The relationship between indirect rule and Quranic education

Considerations for the emergence of Boko Haram terrorism in Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the historical legacy of the British policy of indirect rule and how its colonial policy of preserving the local traditions of the people through Quranic education contributed to the rise of Boko Haram terrorism. The narrative of hatred and anger against Western education is deeply ingrained and rooted in the political and religious culture of the region. Hence, the article traces the continuities between the colonial past and post-colonial Northern Nigeria and unveils the similarities contained therein. This article asserts that the policy of indirect rule and the official apathy towards Islamic and Quranic education in the region has led to this rise of unregulated and unreformed fundamentalist Quranic schools in Northern Nigeria. Under British rule, Quranic education in Northern Nigeria was left unregulated and unchecked due to fear of a backlash from the region's religious and political leaders. The British needed these leaders to further consolidate colonial rule in the area. Although the colonial government was aware of the enormous danger of spreading Islamic fundamentalism, the region remained unregulated. This governmental apathy towards reforming the basic tenets of Quranic schools persisted in post- independence Nigeria.

The article also suggests that efforts to combat Boko Haram terrorism in Northern Nigeria should involve policies to reform and regulate the thousands of Quranic schools in the north. These schools target desperately poor, unemployed and unemployable young men and women, who are recruited easily as foot soldiers by Boko Haram leaders.

INTRODUCTION

This narrative of hatred and anger towards Western education is deeply embedded in the region's political and religious culture. This is the main thrust of this article, as it traces the continuity between the colonial past and post-colonial present in Northern Nigeria, and

reveals the similarities in this regard. The article asserts that the policy of indirect rule and official preference for the Islamic faith has facilitated the rise of Islam and Quranic education in the region.

This article discusses how Quranic schools in Northern Nigeria have contributed towards the rise of Boko Haram terrorism today. The article posits that in order to find a viable and long-term solution to the problem of Boko Haram terrorism, there has to be an understanding of the historical legacy of the British colonial policy of indirect rule. In interrogating the concomitant effects of indirect rule in post-independence Nigeria, the author is mindful of the narrative that not all of Nigeria's problems are rooted in the colonial encounter. The article argues that in seeking solutions to the spectre of terrorism that is haunting Nigeria, a holistic understanding of the underlying issues is crucial. This new insight and knowledge could help policy-makers and researchers interested in the issue of Boko Haram terrorism to formulate and implement appropriate short-term and long-term solutions to this scourge.

To provide insight into the link between indirect rule and Boko Haram terrorism, the article is divided into five parts. The first part of the article provides reasons for the need to gain a holistic understanding of the root causes of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria before offering recommendations on how to solve the intractable crisis in Northern Nigeria. This part traces the colonial root of indirect rule and Islamic education and the ripple effect it has on post-colonial Nigeria's politics. The second part of the article conceptualises key terms such as terrorism, indirect rule and education and what it means in Nigerian parlance. The third part of the article provides an exposition of the nexus between indirect rule, Quranic education and Boko Haram terrorism in Northern Nigeria. Hereafter, the article focuses on the effects of indirect rule and Quranic education, which include unemployment and high poverty rates. The last part of the article focuses on key conclusions and provides recommendations on possible ways to solve the problem of Boko Haram terrorism in Northern Nigeria.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The concomitant effect of Quranic education lies in the millions of youths who are unemployed and unemployable. This is mainly because of their inability to work in a modern Nigeria that requires a degree of Western and formal education. Indirect rule, as used in this article, refers to the system of native administration that Lord Lugard implemented as Governor of Northern Nigeria. In the second decade of the 20th century, this practice was extended to some parts of Southern Nigeria, and to all parts of Nigeria after the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914 (Tukur 1979:866). With this administrative system, the authority of the native emirs and the cultural laws of the people and chiefs was the fundamental element of government, as they were mandated and protected by British laws. Northern Nigeria is under the stranglehold of Jihadists known as Boko Haram, who have brought chaos and anarchy to almost the entire north-eastern part of the country.

This anomaly was aggravated by the fact that Quranic education in Northern Nigeria was given preference over Western education. It is no coincidence that the Hausa name for Boko Haram literally means 'Western education is evil'.

The Boko Haram group is popularly known as the "people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad", Since its first attack on the Bauchi prison in Northern

Nigeria in September 2010, the group has carried out more than 500 attacks and killed more than 3 500 Nigerians (Badejogbin 2013:229).

The 'strong thought' approach, as reflected in the Boko Haram dichotomy, is evident in the theories of Slavoj **Žižek**, who bemoans the preeminence of 'weak thought' formulations in appraising contemporary world issues, while relinquishing the deep-rooted systemic origins of these aberrations, such as terrorism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012:3). **Žižek** expresses his concern as follows: "Why are so many problems today perceived as the problems of intolerance, rather than as problems of inequality, exploitation, or injustice? Why is the proposed remedy tolerance, rather than emancipation, political struggle, and even armed struggle?" (**Žižek** in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012:3).

With regard to **Žižek**'s proposition, 'weak thought' satisfies the curiosity of the majority when one has a limited comprehension of an issue. In turn, 'strong thought' burgeons when there is a more comprehensive understanding of the issues under discussion (in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012:3). The author is of the opinion that colonialism plays a relevant role in investigating the phenomenon of terrorism in independent Nigeria. It validates the view of the Latin American sociologist and theorist in colonialism, Ramon Grosfoguel (2007:219), who states that legacies of colonial rule continue to haunt many countries in the developing world, especially those in South America and Africa. Grosfoguel provides the following explanation: "One of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to the decolonisation of the world. This led to the myth of a 'postcolonial world'. The heterogeneous and multiple global structures put in place over a period of 450 years did not evaporate with the juridical-political decolonisation of the periphery over the past 50 years. We continue to live under the same 'colonial power matrix.' With juridical-political decolonisation we moved from a period of 'global colonialism' to the current period of 'global coloniality'" (Grosfoguel 2007:219).

This narrative, though pitiable, is true. According to the policy of indirect rule, local and traditional emirs were allowed to govern their territories with minimal supervision, as long as it did not challenge the British colonial control. As such, indirect rule was a type of 'contract' between the British colonial government and the traditional rulers of the Northern Nigerian region, as the policy was a win-win situation for both parties (Mamdani 1996:15).

Lord Lugard regarded Islam as an inferior religion. However, due to colonial expediencies and consolidation of power, it was able to flourish and develop freely in Northern Nigeria. This was purely a pragmatic decision. In his book, *Dual Mandate in Tropical Africa,* Lord Lugard highlights the following reasons for adopted indirect rule in Northern Nigeria (Lugard 1922 cited in Lange 2004:907). "Islam is a religion incapable of the highest development, but its limitations clearly suit the limitations of the people. It has undeniably had a civilising effect, abolishing the gross forms of pagan superstition and barbarous practices, and adding to the dignity, self-respect and self-control of its adherents. Its general effect has been to encourage abstinence from intoxicants, a higher standard of life and decency, a better social organization and tribal cohesion, with a well-defined code of justice" (Lugard 1922 in Lange 2004:907).

The British colonial government tried to promote the narrative that colonial administration in Northern Nigeria gave an equal amount of freedom of organisation and association to both Muslims and Christians in the region. However, this was far from the truth. As the governor of the Northern Protectorate of Nigeria, Lord Lugard insisted on various occasions that British

rule was geared towards the peaceful co-existence of the two religions. According to Lord Lugard, "The attitude which the British Governments have endeavored to assume is that of strict neutrality, impartiality, and tolerance in all religious matters [unless] any particular form of religion sanctions or enforces acts which are contrary to humanity or good order" (Lugard 1922 in Lange 2004:907).

A closer analysis of a series of colonial policies in Northern Nigeria revealed that there was a huge dissonance between official British rhetoric and the reality with regard to religious neutrality. According to Reynolds (2001:610), the reality in Northern Nigeria showed a colonial state that was bent on giving preferential access and opportunities to Islam in the region. It was clear that Islam was the colonial administration's preferred religious choice. This should be understood in the following light. Firstly, promoting Islam in Northern Nigeria helped the British solidify their control of the region, with the support of the emirs (Mamdani 1996:15; Reynolds 2001:610; and Falola 1981:230). Secondly, the emirs were petrified of the speed at which Christianity was growing, as this could have led to the emergence and development of a new class of rulers who might have challenged their authority in the region. Therefore, the encouraging of Islamic beliefs served both the British and aristocrat emirs' interests (Ugwu 1994; Kukah 2009:25 and Ozigi and Ocho 1980:41).

The unholy alliance between the interests of the British colonial government and the emirs was grounded on personal agendas. The British saw this as a way to consolidate colonial rule, while the emirs were worried that Western education would threaten their despotic rule (Falola 1981:230; Reynolds 2001:610). This resulted in a significant educational gap between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria (Ogunsola 1982). The collusion of the Emirs in the north, who refused to give their communities access to Western education, was exacerbated by the fact that in British colonial archives, no emir in Northern Nigeria had asked the British government for funds throughout its tenure from 1900–1960 (Ozigi and Ocho 1980:41).

This suppression of Western education was partly due to the emirs' concerns that a new educated class would emerge to challenge their political and religious authority (Ozigi and Ocho 1980:41). The gap widened so much that at the dawn of political independence from British colonial rule, Southern Nigeria had 109 secondary schools, in comparison to only nine secondary schools in the north (Etakibeubu 2014).

CONCEPTUALISATION AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF KEY TERMS

Terrorism

Terrorism is a modern predicament that afflicts many parts of the world, even though its roots can be traced back to the ancient and medieval epoch. Terrorism in this era occurred during Roman colonial rule in present-day Israel and Palestine. In the 1st Century AD, a Jewish group named the Sicari rebelled against Roman rule in their region (Schmid 2004:210 and Hoffman 1998:25). Josephus provides the following insight into this act of terrorism (Rhoads 1976:15):

"But while the country was cleared of these pests, a new species of bandit was springing up in Jerusalem, the so-called Sicari, who committed murders in broad daylight in the

heart of the city. The festivals were their special seasons, when they would mingle with the crowd, carrying short daggers concealed under their clothing, with which they stabbed their enemies. Then, when they fell, the murderers joined in the cries of indignation and, through this plausible behavior, were never discovered. The first to be assassinated by them was Jonathan the high priest; after his death there were numerous daily murders. The panic created was more alarming than the calamity itself; everyone, as on the battlefield, hourly expected death. Men kept watch at a distance on their enemies and would not trust even their friends when they approached. Yet even while their suspicions were aroused and they were on their guard, they fell; so swift were the conspirators and so crafty in eluding detection" (cited in D'Allesion and Stolzenberg 1990:332).

The word 'terrorism' was highlighted during the French Revolution, as it was a term used to refer to the deeds that occurred in the 'Reign of Terror', which was supervised by Maxmilien Robespierre (D'Allesion and Stolzenberg 1990:332). Terrorism has complex meanings and it conveys many emotions and reactions of people (Hoffman 1998:25 and Schmid 2004:210). With regard to the lack of consensus on definition of the concept, Laqueur (1999:14) states that it is difficult to interrogate and define this concept systematically. When attempting to define terrorism from an analytical perspective, Laqueur states that the word has a general application and involves certain assumptions, concepts such as terrorism "are almost always misleading" (Laqueur 1999:14). As a result, the intellectual study of terrorism has become "descriptively rich but analytically barren" (Ross 1993:320).

The government of the United States of America (US) has formulated its own definition of terrorism, which is described as follows: "The term 'terrorism' means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience" (Berrebi 2007:5).

In an effort to clarify the terms used in its definition, taking due cognisance of the ambiguity involved in attributing a meaning to its concept of terrorism, the American State Department explains that: "The term non-combatant should be understood to include, in addition to civilians, military personnel who at the time of the incident are unarmed and/ or not on duty. We also consider as acts of terrorism attacks on military installations or on armed military personnel when a state of military hostilities does not exist at the site, such as bombings against US bases in the Persian Gulf, Europe, or elsewhere" (Berrebi 2007:5).

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) defines terrorism as: "Criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitutes offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism" (in Adegbulu 2013:262).

In a similar vein, a United Nations (UN) panel considered the attacks against civilians in its definition of terrorism. As such, terrorism is defined as: "Any action, in addition to actions already specified by the existing conventions on aspects of terrorism, the Geneva Conventions and Security Council resolution 1566 (2004), that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act" (in Adegbulu 2013:262).

Literary scholars agree that, for an act to be regarded as a terrorist act, it must involve the willful taking of human life. This should be done with the full intention of inflicting severe mental distress, and sometimes entailing uncoordinated or calculated attacks on the innocent (Harmon 2000:5). In view of the above definitions, the author can infer that the actions of the Boko Haram group in Northern Nigeria constitute acts of terrorism.

The types of terrorist acts that Boko Haram undertakes in Northern Nigeria are examples of religious terrorism. This type of terrorism emerged from the Islamic religion and occurs when there is a religious justification for acts of terror (Adegbulu 2013:265 and Falola 1981:230). Boko Harm regards anything Western, both in terms of education and values, as anti-Islam and as something that must be eliminated from Muslim societies. The notion of the 'ideal Islamic state' is pursued at all costs, while the Islamic religious doctrine is manipulated in order to commit acts of murder, robbery, looting, rape, and to sow anarchy within a society. Undeniably, this is incompatible with modern civilisation and life. Furthermore, Karl Marx called religious terrorists "dangerous dreamers of the absolutes" (Schmid 2004:211).

Indirect rule

A common feature of British colonial rule in many parts of Africa was the scarcity of resources and manpower dedicated to controlling, consolidating and administrating such a vast continent. As such, it was described as "colonialism-on-the-cheap" (Mamdani 1996:15 and Fisher 1984:395). British colonial authorities saw colonialism as a business enterprise where not a penny of British tax could be spent on developing native Africans. The situation persisted even during what some scholars called "the high noon of empire" (Spear 2003:1). During this time, an estimated 3 000 European administrators had direct control and supervision of an African population that was estimated to be around 90-million (Fields 1985:64 and Phillips 1989:40).

The idea of a few Europeans administering large areas of African territories in collaboration with a 'minority elite' (Lange 2004:905) was brilliantly captured in what Kirk-Greene and Berry respectively referred to as the "thin white line" (cited in Richens 2009:33). In Richens's view, the term "thin white line" refers to the British government's determination to run their African colonies on a shoestring budget, by coercing colonies' traditional institutions, such as chieftaincy, customary law and land tenure, to be their eyes and ears within the communities (Richens 2009:33). Fields (1985:64) elaborates on the aforementioned by stating that, "for a state born illegitimate and forced to scrimp all its life, chiefs' legitimacy was the best available makeshift".

The policy of indirect rule empowered local chiefs, as they were given control of the customary laws within their communities. During the early years of colonial rule, much of what was held and believed to be customary law was not formalised. As such, the chiefs were granted unprecedented power to weave, mould and wield traditional laws and powers for their own personal benefit (Boone 1994:115; Chanock 1985:35; Mamdani 1996:15; Merry 1991:905; Migdal 1988:25 and Roberts and Mann 1991:40). According to Mamdani (1996:15), who is regarded as a leading authority on indirect rule and colonialism in Africa, indirect rule established a decentralised despotism, as the British colonial policy in African territories was able "to marshal authoritarian possibilities in native culture".

Mamdani (1996:15) continues to state that: "Custom… was state ordained and state enforced… I am not arguing for a conspiracy theory whereby custom was always defined 'from above', always 'invented' and 'constructed' by those in power. The custom was more often than

not the site of struggle... My point, though, is about the institutional context in which this contest took place: the terms of the contest, its institutional framework, were heavily skewed in favour of state-appointed customary authorities... the functionary of the local state apparatus was... the chief. Far from being pre-colonial holdovers, colonial chiefs represented a consolidation of judicial, legislative and executive authority at the center of a system founded on forced labour, cultivation of crops, and payment of taxes and giving up land" (Mamdani 1996:15).

Many scholars believe that socio-economic factors were responsible for the British colonial government's decision to promulgate indirect rule in Nigeria. The socio-economic factors in question include staff shortages; the quest for cheap administration; a focus on creating administrative continuity between traditional and European governance models; avoiding the difficult task of abolishing Africans' traditional institutions, and addressing the need to improve administration in view of the unfavourable climate of the region, as malaria killed many of the colonial administrators posted to Northern Nigeria (Afigbo 1971:18; Atanda 1973:26 and Atanda 1970:20).

In advancing the objective of indirect rule, which was to consolidate and legitimise British rule in their colonies, Sir Donald Cameron rationalised the policy as follows: "The rule of the Chief is deeply rooted... the people have a real attachment to their Chief and the system of tribal government to which they belong. It would surely be mere vandalism to set out to smash an organisation like this... Their loyalties to their own institutions... [which] form one of the most valuable possessions which we have inherited... make for law and order in the land as nothing else can" (Cameron 1937 in Spear 2003:8).

In areas where there was no existing central chief or traditional ruler, such as the Igbos of South-Eastern Nigeria, the British authorities stationed warrant chiefs, so that the locals could be ruled through the colonial creations that would "strike a resonant chord in the community" to ensure effectiveness (Afigbo 1971:18). Perham's influential definition of indirect rule defines the policy as follows: "Indirect rule can be seen as a system by which the tutelary power recognises existing African societies and assists them to adapt themselves to the functions of local government" (Perham in Smith 1937:372).

Perham's use of the word "assist" is a metaphor for direct obedience to any traditional authority, prince or chief appointed by British colonial government (Atanda 1973:26). Since colonialism's main goal was to fulfill the wishes and aspirations of the metropolitan capital and powers in London, any acts of disloyalty would be ruthlessly rooted out (Mamdani 1996:20).

Fields (1985:64) asserted that indirect rule became effective "by making black men with legitimate authority appendages of white men without it". In addition, it "was a way of making the colonial state a consumer of power generated within the customary order... Real power issued from the ruled and most of the colonial powers were derived from local customs of the people" (Fields 1985:64). In interrogating the policy of indirect rule, it is imperative to refer to the intellectual worldview and vision of Lord Lugard (1922 in Lange 2004:907), who played an instrumental role in establishing indirect rule in Northern Nigeria: According to Lord Lugard, "The essential feature of the system... is that the native chiefs are constituted as an integral part of the machinery of the administration. There are not two sets of rulers – the British and the native – working either separately or in co-operation, but a single Government in which the native chiefs have well-defined duties and an acknowledged status equally with British officers. Their duties should never conflict, and should overlap as little as possible. They should be complementary to each other, and the chief himself must

understand that he has no right to place and power unless he renders his proper services to the State" (Lugard 1922 in Lange 2004:907).

Mamdani (1996:15) critiqued Governor-general Lugard's, narrative and insisted that the real impact of the policy was far from the stated position. According to Mamdani, the reality of indirect rule meant that there were two separate, divided states that existed in the colonies – one headed and controlled by the Europeans, and the other dominated and controlled by the local chiefs. Mamdani (1996:15) states that, "While recruitment, promotion and work in the colonial administration followed the Weberian sense of bureaucracy, recruitment and administration on the side of the local chief were based on lineage or strict allegiance to the chief and his caprices. It was indeed a patrimonial system of government, as dictatorship was rife in the local communities of the British colonies under indirect rule" (Mamdani 1996:20).

The patrimonial system that Mamdani alludes to paved the way for the Quranic system of education, which is a key component of indirect rule. Quranic education was left undisturbed and unregulated in the hands of incapable and untrained mallams, who spread their views of Islam and its position in modern Nigeria among the impressionable children who were left under their care and supervision. This practice was rife in colonial and post-colonial Northern Nigeria, and the concomitant effect was the rise of religious fundamentalism and the subsequent Boko Haram terrorism in the region (Maiangwa 2012:45 and Boyan 1979:100).

Quranic education

Quranic education is a process where parents or communities place their young children under the direct supervision and mentorship of a Quranic teacher (mallam), in order to memorise the Quran and gain the knowledge of the religion. The mallam usually moves the children far away from their parents and communities and they (almajiris) are forced to learn Islamic religious instructions, doctrines and values. In many parts of Northern Nigeria, verses of the Quran are written on wooden slates and then erased and replaced, depending on the progress of the students (Winters 1987:175 and Falola 1981:131).

The use of corporal punishment is a common form of discipline in these schools. The mallams discipline almajiris to make them conform to Islamic values and their schools' tenets. The curricula in Quranic schools are unregulated, and there is no special training to become a mallam (Fagbumi 2005:5). Children are sometimes as young as five years old when they are removed from their parents. Under the supervision of incapable, untrained mallams, children become vulnerable to subversive doctrines such as Islamic fundamentalism. These Quranic schools are a veritable source of recruitment for Boko Haram leaders looking for future terrorists (Fagbumi 2005:6; Abubakar 2009 and Alkali 2009)

THE NEXUS BETWEEN INDIRECT RULE, QURANIC EDUCATION AND BOKO HARAM TERRORISM IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

In this section of the article, the author states that the unsupervised nature of the Quranic schools, their mallams and their activities played a vital role in the rise and growth of Boko

Haram terrorism in Northern Nigeria. When British colonial rule began in the region, the British were quick to realise that Islam had a special hold over the psyche of the average Northern Nigerian, and they exploited this to the fullest (Mamdani 1996:15; Falola 1981:131 and Afigbo 1971:18).

Throughout Northern Nigeria, newly sworn-in emirs are required to take the following oath of allegiance to the British Crown; this oath also demands that the emirs do nothing that will jeopardise the Islamic religion, laws and culture: "I swear, in the name of Allah and of Mohammed his prophet, to serve well and truly his Majesty King Edward VII, and his representative, the High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria, to obey the laws of the Protectorate and the lawful commands of the High Commissioner, and of the Resident, provided that they are not contrary to my religion. And if they are so contrary I will at once inform the Resident for the information of the High Commissioner... And as I carry out this oath, so may Allah judge me" (in Reynolds 2001:604).

It is a stated fact that the emirs in the north denied their communities access to Western education. According to records in the British colonial archives, throughout British rule (1900–1960), no emirs in Northern Nigeria asked the British government for funds to develop educational institutions in their emirates (Ozigi and Ocho 1980:41). This suppression of education was partly due to the fear that a new educated class would emerge to challenge the emirs' political and religious authority (Ozigi and Ocho 1980:41; Boyan 1979:115 and Afigbo 1971:18). The gap widened to such an extent that, at the dawn of Nigeria's political independence from British colonial rule, Southern Nigeria had 109 secondary schools, in comparison to only nine secondary schools in the north (Etakibeubu 2014:5).

This was exacerbated by the fact that Quranic education in Northern Nigeria was given preference over Western education. The emirs wanted to curtail education and Christian enlightenment, while the British wanted political hegemony and absolute control of the taxes in the region through indirect rule. This common agenda led to a wide gap between educational standards of the North and South (Fagbumi 2005).

Boko Haram literally means "Western education is evil", but this name is emblematic of the collective reasoning and perception of all people in Nigeria. It dates back to colonial times, when the British used Quranic education to consolidate their control over the region. According to some educational experts, formal education is seen as the process through which an individual is transformed into an active participant in the socio-economic development of their society (Ozigi and Ocho 1980:41). This pivotal role of Western education was kept from millions of youths in Northern Nigeria. It was replaced with Quranic education, which makes them incapable of participating in the socio-economic development of modern Nigeria. The subsequent alienation and sense of frustration has caused these youths turn to radical Islam, which is represented by Boko Haram, to gain a sense of fulfillment and hope (Kukah 2009:22 and Falola 1981:231).

The resentment towards Western education is perfectly encapsulated in the view of Sultan Ibrahim. He is a descendant of the great Usman Dan Fodio who ruled Northern Nigeria before the advent of the British colonial rule, while his son went to Harvard University in the US. He advised his subjects against receiving Western education by stating that, "Western education undermines our culture" (Ugwu 1994). The Northern elite spoke against Western education from the colonial era, and Boko Haram has now picked up the narrative and amplified it, with the message that Western education is evil (Fagbumi 2005:4). Hassan

Kontagora (2001:53), a renowned politician in Northern Nigeria, stated that, "Western education is useless, it is polluted, and it is immoral! What do you need it for? You need it to work in the government service, and there are no longer government jobs".

Aliyu Tilde, another politician from Northern Nigeria, encapsulates the iron grip of Islamic education on the psyche of the average Northerner as follows: "We go to school only [to] obtain a certificate that will earn us a job without [obeying] the principles and fundamentals that enabled the West to excel in such knowledge and technology… Our general contempt for knowledge is outstanding, making us to prefer ignorance as a companion.… We are culturally repulsive to anything modern, from whatever direction it comes. Simply put, we are Boko Haram. Otherwise, what could explain our backwardness in every national endeavor, economic, social, and political? Why do we have, for example, the lowest per capita income in the country, the lowest life expectancy, the lowest academic achievements… highest poverty and highest maternal and infant mortality rates?" (in Harnischfeger 2014:53).

In most parts of Northern and Southern Nigeria, the Almajiris are generally perceived as neglected, exploited, abandoned, "an eyesore or a pest" (Tilde 2009), and as a "generation lost" (Ekaette, in Abubakar 2009). The Nigerian Nobel laureate, Prof Wole Soyinka, calls them the "butchers of Nigeria" (Soyinka 2012). According to the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC 2010), the total enrolment in Quranic schools throughout Nigeria is estimated to exceed 9.5-million, with more than 8.5-million in the northern part of the country (UBEC 2010). The common narrative in Nigerian political economy is that the Almajiris are regarded as relics from the colonial era, who are "stuck in a time warp" (Fabiyi 2008). This situation can be ascribed to British colonial support of Islam and Quranic education,

Tilde (2009) likens the Almajiris' schools to 'typewriters' in an era of 'computers'. In the most stringent indictment on the Quranic education system ever given by a Northerner, Tilde (2009) emphasises that there has to be a total and radical restructuring of the current Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria if the youths are ever going to enter modernity with their counterparts in Southern Nigeria. According to Tilde, "Quranic education has locked its students (out of modernity)", students who can neither "read news articles nor partake in the running of government" (Tilde 2009). Suleiman (2009) corroborates this assumption, stating that the Almajiris are devoid of "the practical skills required in the real world to contribute meaningfully to modern society or even to earn a livelihood".

Quranic education, which produces these Almajiri students, is a fertile ground for Boko Haram recruitment, radicalisation and indoctrination of thousands of youths in Northern Nigeria. Sani, (in Abubakar 2009), a local government politician in Kano (the most populous state in Northern Nigeria) believes that the nature of their upbringing and the radical Islamic teachings to which they are exposed in the unreformed mosques and schools of the north makes them susceptible to criminal behaviour and even terrorism (Abubakar 2009). According to Sani, (in Abubakar 2009), "The pathetic life they live… breeds heartless criminal minds in them, and because they are hungry and angry at the modern state means they can be easily mobilized to engage in killings and looting during ethnic or religious clashes" (Abubakar 2009).

Awofeso, Richie and Degeling (2003:320) highlight the danger posed by the millions of Almajiris roaming the streets of Northern Nigeria without jobs and a means of livelihood. They are wary of the "terrorist potential of having about one million hungry and gullible children roaming aimlessly in Nigeria's northern cities, from whom any fanatic, religious or otherwise, could readily recruit disciples for antisocial purposes" (Awofeso *et al.* 2003:320).

In a ground-breaking study, which bears a striking resemblance to the evils of terrorism in our contemporary world, economist Gary Becker (1968:169) provides theoretical and empirical proof that poverty and limited education lead to a significant number of property crimes. Becker (1968:169) states that criminals undertake illegal activities because the reward for the crimes exceeds the loss of income had they been employed lawfully. Since they lack legal employment as a result of limited education and low skills levels, crime has become a profitable venture (Becker 1968:169).

Clark (1970:25) agreed with the aforementioned view of Becker. The author highlights that crime prevention efforts should also focus on alleviating poverty, as poverty and illiteracy are a fertile soil in which crime germinates and grows. Former US president, George Bush corroborated this sentiment in his message to the then President of the Palestinian region, Chairman Yasser Arafat, in which he condemned the wave of terrorist attacks which had engulfed the Middle East in 2002. Bush also asked world leaders to work together with the US Government and its allies to cut off funding for terrorist organisations globally, as well as to prevent them from finding a safe haven anywhere in the world. According to Bush, "We fight poverty because hope is the answer to terror . . . We will challenge the poverty and hopelessness and lack of education and failed governments that too often allow conditions that terrorists can seize" (White House News Release 22 March 2002).

This narrative was voiced at one of the largest global gatherings of Nobel Peace Prize laureates, which was held in Oslo, Norway, in 2001. Many voiced their concern at the surge of terrorism that is endangering peace and development worldwide. Elie Wiesel, the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize winner, was of the view that, "The roots of terrorism nest in fanaticism, hatred, and the will to live in ignorance.... What is it that seduces some young people to terrorism? It simplifies things. The fanatic has no questions, only answers. Education is the way to eliminate terrorism" (Wiesel cited in Jai 2001:7).

Kim Dae-jung, former President of South Korea, concurred: "At the bottom of terrorism is poverty. That is the main cause. Then there are other religious, national and ideological differences" (Jai 2001:7). Desmond Tutu, former Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, hit the nail on the head when he concluded that, "Education is the way to eliminate terrorism" (Jai 2001:7).

LEGACIES OF INDIRECT RULE AND QURANIC EDUCATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

After the 9/11 attacks on the US, global public opinion refocused on the causes of terrorism and the best way to prevent such callous acts from occurring again. There is a prevalence of thoughts and views that poverty and unemployment create terrorism (Kahn and Weiner 2002:4). However, this view is not new to literature. The results of a study by Alesina, Ozler, Roubini and Swagel (1996) reveal that poor living conditions and economic exclusion heighten the possibility of political violence in order to settle economic injustices or deprivation. Collier and Hoeffleer (2004:570) highlight economic deprivation as one of the most important indicators for predicting political conflict, violence or terrorism in a country.

However, there is no general consensus that poverty and poor economic conditions are 'fertile soil' in which terrorism is grown and nurtured. Despite his impressive wealth and fine

education, Osama Bin Laden veered onto the path of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. Many researchers reject the substantial link between terrorism, poverty, unemployment and overall poor economic conditions (Piazza 2006:165; Sambanis 2008:175 and Dreher and Fischer 2010:10 and Dreher and Gassebner 2008:28). However, in the case of Northern Nigeria, the poverty–terrorism nexus is most apt for capturing this anomaly.

The narrative of this article is that poverty and unemployment are a veritable tool for Islamic intolerance and fundamentalism to thrive, which gives birth and impetus to Boko Haram terrorism in Northern Nigeria. This argument is underscored by one of the unfortunate legacies of Quranic education – many young boys and men are enrolled in Quranic schools without proper guidance and supervision. Since many of these young boys learn to read, write and recite the Koran in Arabic, they have no means of creating livelihoods. Referred to as the Almajiris, they find it difficult to get jobs in the formal sector. As a result, they roam the streets of the north, begging for alms and listening to Islamic preachers and mallams' teachings, absorbing whatever is being preached from the pulpit. As noted before, many of the student Almajiris and their teacher mallams are opposed to modern knowledge, hence their decision to attend Islamic schools. This deficiency in modern knowledge and skills makes it difficult for them to fit into the general socio-economic milieu of the Nigerian state (Awofeso *et al.* 2003:315; Alkali 2009 and Suleiman 2009:5).

This dangerous combination of poverty and religious indoctrination has manifested in Northern Nigeria, where millions of youths seek reason and meaning in their lives through the affirmations and preaching of their mallams. The Nobel Laureate, Prof Wole Soyinka (2012), supports this narrative in an article published in *Newsweek* magazine, where he described the Boko Haram terrorist group as the "butchers of Nigeria", who find easy recruits and willing men among the thousands of Almajiris who attend Quranic schools in Northern Nigeria. He says the following in this regard: "They [have] been deliberately bred, nurtured, sheltered, rendered pliant, obedient to only one line of command, ready to be unleashed at the rest of society. They were bred in madrassas and are generally known as the Almajiris. From knives and machetes, bows and poisoned arrows they have graduated to AK-47s, homemade bombs, and explosive-packed vehicles" (Soyinka 2012).

The deplorable conditions that characterise the daily material existence of the Almajiris attracted the attention of a former Cabinet Minister of Education in Nigeria, Aishatu Jibrin Dukku, who lamented that "most of these children, because of the harsh realities they found themselves in, end up becoming juvenile delinquents and, subsequently, adult criminals" (Alkali 2009).

In a similar vein, the Nigerian National Council for the Welfare of the Destitute (NCWD) was uncertain as to how best to handle and support the full socialisation of the Almajiris, since thousands grew up without their nuclear families, and are thus very vulnerable to all sorts of mischief and crime. According to the NCWD, "lack of parental participation in the moral up-bringing of the Almajiri pupil predisposes them to become delinquents" (NCWD 2001:95). Most of the Almajiris' farming activities with their teachers expose them to exploitation and difficulties, which hardens their outlook on life. Abubakar elaborates by saying that the Almajiris' free labour on their teachers' farms amounts to "sheer exploitation" (Abubakar 2009).

Mallam Sanusi, former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria and the current Emir of Kano in Nigeria, reiterated these conditions. Speaking at the Isaac Moghalu Foundation

Leadership Lecture and Symposium in Abuja, he asserted that as many as 93% of female children in Northern Nigeria are being denied access to secondary school education as a result of the preference for Islamic education. Most importantly, only 3% of females completed secondary education in Northern Nigeria, as 70% of women between the ages of 20 and 29 are unable to read, compared to 9.7% in Southern Nigeria (Sanusi 2013).

Most of the current governors of Nigeria's 19 northern states have spoken out against the Islamic conservatism of the northern leaders, who favoured Muslim education and barred Western education and Christianity. Subsequently, the north is relatively poor and undeveloped, even archaic, compared to the southern states in the country. Some researchers in the field of Nigerian politics and development have noted this anomaly: "In the north the whole process of modernisation – changes in the way of living, values, and skills, as well as directly material terms – has lagged behind that of all the states in Southern Nigeria" (Kilby 1969:32). The toxic mix of poor education has meant that the vast majority of citizens in Northern Nigeria, from where Boko Haram recruits most of its jihadists, live in absolute poverty and deprivation.

The severe poverty and underdevelopment in the region is aptly captured in the Nigerian National Population Commission's assessment, which shows low literacy levels in the northern states, with a special mention of the Yobe and Bauchi states that have a literacy level of 58%. Statistics from Borno State, which is the headquarters of Boko Haram, were most telling, as 72% of the children aged between six and 16 have not attended a primary/secondary school (Vanguard 6 July 2011). Maier (2000:144) adds that the majority of young people in Northern Nigeria bemoans the deplorable conditions of their material existence and is in a state of continuous restlessness and anger. He adds that the youths harbour a "quiet rage over their falling living standards, their lack of clean water, decent schools, health clinics and jobs" (Maier 2000:144).

The dire situation of poverty in Northern Nigeria resonates deeply with the views of Gurr (1970:10) in his thesis on 'relative deprivation'. He points to the fact that there is always violence when there is a dissonance between the expectations of individuals or groups of people and the actual economic benefits that they accrue through legal avenues (Gurr 1970:10). As such, many people are prone to violence if they feel that they have been unfairly treated in terms of the distribution of economic resources within a particular socio-cultural milieu. Statistical evidence in relation to the poverty rate of the whole northern region, in comparison to that of the southern states, buttresses Gurr's idea of 'relative deprivation' (1970:10).

The following is a breakdown of the percentages of the poor in all six geopolitical zones of the country: North West – 72.2% of its population; North East – 71.2% of its population; North Central – 67% of its population; South East – 26.7% of its population; South-South – 35.1% of its population; and South West – 43.1% of its population according to the National Bureau of Statistics report (NBS Report 2012:16). In view of these statistics, it becomes clear that Gurr's (1970:10) argument is legitimate, at least in the case of Nigeria. It means that terrorist groups find it more convenient, cheaper and easier to recruit members from this pool of frustrated and angry men and women, who feel disenfranchised and excluded from the post-colonial project called Nigeria.

Further insights into the level of poverty and deprivation that envelops the life of an ordinary citizen in Northern Nigeria can be gleaned from the statistics published by Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) with regard to relative poverty in the country. Relative poverty, as used here, refers to the living standards of the majority of Nigerians. It shows

that relative poverty is acute and prominent in the northern region of the country, unlike the southern region. Statistics show that the northern states of Nigeria's relative poverty figures are as high as 76.3%, while the southern states have around 59.1% (NBS report 2012:16).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The author of this article is of the opinion that the *raison d'être* for the rise of Islamic intolerance and terrorism in Northern Nigeria is the historical legacies of the British government's colonial policies. Notably, these policies favoured Quranic education, which produced millions of youths in the north who had no Western education. As such, they had marginal opportunities for formal employment. This deplorable condition also made poverty and economic backwardness rampant in most of the states in the North. When one understands the intrinsic link between poverty and Islamic fundamentalism, one can gain a deeper understanding of why the region's religious intolerance has morphed into full-scale terrorism.

The analysis in this article highlights that no single approach is adequate to solve the problem of Boko Haram terrorism, which feeds on the deplorable material conditions of the majority of the people in North-Eastern Nigeria. This understanding crystalises the options available to all the states and federal stakeholders in the region. The responsibility for dousing the flames of religious radicalism has to be placed on the doorsteps of thousands of Islamic teachers in the region who were hitherto unregulated. The religious leaders in the region should make an effort to create a set of guidelines that will help train Islamic teachers and set-up Islamic schools, popularly known as Almajiris, in the region.

Since Quranic education has been a dominant force in the region, religious, political, cultural and educational leaders in the region should show the virtue of tolerance and take note of the fact that Nigeria is a secular country. In this regard, the quest to forcefully convert non-Muslims will not be tolerated, as the full might of the law will be applied to those who flout the laws of the country. There should be better monitoring of Islamic preachers in the region. Islamic religious leaders in the region should undertake this task, so that the religious sensibilities and sensitivities of the people are not offended. This endeavour should be geared towards curbing the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the region.

The Federal Government of Nigeria should also provide more educational facilities for non-Muslims, and even for moderate Muslims, as education and enlightenment are veritable weapons in the fight against religious extremism and fundamentalism. In this respect, the thousands of Quranic schools provided by the outgoing administration of Jonathon Goodluck is a step in the right direction, as multicultural centres of learning and instruction would help to unveil the lies, myths and unfounded dogmas that have turned the graduates of these schools into people who commit acts of savagery and barbarism, such as those perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorists.

In Pakistan, a country which has also struggled with the spectre of Quranic education, philosophies and their links with terrorism, it was found that many of the students were unable to attend modern schools due to financial reasons. In this case, the Pakistani authorities provided free public schools to counter the recruitment drive and vigour of the Quranic schools (Stern 2004:287). The state and national governments in Nigeria could adopt the same formula to neutralise the impact Quranic education has on the lives of thousands of Muslim youths in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Although Boko Haram terrorism in North-East Nigeria is a religious conflict, it is clear that the bulk of their recruitment thrives on the poverty and hopelessness that pervades the region and its states. In order to cut off this line of supply, regional and state governments should endeavour to provide a means of livelihood for the millions of desperately poor young men and women in the region. Graduates of Quranic schools find it difficult to get gainful employment in the formal sector of the Nigerian economy. However, government can help by providing apprenticeship and artisan training for the youth in this region, as this would keep them from becoming easy targets for Boko Haram.

While not criticising the ongoing military campaign against Boko Haram terrorism in Northern Nigeria, it is important that the Nigerian authorities persuade religious ideologues and teachers in the region to be at the forefront of the intellectual war against Boko Haram's false teachings and ideologies. It is important for the Islamic leaders in North-Eastern Nigeria to help counter the ongoing indoctrination of their fellow Muslims, and point out the path to true and authentic Islam to the moderate Muslims.

Since Boko Haram terrorism has spilled over to the neighbouring countries of Chad, Cameroon, Benin Republic and Niger, it is vital that a regional strategy be adopted to defeat these groups. It can no longer be a Nigerian problem, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) must therefore develop a joint security and defense mechanism to guide and protect their common borders. The terrorist group has used Nigeria's slack borders with its neighbours as a safe haven to move personnel, arms and munitions. Greater intelligence gathering and sharing must be forged between the regional governments and immigration, while border patrols must be coordinated to prevent criminals and terrorists from moving freely in the region (Pham 2012:7).

The state and national governments in the north-eastern part of the country should also devote a considerable amount of time and energy to addressing the endemic poverty and unemployment that characterise the lives of most Nigerian citizens in the North-East. This sense of hopelessness has enabled Boko Haram to achieve a cult-like status and fellowship in the region, as thousands of disenfranchised, poor, illiterate and unemployed young people see the group as the only way to escape their deplorable living conditions. There must be a concerted effort to train and retrain the youth in small-scale farming and artisan work, while jobs and opportunities for poverty alleviation and food production should be directed towards the youths of the region. This is because they constitute an ever-increasing recruitment pool for the Boko Haram group. If the efforts towards poverty alleviation and job creation are successful, this will cut off an important lifeline of the Boko Haram group.

Finally, it has become evident that during the eight-year military campaign against Boko Haram terrorism, the Nigerian military is not adequately equipped and too corrupt to adapt to the modern methods of warfare and counter-terrorism. It is therefore essential that the government embark on the rigorous retraining of its security and military personnel to defeat the Boko Haram group. The military campaign remains an integral part of the effort to solve the problem.

In conclusion, the advice of the former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Anan, remains timely: "Our strategy against terrorism must be comprehensive and should be based on five pillars: it must aim at dissuading people from resorting to terrorism or supporting it; it must deny terrorists access to funds and materials; it must deter states from sponsoring terrorism; it must develop state capacity to defeat terrorism; and it must defend human rights" (in Maiangwa 2012:134).

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