Kanuri are also noteworthy, focused in the Northeast, particularly in the states affected by Islamist violence. The south of Nigeria is predominantly Christian. Muslim and Christian communities however are found in most parts of the country, with sizeable Christian minorities in some northern states and sizeable Muslim minorities in the South. Both Muslims and Christian communities are distributed more evenly in the central parts of the country known as the Middle Belt, as well as in parts of the Southwest, where the dominant ethnic group, the Yoruba, is made up of both Muslims and Christians.[3]

R. Mason (ed.), *Muslim Minority-State Relations*

Nigeria is a federation of 36 states. Each state has its own government and its own state house of assembly. State governors are granted considerable autonomy, can control vast budgets and, in practice, the federal government rarely intervenes to challenge their decisions or policies. About half of Nigeria's states are considered to be part of what is commonly referred to as the North, although there is no official boundary between North and South. The North is very different from the South in a number of significant ways. In terms of regional politics, the North is an amalgamation of the remains of preexisting (and ancient) Islamic kingdoms in the region[4] and is seen as a bloc ready to confront other regions for power sharing agreements.[5] In practical terms, it was an entity forced into political marriage during the British colonial period, and one between very different ethnic groups. The Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups dominate the North, and it is their culture that is often seen as hegemonic over other minority northern groups.[6] In religious terms, while prosperity and Christianity advanced in the South, in the North, orthodox forms of Islam have grown.

The number of *Almajiris* (Qur'anic students) increased exponentially in most cities of the North, including Abuja, estimated to be 7 million in 2005.[7] Iranian financial support increased Nigeria's Shi'a population from less than 1 percent in 1979 to around 5–10 percent of Nigeria's Muslim population between 1999–2009 alone.[8] During protests, Iranian and Hizbollah leaders were revered, along with Osama Bin Laden, while American and Israeli flags were burned.[9] While poverty is growing in Nigeria, in the North it is endemic. Diminishing farm lands, threats from widespread gully erosion, environmental degradation, and the search for greater economic prosperity attracted massive outward migration from all round the country toward the new capital Abuja.[10]

In this chapter, we will focus on a number of issues that affect Muslim communities in Nigeria and especially those Muslim communities in the North of the country. Even though Muslims in Northern Nigeria may form a majority of the population in that region, there are still a number of challenges that affect Muslims that are not seen in other parts of the country. We will place our analysis into context by outlining the history of Islam and Muslim communities in Nigeria, before continuing to look at the issues of education, *Shari'a* law, and ultimately the impact of Boko Haram led Islamist violence in the northeast of the country. Boko Haram is an Islamist movement whose name is often translated as "Western education is sin" and is more formally known as *Jamaat Ahl as-Sunnah Lid dawh wa al-Jihad* (Sunni Group for Proselytization and Jihad).

Islam in Nigeria

Islam is a traditional religion in West Africa. It came to Northern Nigeria as early as the eleventh century first through the Kanem-Borno Empire.[11] It is described as the beginning of *dar al-Islam* in the region and coincided with the rise of the Sayfawa dynasty in Kanem at the end of the eleventh century.[12] Islam then spread into Hausaland. By the end of the fifteenth century, Islam was firmly established in Northern Nigeria particularly in the regional capitals, spreading into the countryside and toward the middle belt uplands. The Fulani-led jihad in the nineteenth century pushed Islam into Nupe and across the Niger River into northern Yoruba-speaking areas. Islam in Northern Nigeria reached great heights of prosperity and influence never seen before between the sixteenth–nineteenth centuries under Mai Idris Aloma in the Borno Empire, and under Sultan Attahiru Ahmadu I in the Sokoto Caliphate. This was shortly before the establishment of colonial rule in Nigeria.[13] During these periods, Northern Nigeria had been subjected to external influences from the large medieval kingdoms of the Western Sudan: Ghana, Melle, and Songhai, from the Maghreb and Tripolitania, and from Egypt via Lake Chad and the Nile-Niger. Economically, the region was oriented toward North Africa.

By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Borno controlled trans-Saharan routes, built garrisons to protect them and ensured treaty relations were established with the Hafsid rulers of Tunis.[14] The superiority of Borno lasted until colonial subjugation in the nineteenth century.[15] Kano was also known for the weaving and embroidery of cloths, the tanning of skins and the ornamental leatherwork. The latter product, known as "Morocco leather" was exported across the Sahara to the North African ports; the Caravans brought back to Kano European trade goods, mostly cloth, metal articles, and glass.[16] First, the political elite imposed centralized government and rigid class hierarchy using the Islamic principle of *bayat* (allegiance and loyalty). The Hausa language absorbed hundreds of words of Arabic origin and was adapted to the Arabic script. Islam provided a trans-tribal bond, which has been one of the most powerful integrative factors in Northern Nigeria. It also provided the links with the Middle East, as evidenced by the thousands of pilgrims who travel from Northern Nigeria to Mecca each year, and by growing contacts with the Sudan, Egypt, and other Muslim countries.

With these achievements, it was natural that resistance to colonial rule gave birth to extremist militant form of Islam. First, the

nineteenth-century jihad that founded the Sokoto Caliphate created proselytizing movements within the community of the faithful. Different Islamic sects supported their own candidates for both religious and traditional emirate offices. These differences were generally very disruptive and led to intersect clashes in many places in Northern Nigeria. While divisions emerged on how to react to the arrival of colonial rule, Islamic activist preachers and student leaders who spread ideas about a return to extreme orthodoxy also existed. The first group believed in fighting to the death, the second argued for *hijra* (migration) to demonstrate their rejection of the new system, and the third group believed that some kind of cohabitation might be diplomatically worked out so that the religion could survive. This last group was accused of treachery and hypocrisy.[17] This led to the rise of the Mahdi movements. The Mahdi, from the Arabic concept of *mujaddid* (renewer of the religion) was expected to appear before the end of the world, to fill the world with justice, rid it of oppression and make Islam supreme. The Mahdi became a symbol of expectations among different Muslims communities.[18] According to Anwar, the collapse of the Muslim institutions as a result of British colonial conquest and the growth of Western system of governance in Nigeria, either military or democratic, led to a decline in the status of the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) and the gradual loss of their identity and influence in the society.[19]

As a result, there emerged the revival of a peculiar form of religious teaching and propagation characterized mainly by ignorance of the history and basic tenets of Islam, overzealousness, intolerance, and profound ignorance of the Arabic language, a fundamental medium through which Islam is better understood and transmitted. It also created a popular culture of radicalism, protests, and resistance among a section of the Qur'anic students and preachers in Northern Nigeria.[20] This also meant that the wide scope of Islamic beliefs and practices, with emphasis on the return to original form of Islamic practice was spreading in Northern Nigeria, and affecting family life, dress, food, manners, and personal qualities linking them to one another and a wider Islamic world. At the constitutional conference of 1978, Muslim delegates walked out as a unit for losing out on the issue of a separate Islamic supreme court, a demand that remains a Muslim goal to date.[21] It is within the tradition of this history that the demand for *Shari'a* intensified and Boko Haram itself emerged.

Islamic Education

Of all the issues facing Muslim communities in Northern Nigeria, it is that of education that stands out as being the most significant. For the most part, Northern Nigeria has followed a different educational trajectory from the southern part of the country. In Southern Nigeria, which came under direct British colonial rule, Christian missionaries were allowed to flourish and schools teaching a comprehensive education were established. In the North this was not the case. The British ruled in an indirect way, meaning through preexisting traditional and religious elites. The activities of Christian missionaries were restricted, and education was allowed to remain in a traditional and Islamic format. This desire for the North to maintain a distinct and Islamic form of education has continued into the modern period, and even where more comprehensive forms of education have been implemented, the state of education has still remained stagnant. This severely disadvantages Muslim communities who are often left without the core skills to function in modern integrated economies.

One simple statistic reveals this: Only some 15 percent of primary age children are now entering Grade 1 in the northern states, while the figure for the southern states is in the region of 60 percent. That suggests the ills associated with poor education, especially but not only in the North, will beset the country for years to come.[22] This includes a vulnerability to crime, vigilante violence, and even militancy and terrorism of various kinds. The dire state of education in Northern Nigeria was reinforced in February 2015, by the Nigeria novelist Adaobi Nwaubani[23]:

1. Because of poverty and cultural or religious antipathy toward Western education, many parents keep their children from attending formal school.
2. Many Children in the North are sent to Qur'anic schools (Al-Majris) where education is rudimentary and children do not gain the necessary skill to be integrated into a modern economy.
3. Northern Nigeria suffers from a poor supply of qualified teachers.
4. The North has the country's worst statistics on literacy, health, and poverty.
5. That stratum of society that the elite egregiously neglected is now providing a steady army of recruits for Boko Haram—hopeless

youths whose lives suddenly have some purpose, even if it is simply to destroy. With regards to education it also emerges that educational systems, especially those in the North, suffer from a lack of state and federal government funding.

6. Schools in Katsina state—the first northern state to establish Western-style schools in the North—suffer from class sizes of as many as 143 even when the intended class size is 40.
7. Teachers are massively underemployed and recruited through poor salary practices, magnifying their cost.

The situation around education may however be changing. Following the victory of General Muhammadu Buhari in Nigeria's 2015 presidential elections much hope is being generated inside Nigeria. President Buhari throughout his election campaign made clear that in his opinion the three central problems facing Nigeria are, corruption, Boko Haram, and education. It was in an opinion piece in the *New York Times*, that Buhari zoned in on the importance of education, and how the absence of a strong educational foundation can lead to "fundamentalism"[24]:

> There are many reasons why vulnerable young people join militant groups, but among them are poverty and ignorance. Indeed Boko Haram preys on the perverted belief that the opportunities that education brings are sinful. If you are starving and young, and in search of answers as to why your life is so difficult, fundamentalism can be alluring.

Boko Haram, the militant Islamist sect that has been terrorizing much of Northern Nigeria since 2009 is avidly against the establishment of modern and Western education for Muslim communities, and indeed this is a main facet of the movement's ideology. According to Zenn and Barkindo, Boko Haram see the edifice of Western civilization as constructed on three fundamental pillars. These are Western education, Judeo-Christian traditions, and democracy. It is the collaboration between these three that has led to what the movement's current leader Abubakr Shekau describes as globalization and the modern world order.[25]

Shekau argues that the Western world uses Western education to infiltrate Muslim minds and destroy Islam. Education for him is the foundation of immorality and all that is evil in the world. Such systems of education must not only be rejected but must be replaced by Islamic education where Allah is the means and the goal. Shekau

in a speech gave the following example of how Western education is contrary to Islamic beliefs, and as to why a more comprehensive education system should not be implemented in the North[26]:

> There are prominent Islamic preachers who have seen and understood that the present western style education is mixed with issues that run contrary to our beliefs in Islam. Like rain. We believe it is a creation of god rather than an evaporation caused by the sun that condenses and becomes rain. Like saying the world is a sphere. If it runs contrary to the teachings of Allah, we reject it. We also reject the theory of Darwinism.

Shekau has gone even further in arguing that Western education is the gateway to moral corruption and decaying of Muslim societies. In this he is very clear:

> Followers of western education have usurped our hearts with a philosophy and method of thinking that is contrary to the demands of Allah. They have destroyed our style of life with a system that has not been instructed to us by the Prophet of Allah. Today the government rejects the Qur'an, the Prophet of Allah and the religion of Allah in public life. It replaces these with the concept of a new world order, globalization; a new system of directing world affairs. How can you as a Muslim live in this new world order and gain paradise? This is precisely what we the Muslim ummah is fighting. This is what we have declared we do not want.[27]

Boko Haram has further been adept in manipulating the fears of Muslim communities in the North through drawing on history to argue against Western forms of education. They do this through associating Western education with colonialism, and especially with Christianity and Christian missionaries. The argument here is that Western education is a tool to Christianize Muslim children and to divorce them from their religious and cultural heritage. This is an argument that resonates in an already poorly educated region:

> This system of [western] education was imposed upon us by the Europeans. Anyone who reads history, except a fool, knows that the Europeans handed over this form of education to the missionaries. The missionaries included into the curriculum of western education the belief system and values of Christianity. We have said it again and again; the Christian concept of God has been constructed differently from what God himself said he is. Allah revealed to us that to work under a secular government or collaborate with it is a

> sin . . . We do not accept western civilization in anyway. If it is intellectual development that can advance religious education, we can do it without embracing western education and civilization . . . We refused to accept the form of education that originated from the western world. We also reject the western construction of the concept of nation that excludes the law of *Shari'a*. We reject forms of work and all kinds of jobs based on western concepts and ways of doing things.[28]

It is important that President Buhari has recognized not only the prime importance of bolstering education in Northern Nigeria but also that the problems of corruption and radicalization are directly linked to the quality of education. As Buhari has wrote:

> My government will first act to defeat it militarily and then ensure that we provide the very education it despises to help our people help themselves. Boko Haram will soon learn that, as Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."[29]

The Question of Shari'a

There are many issues facing Muslim communities in Nigeria—from economic and educational disparity, to the adverse affects of Islamist violence in the north of the country. Yet, for many Muslims in Northern Nigeria it was the issue of *Shari'a* law that resonated most and pushed as the solution to bettering the situation of Muslim communities. The issue of governance among Muslim communities in Northern Nigeria, and the question of the extent to which *Shari'a* law should be implemented in the daily lives of the population, has been a hot topic. This issue, however, should be viewed within its historical context, and with special attention paid to the precolonial period from which many in Northern Nigeria draw inspiration, and look to for alternative forms of governance. The precolonial period in Northern Nigeria saw the establishment of two significant Islamic entities, that of the Kanem-Borno Empire and the Caliphate of Sokoto. Both entities drew legitimacy from Islam, and both applied the *Shari'a* legal system to various degrees. It was not until the arrival of British colonialism at the turn of the twentieth century that patterns of governance would start to change in the region. Perhaps most significant was a British decree ruling that *Shari'a* courts be restricted to implementing what they called "penal codes," meaning *Shari'a* civil laws but not criminal laws.[30]

Independence for Nigeria came in 1960, and with this, Nigerians as a nation had to decide how to manage the diverse needs of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious population. According to Paden, it was decided that the different regions of Nigeria would have room for maneuver based on historical precedents, and for the North this meant a hybrid system with a formal judicial bureaucracy as well as a regional *Khadi* system with personnel learned in *Shari'a* law.[31] It was not until the 1970s that a focus on the position of the *Shari'a* within Nigeria's constitution would resume. It was decided that there would be no Federal *Shari'a* court of Appeal, but "there shall be for any state that requires it, a *Shari'a* Court of Appeal for that state."[32] Even then, *Shari'a* courts were restricted to civil proceedings involving questions of Islamic personal laws.

In 1999 after a period of military rule, Nigeria transitioned to democracy. It was at this point that the issue of *Shari'a* law would take central stage in the politics of the North, but with its ramifications extending beyond. The main protagonist in this scenario was Sani Ahmed Yerima, the governor of Zamfara state in Northwestern Nigeria, who acted on an electoral pledge from March 2000 to expand the jurisdiction of *Shari'a* courts in his state to include criminal cases. Eleven other states in Northern Nigeria immediately followed suit. According to Pieri et al., the states claimed legislative competence, under among others, "sections 4, 6, and 277, and the Second Schedule to the 1999 Nigeria constitution, to establish *Shari'a* courts, in addition to existing ones, expand their jurisdiction, and enact laws drawing inspiration from religious and non-religious norms."[33] Thus, the states enacted written laws and punishments prescribed therein for consumption of alcohol, prostitution, and theft, among many other issues regarded as vices.

It is important to note however, that in those states where *Shari'a* law was reinstated, *Shari'a* applies only to Muslims and not to Christian communities or those of other faiths and traditions. State governments in the North of Nigeria did not attempt to force non-Muslims living in those states into being tried by *Shari'a* courts. For Muslims there was little choice as it was assumed that all Muslims should be judged under *Shari'a*, whether they wanted to or not. Non-Muslims are not prevented from accessing *Shari'a* jurisdictions and may choose to take cases through the *Shari'a* courts if they wish. Some have done so in the belief that their cases would be treated faster, but overall, such cases are rare. According to Human Rights Watch, "non-Muslims accused of criminal offenses continue to be tried under the common law system by magistrates' or High Courts, which operate in parallel with the *Shari'a* courts."[34]

The reinstating of the *Shari'a* in Northern Nigeria should not be regarded solely as a push by Islamists, but rather as a calculated move by the governor of Zamfara State who saw an opportunity that carried popular mass appeal. Once one state had moved to implement *Shari'a* in its entirety it caused a ripple effect across other majority Muslim States, in which popular demand for Islamic law was shown through mass rallies and protests. Many Muslims in Northern Nigeria felt divorced from the federal government and a legal system, which they saw as distant and as failing to meet the needs of Muslim communities. *Shari'a*, with its emphasis on justice, welfare, and civic responsibility was seen by many Muslims as a panacea for all that was wrong in their societies. Muslims in the Northern states felt aggravated with the police and the judiciary. As Human Rights Watch argued, "crime was increasing, yet the police and the courts were paralyzed by inefficiency and corruption. *Shari'a* was seen as an alternative to these problems, offering a system that promised to be faster, less cumbersome, and less corrupt."[35] It should also be noted that the popular clamor for the full implementation of *Shari'a* was further attractive as reaffirmation of Muslim religious identity in the North.

By June 2000, following mass popular demonstrations, the newly elected governor of Kano state was forced into adopting the reintroduction of *Shari'a*. By 2003, Kano went even further and introduced a societal reorientation program, "A Daidaita Sahu," translated as "straighten your rows" (in the manner of worshippers in a mosque).[36] The program identified more than a hundred problems (vices) that were to be discouraged among the population but also identified values to be promoted as beneficial for a healthy Muslim society. The vices and values were wide ranging and far reaching. They included issues such as imbibing liquor, listening to rhythmic music, the intermingling of men and women in public, lack of working capital, poor personal health care, idleness, early marriages, family abandonment, individualism, child trafficking, and sale and reading of licentious books among many others.

Kano, as with a number of other Northern Nigerian states, went further to establish a *hisba* board with thousands of uniformed personnel to implement the social reorientation program and to police sin in public places. The duties of the *hisba* range from checking that market traders do not swindle customers to tracking down brothels.[37] They confiscate beer and scold women for using *okadas*, Nigeria's motor-cycle taxis, because it brings them into contact with men. As Susan O'Brien notes, Kano also employs around 900 women as

part of its state *hisba*. These female officers are charged with the task of working among Muslim women in the city to promote virtues, they are specifically to encourage charitable deeds and provide moral counseling to other women.[38]

According to the website[39] of the Kano State Hisba Board, the *hisba* destroyed 326,151 bottles of beer out of the 363, 853 it confiscated from members of the public in between 2012–2015. The same website noted that in 2013 the Kano State Hisba Board arrested a middle-aged man, who allegedly specializes in trafficking of children and selling children at between N30,000–N60,000 ($200-$400) each. In February 2015, Kano State Hisba command said it had discovered three hotels in Kano where alleged homosexuals, lesbians, and prostitutes were engaging in "immoral" activities and assumed the responsibility to stamp out the illicit acts. Speaking to news reporters in Kano, the deputy commandant special services, Barrister Nabahani Usman said that the crackdown followed an intelligence report the *hisba* received from its surveillance unit and added that the *hisba* is "worried by the increasing spate of immoral acts allegedly committed in the state." He stated however, that the Kano Hisba Command was "established by law as an additional impetus to the *Shari'a* legal system," adding that "the command's corps has been empowered by law to descend on any place where immoral acts are committed."[40]

The use of *hisba* police caused a row between the state and the federal government that ended up before the judiciary. Consequently, the *hisba* do not have much clout under Nigerian federal law. The officers are not allowed to make arrests; they can only preach at miscreants or alert the federal police, who often refuse to cooperate. Senior members comment that they pass all reports of graft on to a dedicated state body, adding that their limited powers make further action difficult. They do enjoy more success, however, with family problems such as domestic violence when all parties agree to negotiate.[41]

What emerges from the Nigerian context is that even though the *hisba* may not have as much power as they would like, the desire is, namely to police sin and to create a moral space in which Islam can be practiced free from what are seen as the blemishes of Western cultural influences. The draconian amputation sentences warned of by human rights activists and the religious oppression feared by Christians have mostly not come to pass. But neither has the utopia envisioned by backers of *Shari'a* law, who believed politicians' promises that it would end decades of corruption and pillaging by civilian and military rulers. The people are still poor and miserable, residents complain, and politicians are still rich.[42]

Boko Haram and the Specter of Islamist Violence

Among many other issues, Boko Haram emerged because the sect's leaders felt aggrieved that *Shari'a* was not being fully implemented in Maiduguri—Borno State's capital. Mohammad Yusuf (1970–2009) was an early founder of Boko Haram and exerted great influence over the ideologies and actions of the sect. He further established a strong alliance with Ali Modu Sheriff, a Maiduguri-based politician with immense wealth and a profound business networks that spans the Lake Chad border region and beyond.[43] Although Sheriff vehemently denied any links with Yusuf or Boko Haram,[44] he is believed to have entered into a deal with Yusuf and his followers.[45] The deal was centered on one issue, Boko Haram's support for the political ambitions of Sheriff who wanted to be governor of Borno state, and in turn he will implement full *Shari'a* law. Yusuf gave massive support to Sheriff's campaign, reportedly including fiery attacks against Sheriff's political opponents like former governor Mala Kachalla, who was portrayed as a bad Muslim uninterested in *Shari'a*. Sheriff later became the governor of Borno state in 2003.[46]

In 2002, the group declared the entire city of Maiduguri intolerably corrupt and irredeemable and embarked on *hijra* to Kanama in Yobe state; along the lines of the Prophet, from Maiduguri to a village called Kanama, Yobe state.[47] A confrontation with the police in December 2003 led to a siege of its mosque by the army that lasted until January 2004, with more than 70 of the sect members brutally murdered.[48] The Kanama siege survivors who returned to Maiduguri appointed late Mohammad Yusuf as the new leader.[49] Yusuf was alleged to have been born in January 29, 1970, at Gidgid (pronounced Girgir) village in Jakusko Local Government Area of Yobe State. He was enrolled into the local primary school but dropped out in 1976. He began his Qur'anic education under his father, then another teacher at Ngelzarma, a village in Yobe state. He became an itinerant student in 1981 but shortly found himself under the tutelage of various Islamic teachers in Maiduguri and Kaduna.[50] Among other things, the government's failure to fully implement *Shari'a* forced Yusuf to organize the Boko Haram sect, arguing that a legitimate political authority must be based on the Qur'an.[51]

Under the leadership of Mohammad Yusuf, Boko Haram recruited and expanded their network across the Northeastern states. The group was apparently left alone by the authorities, and it expanded into other states, including Bauchi, Yobe, and Niger state.[52] Yusuf

then embarked on the process of establishing the group's own mosque in Maiduguri. This new mosque, named the Ibn Taimiyyah Masjid, was built on land to the north of the center of town, near the railway station, owned by Yusuf's father-in-law, Baba Fugu Mohammed. The group "strove for self-exclusion of its members from the mainstream 'corrupt' society by living in areas outside or far away from society in order to intellectualize and radicalize the revolutionary process that would ultimately lead to the violent takeover of the [Nigerian] state."[53] Yusuf changed the name of the group from *ahl al-sunna wa jama'a al-hijra*, or popularly called the Nigerian Taliban, to *Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad*, meaning a "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad."[54] With the expansion of the sect under Yusuf's leadership, Boko Haram members committed themselves to carrying out the Islamic injuction of "doing good and forbidding evil." In this case, they attacked police stations, beer parlors, military installations, churches, and schools and killed thousands of people. This they did through drive by motorbike shootings, using machetes and locally produced hand guns and bombs.[55] The group expanded its operational capabilities from drive-by motorbike shootings to using vehicle born improvised explosive devices (VBIED), kidnappings, suicide bomb attacks, and other violent strategies, which has left scores of people dead and properties worth millions destroyed.

When Yusuf was brutally and extrajudicially murdered in 2009, the mantel of leadership fell to Abubakr Shekau. Under Shekau, the sect's ideology shifted substantially from addressing local grievances to establishing an immediate Islamic State. He allied with other regional and global jihadi organizations like Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magherb (AQIM) and Islamic State (IS).[56] Shekau also introduced the concept of *takfirism* into the group. It is an ideological principle that underscores the authority to declare both Christians and Muslim non-Boko Haram members as apostates.[57] On several occasions, Northern Nigeria's traditional religious leaders were attacked, while others assassinated.[58] There was a massive increase in the use of social media for propaganda and publicity. For instance, in 2011 alone, there were about 30 YouTube videos released by the sect, in addition to phone interviews, press releases, and radio call-ins. This number increased to 38 YouTube video releases in 2012.[59] By 2015, Boko Haram not only strengthened its alliance with the Islamic state but also set up a Twitter handle.

The impact of Boko Haram's actions have caused immense instability in Northeastern Nigeria affecting both Muslim and Christian

communities. Thousands of Muslim residents in the northeast have been forced to flee their homes to live in IDP camps. Their farms, shops and businesses completely destroyed. In some instances, roads and bridges linking Muslim villages and communities have been blown away. Boko Haram has also destroyed mosques, schools, and hospitals, killing imams, Muslim traditional rulers as well as politicians.

Conclusion

Islam has had a long and distinguished history in Nigeria, and Muslim communities have played an integral role in the development of the modern state. Muslim communities dominate in the north of Nigeria, though Muslim communities also have a presence in the South and central areas of the state too. To understand the situation of these communities, it is important to understand the history of Nigeria: that the current state of Nigeria is an irredentist entity, constructed by Britian during the colonial period, and an amalgmation of a predominantly Christian South with a predominantly Muslim North, which itself is divided between the historic Kanem Borno Empire and the Caliphate of Sokoto. What remains true is that religion is an important feature of every day life in Nigeria both for Christians and Muslims. Yet, the manipulation of Islam by different actors in Nigeria has at times served to hold back Muslim communities—education in the North is less developed, poverty is rampant, and women are often less empowered.

In 2015, a Muslim from the north of the country was popularly elected as president of the country in what was a defining moment for democracy in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. General Muhammadu Buhari, a one time military dictator of Nigeria, has returned as a proclaimed saviour of the nation—someone who could rectify the problems that many Nigerians face. The new President has identified corruption lack of education and the threat of Boko Haram as the key challenges. It is these issues that Nigeria will focus on improving in the next few years. It is these same issues (at least in terms of education and Islamist violence) that have had have a disproportional impact on Muslim communities. Moreover, Muslim communities have had to deal with a resurgence in Islamic revivalism and a politicization of their religion. This has often resulted in drives to police the morality of Muslim communities and a push to enact the criminal aspects of *Shari'a* law.

As has already been argued, one of the biggest challenges facing Muslim comminities in Nigeria is the dire state of the education

system in the North. While the South has developed and prospered with a comprehensive education system, much of the North still adheres to solely Islamic education, often taught at Qur'anic schools where students learn few of the skills necessary to integrate into a global economy. While a religious education is certainly valuable, it is not a subsitute for skills learned in science, mathematic, and technology classes. To further complicate the situation, Boko Haram has lead a campaign of misinformation and violence around Western education, often attacking schools, killing teachers, and kidnapping students. For Boko Haram, the Western world uses education to infiltrate Muslim minds and destroy Islam. Education is seen as the foundation of immorality and all that is evil in the world. Parents are told that Western education must not only be rejected but must be replaced by Islamic education where Allah is the means and the goal.

The intense debates as to what form education should take in the north of Nigeria, have been matched by discussion over the extent to which *Shari'a* law should be implemented. The drive for a return to enacting *Shari'a* law in its entirety came in 1999 after Nigeria's return to civilian rule. *Shari'a*, with its emphasis on justice, welfare, and civic responsibility was seen by many Muslims as a panacea for all that was wrong in their societies. Committees to oversee the enforcement of strict moral standards were quickly established, and pious Muslims were hired to patrol the streets and to ensure that morality was enforced. For all the fanfare and expectations around *Shari'a* as a solution to the ills of the state of society, it has yet to revolutionize society in the way that many expected.

Finally, the specter of Boko Haram has terrorized communities across Northern Nigeria and has served to brandish Muslim communities as problematic and as prone to radicalization. The truth is that Muslim communities have suffered greatly from Boko Haram's violence, often being on the frontline of attacks. Boko Haram remains a genuine threat not only to Nigeria but also to other regional neighbors. However, Muslim communities have been awaken to how unchecked radicalization can affect not only the image of Islam but also destroy Muslim means of livelihood and future. There is a sense that Northern Muslims are not poised to engage extremist elements within their communities. They are forced to distance themselves from Boko Haram as un-Islamic and does not represent Islam. There is a need to embrace Western education through which Muslims can empower themselves and break through the cycle of poverty and ignorance.

Notes

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