

Islām, Violent Extremism and Peaceful Coexistence in Nigeria

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Abstract

Contemporary writings continue to associate Islām with violent extremism. Activities and narratives of a cross section of Muslims in many regions of the world have confirmed the intellectual proposition of the writers. Although violent extremism is multi-factorial and extremely diverse, it cannot be predicated on one variable alone. For violent extremist movements to evolve, develop and command followership, it requires an alignment of situational, socio-cultural and individual factors. However, a critique of some of the existing literature reveals that violent extremism is caused principally in Islām by the jurisprudential (fiqhī) and interpretational (tafsīrī) narratives that are connected to many contentious issues. Indisputably, the activities of these violent groups have impacted negatively on the world peace. For instance, the 2015 Global Terrorism Index establishes that violent extremism in the form of terrorism continues to rise. The total number of deaths from terrorism in 2014 reached 32,685, constituting an 80% increase from 18,111 the previous year. The significant majority of these deaths, over 78%, occurred in just five countries: Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria. Nigeria has had its fair share of these violent activities in the forms of ethno-religious and cultural violence and terrorism in the past. It was initially maitasine in 1970s and 1980s; and recently the boko haram insurgency, both in the Northern part of the country. It is in the light of the foregoing that this paper examines the effects of boko haram on the peaceful cohabitation of Nigeria.

Keywords: Islām, Violent Extremism, Peace, Boko Haram, Nigeria

Introduction

Islām has grown unswervingly since its advent in human history, expanding into new neighbouring territories without ever retreating. It began in the seventh century as a small community in *Hijāz* in the Arabian Peninsula, led by its messenger and prophet, Muhammad bin 'Abdullah (d. 632), who eventually united all the Arab tribes under the banner of the religion. Within the first two centuries of its existence, Islām came into global prominence through its conquests of the Middle East, North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, the Iranian lands, Central Asia, and the Indus valley (Gerhard, 2013). Further conquests therefore, exposed Muslims to many theologies and ideologies of the conquered empires and territories. This development was one of the factors responsible for the rise of violent groups in Islām.

The *Sunnī* Islāmic tradition considers the emergence of the *Khārijites* (Ar. al-Khawārij) in the course of the first civil war (*fītā*; 35-40AH/656-661CE) as the first ideological and theological struggle of the early Muslims. Early Islamic heresiography, historiography and *adab* (literature) abound with reports of the unparalleled *violence* and uncompromising piety of the *Khawārij*; it is this volatile combination that apparently led to the obliteration of most *Khārijite* groups before the end of the ninth century CE. Their particular brand of militantly pious opposition was encompassed in the *Khārijite* maxim *lā ulla illā li-llāh* ('judgment is God's alone'), which left a lasting impression on the readers and listeners of early Islāmic history as it was remembered in the works of the early Muslim historians and biographers (Hegmann, 2014). Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, it continues to fascinate modern-day Muslims and Islāmic radicalism and extremism alike.

It is therefore, not surprising to reread the contemporary writings associating Islām with violent extremism (United Nations Development Programme, 2017; United Nations Development Programme, 2016). Activities and narratives of a cross section of the Muslims in many regions of the world have further confirmed the propositions of these writers. Although violent extremism is multi-dimensional and extremely diverse, it cannot be pinned down on one variable alone. For violent extremist movements to evolve, develop and command followership, an alignment of situational, socio-cultural and individual factors is required. However, violent extremism is caused principally in Islam by the jurisprudential

(*fiqhi*) and interpretational (*tafsīrī*) narratives that are associated with issues like *lakimiyah/Shari'ah* (governance/Islamic law) *imāmah/khilāfah* (leadership) *kufr* (disbelief), *shirk* (polytheism), *jāhiliyyah* (anti-Islamic practice) and *riddā* (apostasy) *walā'* and *barā'* (loyalty and disassociation) *jihād* and *daulah/Islamiyyah* (Jihad and Islamic State) *'iqāmatul-'udūd* (punishment) *'ahd* and *ann* (treaties with non-Muslims and security), *'ummah* (Islamic community), *ijrah* (migration), among others. These narratives might have influenced the emergence of *Boko Harām*, one of the deadliest terrorist groups on the continent of Africa and the world, in Nigeria inclusive.

The group, according to Blanchard (2014), emerged in early 2000s as a small *Sunni* Islamic group advocating strictest interpretation and implementation of Islamic law in Nigeria. Initially, the sect's leadership did not call for violence; its followers engaged in periodic clashes with security agencies during its formative years. There is a growing suspicion among Nigerians about the real identity and motive of *Boko Haram* sect. Most Muslims see it as an extension of *Maitatsine* sect, which was established in 1945 to transport turmoil to Islām as it was confirmed that *Maitatsine* was not a Muslim until his death, while a reasonable number of Christians see it as an attempt to Islamise Nigerians while some are indifferent (Shehu, 2014). In 2009, the activities of *Boko Haram* had transformed from a local peace militia into a violent group, after the government attacked the members of the group in some major cities of northern Nigeria, which led to five days violent clashes between the group members and the Nigerian forces and resulted in killing the sect leader, Muhammad Yusuf in Maiduguri, and more than 700 other people (Shehu, 2014).

It is also indisputable that the activities of these violent groups have impacted negatively on the world peace, especially peaceful cohabitation between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, chronicles the effects of the group on peaceful cohabitation in the country.

Violent Extremism

Violent extremism is rarely defined. Neither the United Nations nor the European Union has an official definition. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) defines it as "advocating,

engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives (See http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Violent-extremism_RP.pdf). However, this apparently simple and obvious statement conceals a great deal of controversy and uncertainty. Is violent extremism, by definition, something carried out by non-state actors? In conflict situations, how can we differentiate violent extremists from other, more legitimate conflict actors? Does violent extremism always have to be ideological – can it, for example, be criminal, or even purposeless? Is 'violent extremism' merely a synonym for 'terrorism'? More fundamentally, are terms like 'extremism' relative – in which case does 'violent extremism' mean different things to different people? These are not merely academic questions: what we call a phenomenon helps determine how we see it and what we do in response to it.

Violent extremism is usually considered to be a more inclusive term than 'terrorism', although they are broadly synonymous in technical use. Further, although USAID's definition is wide, violent extremism is arguably applied much more narrowly – i.e. to Islamist radicalism or violence alone, ignoring the many other forms of ideologically motivated or justified violence that affect countries (Schmid, 2014; Sedgwick, 2012). There is abundant literature on terrorism, but even some of the most prolific authorities on the subject-matter lament the generally poor state of data and methodology in the field. Much remains speculative, unknown or uncertain.

Disparate phenomena tend to be aggregated; key terms are poorly defined. Most of the works in the field have focused on why and how people become drawn into terrorism – the problem now usually referred to as 'radicalisation' – and how violent extremist groups and networks are organised. Most of these works are on terrorism in or threatening the West. Less works have been done on violent extremists in the countries where they cause a lot of damages – most violent extremism affects countries in Asia and Africa. Researchers are only now beginning to examine the various responses to violent extremism, which can be classified under three headings: counter-terrorism (CT, e.g. using military or policing resources to deter or disrupt terrorists), countering violent extremism (CVE – preventative approaches using mostly non-coercive means), and risk reduction (seeking to ensure that violent extremists do not cause harm, e.g. through efforts to change behaviour).

The abundant literature on radicalisation, terrorism and violent extremism does not mean that these phenomena are well-understood. The term 'radicalisation' is generally used to mean the process by which individuals leave the mainstream and become extreme in either views or behaviour, or both. It is viewed by some writers as inadequate or misleading, while amongst its advocates there is no consensus as to how the process might work. Borum (2011), having reviewed many and varied models of radicalisation into violent extremism, concludes that they are largely uninformed by either evidence or theory, but that some models may be better than others.

The paper has a useful summary of assumptions which are generally supported by academic research into violent extremism which include: radicalisation may have many causes or factors, not one; there may be many different pathways to violence, and (conversely) different people on a shared trajectory may have many different destinations; some join extremist groups because of ideology. But others may come to accept an ideology because they have joined an extremist group; it is possible to be 'radical' and non-violent; and that radicalisation is a dynamic, psycho-social process. Francis (2012) also attempts a synthesis of existing theories and models into one which seeks to capture the complexity and variability of radicalisation. He posits three broad categories of factors in the radicalisation process (situational, strategic and ideological) and sub-divides situational factors into pre-conditions and precipitant factors, before sub-dividing pre-conditions into enabling and motivational factors.

World Peace

The word "peace" does not have a generally accepted meaning. Overtime, it has been defined according to situations and contexts, and in response to a break from hostility. The Arabic/Islamic term for peace is *Salām*, the root of which could be traced to *Silm* which means, among others, peace, submission, healthiness, completion, perfection, right, good, escape from, safety from harm, unimpaired by, to be whole. For this reason, the Qur'an 2: 208 carries a very deep meaning for Islam (the religion of peace) and connotatively espouses its essence and objective. Allah says: "O ye who believe! Enter into *Silm* (Islam-peace, agreement, submission, safety, security etc.) whole-heartedly and follow not the footsteps of *Shaytan*. Surely, he is to you, an avowed enemy".

In his 41st Inaugural Lecture delivered at the Olabisi Onabanjo University, Balogun (2006: 10), referencing the *Chambers 20th Century Dictionary*, defines peace as:

...freedom from hostilities, freedom from civil commotion, freedom of disorder, freedom from mental or spiritual disturbance or confusion or conflict arising from mental or spiritual disturbance or confusion or conflict arising from passion or sense of guilt, freedom from war, cessation of war.

Although the above definition presents the ordinary natural meaning of peace, today, it may be said that the cessation of war and the presence of freedom do not fully accentuate the meaning of peace. This is due to the high level of impunity, disregard for law and unending cases of injustice, all of which have continued to force Nigeria, in particular, and some other nations of the world, in general, into crisis. Thus, it may be added that the presence and actualisation of justice form the bedrock of the conceptual interpretation of peace.

Labilam (2016: 67) also, making reference to the *Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace*, defines peace as:

...happiness, harmony, justice and freedom, because peace is something that is mostly recognised by its absence. This is seen in the origin of the word peace, from the word "pees". "Pax" (akin to the Latin "pacisci" – 'to agree') is the Latin feminine noun from which the English word "peace" is derived. The concept of peace varies, as it refers to reaching agreement between two parties; respect for others; equality of life; a peaceful time; civil safety and security; a peaceful mind, etc.

This definition is more encompassing and carries the word 'justice', a key component of any and every plan or programme aimed at achieving sustainable peace and/or peaceful co-existence. It is for this reason that this definition is adopted as the working/operational definition of this study.

Boko Ḥarām: Evolution, Growth and Activities

“Boko Ḥarām” is a name by which a group responsible for most of the recent bombings and killings especially in Northern Nigeria is known by the public. “Boko” is a Hausa word meaning “Western/formal education” or “Western ideology” or “Westernisation” in its entirety (*Da’wah Coordination Council of Nigeria*, 2009: 1). In the classical Hausa language, it means “deception” because of the experience of the people of the region with the colonial masters who used western/formal education to lure them into accepting Christianity (*Da’wah Coordination Council of Nigeria*, 2009:2). “Ḥarām”, on the other hand, according to *Da’wah Coordination Council of Nigeria* (2009:2) “is an Arabic word which means “prohibited”, “forbidden” etc.”. “Boko Ḥarām”, therefore, would mean either “Western/formal/secular education is Islamically prohibited or forbidden” or “Evangelism deceptively camouflaged as western education is Islamically unacceptable” or both (*Da’wah Coordination Council of Nigeria*, 2009: 1).

The Group, popularly known as “Boko Ḥarām” calls itself “*Jama’atu Ahlus Sunnah li’ldDā’wah wal Jihād*” meaning “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Striving in the Cause of Allah”. It started like any other group formed by Muslims to advance the cause of Islām. The formation of the Group or any of such in Islām is hung on the verse of the Glorious Qur’ān which urges Muslims to constitute themselves into a group for the purpose of enjoining good on people and forbidding evils for them. The verse reads:

Let there arise among you (Muslims) a group of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones to attain felicity (Qur’ān 3:104)

This verse has been the motivating factor for Muslims not only in forming groups, societies or associations but also in striving to correct societal ills. They see themselves as duty bound to do so particularly that the verse ends with the description of those who do so as “ones who attain felicity”. Going by its official name, “Boko Ḥarām” could not have otherwise been formed.

Evidences on its founder and the activities of the Group prior to its militarisation point at this. Muhammad Yusuf, who founded the Group for example, was said to have been a member of the Islamic Brotherhood of Shaykh Az Zakizaki in Kaduna (Doi, 1984:65). But when later the Group was accused of *Shi’ah* tendencies and consequently broke into two (Doi, 1984:189), Muhammad Yusuf joined the *Tajdīd* group. He was said to have later found the teachings of the *Tajdīd* group also unpleasant and therefore founded his own group which he called “*Jama’atu Ahlus Sunnah li’ldDā’wah wal Jihād*”.

A cardinal preaching of the group is that western education is the main cause of corruption which to them is the mother of all the problems facing the country. They hold further that if Muslims were to attain felicity, they should avoid it (i.e. western education). Before long, many of those who listened to his sermons withdrew from school; many stopped sending their children and wards to school and those who had acquired one certificate or another burnt them. A revolution against western education had started. The irony of the matter is that the founder himself was a graduate.

A number of Islāmic scholars were said to have challenged Muhammad Yusuf’s theological arguments against western education in public lectures drawing his attention to the socio-political and economic implications of his position, especially on the people of Northern Nigeria who are educationally disadvantaged compared with their counterparts in other parts of the country. One of those scholars was Shaykh Ja’far Muhammad Adam who eventually was assassinated in 2006 in controversial circumstances. While some have alleged that his death was the price he had to pay for criticising the government of the day, others have attributed it to his stern opposition to the Group’s position on Western education (*Da’wah Institute of Nigeria*, 2013).

The Group came into prominence and public notice in 2008 during the regime of late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua. Details of the circumstances surrounding its militarisation have been attributed to the brutal killings of the foundation members of the Group and other innocent civilians by the combined forces of the Nigerian Army and Police (*Al-Jazeera Network*, 2016). Also, a *tafsīr* video tape released by the late Muhammad Yusuf had earlier claimed this. He was said to have further claimed that attempts by members of the Group to visit the injured

in the hospital attracted the brutality of the police and several members of the Group were killed. The founder also said that while those killed were being evacuated for burial, the policemen also attacked them and further killed some of his members. He then vowed never to take kindly to this as he and members of his Group were determined to fight back. The Group made good its threats by attacking police formations in Maiduguri, Borno State where its headquarters is and where the unfortunate incident started.

The late President Musa Yar'Adua, acting on intelligence report ordered a clampdown on members of the Group. This further aggravated the crisis as members of the Group were (and are still more) determined to fight on. More than eight years into the crisis, the battle rages on with casualties on both sides. The Group had lost its founder and many of its foundation members as well as their family members, the government and people of Nigeria have equally lost many of their loved ones in one attack of the Group or the other since the attacks are no longer limited to military formations and government establishments. Attacks are now targeted at getting as many casualties as possible by freely using guns and suicide bombers in markets, worship places, motor parks among other places.

An inventory of some of the nefarious activities associated with or for which the Group claims responsibility include: Bauchi prison break of 7th September, 2010, Abuja attack of 31st December, 2010, Yola jail break of 22nd April, 2011, series of bombing in some states in northern Nigeria on 29th May, 2011, bombing of Nigeria Police Force Headquarters, Abuja of 16th June, 2011, and bombing of a beer parlour at Maiduguri on 26th June, 2011. Others include: bombing of the All Christian Fellowship Church at Suleja on 10th July, 2011, killing of a Muslim cleric (Liman Bana) in Maiduguri on 12th August, 2011, bombing of the United Nations' Building at Abuja on 26th August, 2011, series of attacks in Damaturu on 4th November, 2011, and series of bombings across some states of the Northern Nigeria on 25th December, 2011. To show that the *Boko Ḥarām* crisis is not near ending or easily solvable as soon as people would think, the Group also claims responsibilities for the series of killings and bombing attacks in many states of northern Nigeria between 5th and 28th January and between 8th and 16th February, 2012. In January 2013, an attack was launched against the entourage of the Emir of Kano and members of his family just as scores of people died in Kano as a

result of two bomb explosions allegedly carried out by *Boko Ḥarām* members at motor parks during the Easter holidays of March 2013. About one hundred and eighty-five people were said to have also died in the military skirmishes between members of the group and government forces in Maiduguri in April 2013.

The nature, dimensions, tactics and strategies of the attacks of *Boko Ḥarām* have made it difficult for analysts, commentators and even experts to describe the Group and what it stands for, more so that a good number of the attacks were suicidal. When the attack was on the church, Christian leaders advanced the narratives that the Group was targeting the Christians with a view to Islamising the country and the Muslims reacted by debunking the allegation. While the 'debate' was on, the Group would shift its attacks to the Muslims. No sooner would the Muslims claim they were vindicated that the Group would attack people from the Eastern part of the country who had settled and are residents in the North. Analysts and commentators would then interpret the Group's action and mission as aiming at the disintegration of the country. When the attack was on government establishments and security institutions, people reread political meanings into it claiming that it was a ploy of politicians of northern extraction to destabilize the former President Goodluck Jonathan Southern led government which the former had earlier objected to. At times, the Group hacked down certain individuals including politicians and leading Islamic scholars of the region, including Shaykh Albani Zaria, etc. Some of the attacks were even carried out in the month of *Ramāḍān* in which Muslims worldwide fasted and which they held (still hold) in very high esteem. In short, the Group's activities have defiled all forms of description. No sooner would one perfectly describe the situation than happenings and events necessitated a modification of the description. Although, peace talks are already being initiated, it suffices to note that the only fair description of the Group and its activities is the media usage of the phrase "the nefarious activities of the fundamentalist militant Islamist sect- *Boko Ḥarām*".

The description is said to be fair because the activities of the Group are truly nefarious as hundreds of innocent lives and property had been wasted on the one hand and on the other, the Group was formed by supposedly Muslims and rightly or wrongly claims to have the advancement of the religion of Islām as its mission. What meaningful

interpretation can one read into the activities of this vicious Group which is identified so fairly with a religion that claims “peace” as its motto? In other words, why would members of the Group do what they are doing and believe they are justified in their faith more so that other practitioners of the faith have disowned and disassociated themselves from them (Quadri, 2013).

Implications of *Boko Ḥarām* Insurgency for Peaceful Cohabitation in Nigeria

The violent menace which has lasted over 8 years as indicated above has become a scourge which alongside other problems identified by Muzan (2014) is capable of throwing into a complete state of turmoil and/or cause a case of the largest refugee camp that the world has ever known. Making reference to a statement credited to the former Chief Justice of the Federation (Justice Dahiru Musdapher), Muzan (2014:218) writes:

Boko Haram insurgency, political violence, corruption, nepotism, tribalism, indiscipline, abduction and kidnappings, armed robbery, murder and extortion, bombings of places of worship and innocent Nigerians are all the indicators of a failing state.

Certainly, *Boko Ḥarām* is not the only problem that currently confronts Nigeria and threatens to obliterate it. However, coupled with the other problems noted by the former Chief Justice of the Country, Nigeria is truly in a state of a confusion and fragility that is capable of engulfing it and forcing it to become history. Alluding to this fact, Osagie (2007) quoted in Ofongo (2016:148) writes:

Fragile states are usually characterised by pervasive corruption, poverty, low levels of economic growth, underdeveloped institutions of conflict management and resolution as well as an unstable and divided population. The indices of fragile states apply to the Nigerian situation; it is safe to conclude that Nigeria is indeed a fragile state. This is more so because the country manifests almost all the indices of fragility.

Significantly, it is the contention of these writers that the most ominous and dreadful of all the problems is the consequent effects of the *Boko Ḥarām* crisis which seeks to create enmity in the country by setting the Christians against the Muslims. This strategy is very popular among terrorist organisations. When the majority reject their ideology, they always seek to find a way to force the hands of the majority to either defend themselves against the obvious enemies (the terrorists) or the unassuming others who like the majority have been forced to hate and fight (swayed by the antics of the terrorists).

Religious tension in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon and as noted above, the *Maitiesine* incidence of the 1970s and 1980s is an indicator to the danger that religiously-incited or related misunderstanding portends for a fickle country like Nigeria. It is worthy of note that up till today, the 1914 Amalgamation is still being interrogated because the majority of the people in the Southern region, most notably the South-South and South East, according to Nolte, *et al* (2016) and Sampson (2002), are Christians while the Southwest is also evenly shared between Muslims and Christians but over 90% of the North is Muslim. This creates a sharp divide and shows that aside ethnic and political or territorial division, the country is sharply and clearly divided along religious lines. This has made it possible for crisis to quickly escalate and spiral into areas that were erstwhile peaceful as a response to a killing that might have occurred in another part of the country. Often, such violent responses come under ethnic violence with religious causes or connotations brusquely buried under it like a green snake in a green forest. Political crises also have hidden under the pretext of religion as politicians often used religion to canvass votes and garner support and in case of loss, use it to incite violence or disruption of a peaceful process. Therefore, no crisis can be more dangerous for Nigeria than one caused or cloaked in a religious garment.

The *Boko Ḥarām* war has further widened the gap between the Southern and Northern Nigeria and portrays Islām and Muslims as warmongers whose sole objective is to turn Nigeria to a Saudi Arabia or force everyone in it to become a Muslim who follows the *Boko Ḥarām* interpretation of Islām. In this case, like other modern sinister organisations such as ISIS and *Al-Shabāb*, *Boko Ḥarām* is more dangerous than the *Khawārij* of the first century of Islām. It is an ideological

warfare that feeds fat on the failure of the political elites, the volatility of the country's religious divides and the porosity of the Nigerian borders. While many of the first set of leaders in the terrorist group have been killed in fights, young, strong and fresh youths are still joining their rank and file, and enjoying the immoral and financial support of some powerful men who are yet to be discovered and the bottomless corruption that has ravaged the country. In summary, following are some of the possible effects of the *Boko Ḥarām* war on peaceful coexistence in Nigeria:

1. Permanently, it has created unnecessary suspicion between Muslim and Christian masses as well as the political class of the country;
2. It portrays every northerner as a potential killer, illiterate or prospective *Boko Ḥarām* bomber;
3. It enhances the sprout of hate between Muslims and Christians as well as between Southerners and Northerners;
4. It consistently puts the nation at the risk of total collapse by creating deep rooted distrust between Northerners and Southerners;
5. It emboldens other sinister organisations to rise and challenge the authority through kidnappings, incessant killings and terrorism. The ongoing Zamfara crisis is an example in this case.

The military response to the insurgency continues to yield good results and returns peace to the affected area especially in parts of the North Central and North Eastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. However, as noted by Ofongo, the approach to combating an ideological scourge like *Boko Ḥarām* must be multifaceted and concomitant with the causes that fuel the crisis in the first instance. Ofongo (2016:159) writes:

It is possible nonetheless that military action may prove effective in countering the Boko Haram menace, but the Nigerian State must do more if the vicious circle of the insurgency is to be stopped. Kofi Annan is not alone in observing the limit of a purely military approach to the problem of terrorism.

Making a similar observation, Richard (1984) observed that:

"military responses have a limited impact and can breed more terrorists... economic and diplomatic initiatives are

needed too, not just military". This implies that a more multi-faceted approach, including enhanced diplomacy is needed to combat terrorism.

Thus, it may be correct to posit that achieving peaceful coexistence in Nigeria is almost impossible unless certain things are done or certain measures are put in place. This is because even if the war against the current *Boko Haram* insurgency is won, like *Maitasine*, other malignant groups are going to emerge and most likely, on the pretext of religion (the sharpest sword for dividing the country). Ofongo (2016:159) suggests:

In the final analysis, counter-terrorism initiatives should include both medium as well as long-term strategies. This means that a broad-based approach against terrorism that focuses not only on state-centric security but on human security, with a view to addressing the root causes of insecurity should be adopted. These could include the provision of basic infrastructures such as education, employment, good roads, electricity, and other poverty reducing policies and programmes.

In the same vein, it is established that Nigeria, Africa and indeed the world are at the brink of an ever-growing crisis of a greater proportion, the strength and life-span of which will be determined by the kind of response that governments, non-governmental organisations and individuals respond to it. This implies that the problem of insecurity is a worldwide problem which requires a synergised effort from neighbouring and distant nations of the world to bring the scourge to an end or to the considerably low level. Nobert and Stephan (2002) are right when they conclude (2002: 9):

... any sustainable improvement in the living conditions of people in partner countries will be crucially dependent on the prevailing political, economic and social conditions in the country concerned. As the 21st century dawns, living conditions are being significantly determined by the manner

in which conflicts within and between states are being managed. Realistically, it must be assumed that for the foreseeable future, there will be a base of 20 to 40 serious violent conflicts at any given time. Furthermore, the emerging new socio-economic disparities and the global trends towards pluralisation and politicisation will ensure that the potential for conflict is more likely to increase than diminish in the future (p.9).

Conclusion

This paper takes a cursory look at the activities of the deadly Boko Haram insurgents and implications such violent activities have for peaceful cohabitation between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially Christians in Nigeria. Conceptual clarifications of violent extremism, peace and evolution of the insurgent group, *Boko Haram*, as well as the inventory of the dastardly attacks of the group are analysed in this paper. The discourse concludes that the fragile relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially Christians in Nigeria have been further worsened by violent attacks of *Boko Haram*. Thus, religious institutions and organisations must be fully engaged in the depollution of the already charged minds of various ethnic people and religious adherents.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, these writers thereby recommend the following:

1. Religious institutions and organisations must be fully engaged to detoxify the already charged minds of the various ethnic people and religious adherents;
2. The twin problem of poverty and illiteracy must be addressed head-on with a great deal of the annual budget allocations going into it;
3. Religious and ethnic leaders, both in the rural and urban areas of the country, must be constantly engaged to regulate leadership in places of worship and monitor the kind and style of sermons that are delivered to congregation;
4. Local authorities (traditional and governmental) must be fully engaged to see to the needs of the people in rural areas from where radicalisation often begins;

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6. The government must engage in frontal war with religious leaders who preach hate against government or other religious institutions with the aid of the selected religious and traditional leaders in the country.

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