

Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria

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Country Report

Table of Contents

Political Map of Nigeria
Introduction
Background to Islam in Nigeria
The Nature and Context of Nigerian Society vis-à-vis religion
The Nature of Islamic Radicalisation
Dynamics of Radicalisation
Islamic Radicalisation as a Reaction to other forms of Religious radicalisation
Islamic Radical Groups and Violence
Intra-Islamic Radicalisation and Violence
Nigeria, Islamic Radicalisation and Global Terrorism
Islamic Radical Groups and National Politics
Tertiary Institutions, Islamic Radicalisation and Violence
Islamic Radicalisation, Violence and Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria
External Linkages of Islamic Radical Groups
The Importance of the Colonial Past in understanding Islamic Radicalisation in Nigeria
The role of the Media
The Niger Delta and Islamic Radicalisation
Government Policy Responses to Radicalisation
Implications of Radicalisation
Possible Future Trends
Conclusion

Political Map of Nigeria's 36 States



Islamic Radicalisation and Violence in Nigeria¹

“Before we condemn this attack on America we have to see who carried it out and then, see their reasons... Most of the people here (in Northern Nigeria) are happy with the attacks because of what America stands for and what it does, in its attitude to the Palestinians, for example. The Cowboy way of blazing two guns to get Osama bin Laden ‘dead or alive’ ... will definitely lead to a confrontation between America and the Islamic world”

Abubakar Mujahid, a Nigerian Islamic radical. ²

“There is Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria, but the manifestation is not along the widely recognised lines. It is not radicalisation that manifests in the form of suicide missions, bomb blasts, plane hijacks or other similar trends. And it is not likely that radicalisation in the country will ever follow these patterns because Nigerians love life so much that they will not lay it down for any cause. It may interest you to know that nobody in Nigeria has ever committed suicide in the pursuit of a cause. It is not just our style”.

Alade Fawole, a Nigerian social scientist.³

“The Political conquest of the South was a religious obligation that the Northern People’s Congress owe the world of Islam, the Quran has to be dipped into the Atlantic Ocean before the Jihad could stop.

Muhammed Ribadu, Minister Nigeria’s 1st Republic.⁴

Nigeria, viewed from many angles, is important in any discussion of violence emanating from religious radicalisation. The country has more recorded conflicts over religion than all African countries put together and the number of people that have died as a result of religious violence in the

¹ I am grateful to all those who read drafts of this Paper or shared their knowledge on the subject with me, including, Professors Jacob Olupona, Akeem Danmole, Rosalind Hackett and Matthews Ojo.

² BBC News, 1 October 2001, see www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1573491.stm - 37k

³ Interview, Ile-Ife

⁴ *New Breed Magazine* January 1977, p. 10.

last two decades is higher than those of all African countries combined.⁵ For a long time conflicts associated with the expression of radical religious views in Nigeria have been explained with reference to broader issues like the nature of the country's ethno-religious division, the fluidity of its socio-economic and political structure and the ways both issues underpin politics and governance in the country. But the changes in the global perception of radicalisation, brought about by the September 11 2001 attack on the United States, have necessitated the need for a more detailed look at the phenomenon. This study focuses on Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria. The choices of Islam and Nigeria have been dictated by a number of recent developments that have further reinforced Nigeria's importance in global radicalisation discourses post September 11 2001. For example, Nigeria was one of the few African countries that had their nationals arrested in Afghanistan for allegedly fighting alongside the Taliban insurgents. Furthermore, the country was one of two African countries specifically mentioned by Osama Bin Laden in one of his video releases in 2002 as places where Muslims should rise in rebellion.⁶ Other occurrences that have brought radicalisation to the focus of global attention, such as the publication of the Danish cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed, resonated more distinctly in Nigeria than most other countries. Indeed, more people died in Nigeria as a result of riots over the cartoon than all other countries of the world put together.

But writing on religious radicalisation in Nigeria is fraught with many difficulties, especially because one can always find justification(s) to include (or exclude) any particular occurrence from the broad discussion. Even a similar occurrence, but happening in different social and political contexts, may be categorised (or de-categorised) as religious radicalisation. For example, key issues like natural resource management, chieftaincy matters, ethnicity, elections and even commercial relations, are all issues that may have to be included (or excluded) in the discussion of religious radicalisation in Nigeria. Deciding on what to include (or exclude), but more importantly finding explanations for the delineation of the research, have been some of the most profound challenges faced in the writing of this paper. Indeed, issues are often interwoven in ways that make delineation difficult. Consequently, in discussing Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria, the context has to be taken into consideration.⁷ This Country Report attempts a discussion of some of the key issues relevant to Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria, tracing its history, locating its contents and contexts, discussing its manifestations,

⁵ This, of course, is if we exclude Sudan, whose multi-dimensional conflicts are not exclusively linked to religion.

⁶ The other African country mentioned in the video release was Morocco. These two joined other Middle Eastern countries of Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

⁷ In my discussion with an expert on the History of Islamic religion in Nigeria, Professor Hakeen Danmole, he pointed out that "facts about Islamic radicalization in Nigeria, if not placed within contexts, may amount to falsehood".

identifying its implications and investigating the efficacy of the mechanisms aimed at addressing its socio-economic and security implications.

A brief note on the methodology adopted seems appropriate at this stage. This Country Report is based on extensive library studies undertaken in libraries in Nigeria and the United Kingdom. Among the libraries consulted in Nigeria are those of the Universities of Ibadan, Ife, Lagos, Ahmadu Bello, Bayero, and Ilorin, while in the United Kingdom, the report used the SOAS, LSE and the central University of London libraries. Second, this report has relied on extensive interviews conducted across Nigeria and in some cases, in the United Kingdom. Interviews were held with key individuals who have played important roles in the politics of religion in Nigeria. All interviews conducted complied with the Research Ethics standards of King's College London and all those interviewed signed the Consent Form designed for this purpose. Finally there were focus group discussions. On the whole, focus group discussions were held in 10 locations in Nigeria. These were in Ile-Ife, Ibadan, Abuja, Jos, Kano, Maiduguri, Lagos, Kaduna, Sokoto and Makurdi. About 150 people, from across ethnic, gender and religious divisions took part in these discussions. But in any attempt to understand the politics of Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria, it is appropriate to preface discussions with how the Islamic religion got into the country.

Background of Islam in Nigeria

In its origin, Islamic religion came to Nigeria in two phases. The first was around the 12th century, when scholars and trade merchants from North Africa made inroads through the trade routes of the Sahara desert into what later became northern Nigeria.⁸ During this phase, Islam was mainly a religion of the elite, with the Kanem Bornu Empire, on the northeast of Lake Chad, the first part of latter-day Nigeria to get *Islamised*.⁹ By the eleventh century, there was a small Muslim community in the empire. Islam made a lot of advances during the reign of Dunama Dabalemi (1221 – 1259) and as early as this time the monarch had built a hostel in Cairo for Bornu Pilgrims and students.¹⁰ Although the spread of Islam in Kanem Bornu was affected by the political upheaval that later dominated the empire's affairs, things had become stabilised by the sixteenth century to allow for the further propagation of the religion. This was especially the case during the era of Mai Idris Alooma (1570 – 1602). During this period too, elites in other parts of northern Nigeria that had accepted Islam had also begun forging diplomatic alliances and exchanges with Muslim leaders in other parts of the

⁸ For a more detailed discussion of this, see, Kenneth W. Morgan, (Ed.) *Islam, the Straight Path: Islam Interpreted by Muslims*, (New York: Ronald Press, 1958. p. 247.

⁹ See Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, p.24

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 24-25

continent. Arabic literature also began making inroads into the country. However, despite the advances of Islam into northern Nigeria, indigenous religion still had considerable number of adherents. It was this remnant that was to wait for the second phase of *Islamisation* of Northern Nigeria.

The second and perhaps more relevant phase in the *Islamisation* of Nigeria, was in the 19th Century through the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio. In 1804, this Islamic prophet and social reformer led a great jihad which within 50 years, swept all Hausa rulers off their thrones and established Fulani hegemony in most of the present day Northern Nigeria.¹¹ Within years, Islamic religion became dominant and through trade, social contacts and war, the religion percolated to some southern parts of the country, especially the south-west, dominated by the Yoruba. After the establishment of colonial rule, a number of administrative structures created after the jihad were retained and recognised by the British colonial government. This was both an acknowledgement of how entrenched the structures had become and also because such retention fell in line with the British colonial policy of managing colonies through their established governance structures.¹²

It might be appropriate at this stage to look at the origin of the traditional Islamic sects in Nigeria and the relationship between them in the period before independence and shortly afterwards. This is particularly important in order to investigate the extent to which post-independence tensions between some of these organisations have deeper antecedents. In Nigeria, as indeed most West African countries during the mid-twentieth century, there were two main Islamic orders, the Qadriyya and the Tijaniyya. The Qadriyya got into West Africa during the 15th century, having been founded by Abd al Qadir (1077 – 1166 AD) in Baghdad. Sheu Usman dan Fodio, who as noted earlier, led the major reformist agenda in the country, belonged to this sect. On its part, the Tijaniyya sect was founded by Ahmad al-Tijani (1737 – 1815) in Fez, Morocco and reached Nigeria in the 1820s, coming into the country through Kano. Even at these early stages, ethnicity and politics had become a factor in the relationship between the two groups. The Qadriyya was firmly linked to the Fulani leadership in Sokoto, even though it was to spread to other places. It had five legitimate independent branches and several semi-independent branches, with one of these, the Shaziliyya, often considered a separate brotherhood entirely. On its part, the Tijaniyya was mainly rooted in Kano and it was said that the doctrine symbolised the independence of Kano from Sokoto where the

¹¹ The only sections of Northern Nigeria that escaped the Jihad were Bornu and certain non-Muslims areas that were inaccessible to Fulani Calvary. See Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, London: Faber and Faber, 1962

¹² This was the famous Indirect Rule policy which was perfected in the country by Lord Frederick Lugard after his successful implementation of the policy in Uganda.

Quadriyya held its sway. Considerable attention came to the Tijaniyya/Quadriyya relationship and the Kano/Sokoto rivalry when in 1937 the Emir of Kano, Abdullahi Bayero, openly identified himself as Tijaniyya. Like the Quadriyya, the Tijaniyya too had different *sub*-sects.

Although both the Quadriyya and Tijaniyya had similarities in their doctrines, including the acceptance that a Saviour (*Mahdi*) would come at the end of time to ensure the triumph of Islam over other religions,¹³ there were still major doctrinal differences between them, especially during the Colonial era. For example, riots broke out in Sokoto in 1949, when the Sultan of Sokoto who also doubled as the *Sarkin Musulumi* (Head of Muslims) ordered the destruction of certain Tijaniyya mosques. Riots were to reoccur again in 1956. The period immediately after independence was to witness more tension in the relationship between the two groups and here again politics and ethnicity were to play prominent roles. Throughout the period of the first Republic (1960 – 1966), when Ahmadu Bello (the Sadauna of Sokoto) was the Premier of Northern Nigeria, the Tijaniyya had a difficult period and had to almost operate as an underground movement. Again in 1965, another riot ensued when a promise made by a Tijaniyya *Mallam*, who was allegedly collecting cattle from villagers around Sokoto in exchange for granting them union with God, failed to materialise. Although intra-Islamic differences continued even to date, with more cataclysmic implications, the root cause of disagreement remained the divergence of doctrines.

There is a need to examine the causes of doctrinal differences between the Quadriyyas and the Tijaniyyas, as this was to be a major issue in the early 2000s. First, the latter opposed the ritual and doctrine of the Tijaniyya like the traditional crossing of arms while prayer was being said. This indeed made the *Sadaunna* (the Head of Nigeria's Muslim Community) decree that all prayer leaders should pray with their arms at their side. Second, the Quadriyyas found what they saw as the Tijaniyya tendency to venerate Ahmad-al-Tijani, known to them (Tijaniyyas) as the "Seal of the Saints" over and above Prophet Mohammed objectionable. To the former, Mohammed was the last of the Prophets. There were also disagreements over the treatment of women, with the Tijaniyyas being more relaxed in the ways women were treated and was somewhat opposed to the *hijab* (wife seclusion). There are other smaller sects like the Mahdiyya and the Ahmadiyya. The Mahdiyya believed that Mohammad Ahmad b. Sayyid Abdullahi was the proclaimed Mahdi. On its part, the Ahmadiyya movement was established by Ghulam Ahmad in northern India in the late 19th century. He claimed to be the Mahdi and a re-appearance of the Prophet Mohammed. One important thing among the Ahmadiyya was their interest in Western education. The sect established many secondary

¹³ Peter Clarke and Ian Linden pointed out that many Muslims believed that this would be in 1949 (1400 AH). They further noted that the siege of the Grand Mosque in Mecca coincided with this date and that the first Maitasine riots in Kano occurred one year after. See Peter Clarke and Ian Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*, Grunwald 1984, p. 43

schools, especially in the Southwest where it was able to make significant inroads. What is important to point out is that these other sects found considerably more adherents in Kano than in most other parts of northern Nigeria. When it is considered that Tijanniyya also had its early roots in Kano, it may be concluded that Kano, at least at the time immediately after independence, was receptive to innovative Islamic doctrines.

In concluding this background discussion, there is the need for a brief discussion of the background of Islamic education in Nigeria and how this has been a factor in the recent politics of Islamic radicalisation in the country. In a recent article, Musa Adeniyi has pointed out that there have been two phases of Islamic education in Nigeria. The first is traditional Qur'anic schools, while the second is the modernised School of Arabic and Islamic studies.¹⁴ The former entailed the *Mu'allim* (teacher) sitting under a tree or in his sitting room, veranda or mosque surrounded by a library of Islamic texts including copies of the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions as well as other books on Islamic theology. The pupils learned the shorter chapters of the Qur'an through repetition. One of the pleasures pupils derived from the recitation of this stage lies in the choral chanting of the verses of the Qur'anic text, which often follows a sing-song pattern. This is often very basic; there is no capital required to commence the teaching and no age limit for pupils. Although not rigid, classes are often held twice a day: one in the morning and the other in the evening. The morning session often takes place from early morning between 8.00 a.m. and 12 noon in order to give enough room for the pupils to run up for the afternoon session and in particular, to allow the pupils to help their parents at home or farm before the afternoon session which often starts at about 4.00 p.m. Contrary to Westernised education, which sets aside Saturdays and Sundays as school-free days, the Qur'anic school week runs from Saturday to Wednesday having Thursdays and Fridays as free days. There is often no syllabus, as the entire Qur'an is considered as the syllabus. Holidays are also fixed along Islamic lunar months and religious festivals. For example, the annual vacation is fixed throughout the Ramadan period, while another recess is declared at the approach of the *'id-Ŧ'kabir*.¹⁵ This holiday can last between one or two weeks. Since fees are often not applicable, Islamic teachers rely on gifts from grateful parents. The lessons offered to the students are often very basic and it is not believed that students are being exposed to radical tendencies.

There are now many well-organised Islamic schools, properly structured along Western education. Many of those attending these schools are professionals and others who, after having had Western education, want to acquire Islamic knowledge. Many wealthy Muslims have also established

¹⁴ See Musa Adeniyi, "Evolution of Islamic Education in Nigeria", Unpublished Paper

¹⁵ This is central religious feast often celebrated during the 10th month of the Muslim calendar. It often lasts for three days.

Islamic schools, especially in the South-West, where the desire to “upgrade” the level of Islamic “purity” to the standards often assumed to be prevalent in the North, seems to be becoming prevalent. Another possible reason for the prevalence of this practice in the South-West is the appreciation of the fact that people in this part of the country are more used to western type of education where learning programmes are properly structured. Consequently, the practice of many of these Islamic schools is to adapt a Western concept to the teaching of Islamic education, which has laid out syllabus, matriculation and convocation ceremonies all incorporated into the programme. There are many examples of these across the country and their activities are discussed later in this Country Study.

Currently, Islam in Nigeria is mostly of the Sunni Maliki sect, with minority Shi’a in Sokoto and some parts of North-West. The traditional sects under the Sunni Islam in Nigeria are the Qadriyya, the Tijaniyya, the Tariqa, the Malikiya, the Ahmadiya and the Islamiyya. Of all these, however, the Qadriyyas and Tijaniyyas are the more prominent. The majority of Northern Nigerian Muslims, especially the commoners, embrace Tijaniyya, while the Qadriyyas have more elitist adherents within the society.

The Nature and Context of Nigerian Society vis-à-vis religion

Nigeria’s population of about 140 million makes it Africa’s most populous nation.¹⁶ This is a population that is almost twice that of all West African countries combined. The number of the ethnic groups in the country (about 350) is also Africa’s highest. The country is also the dominant economic power in the West African region, thanks largely to its enormous oil deposits that are the ninth largest in the world. Inbuilt in this huge population and economic potentials are some issues that explain aspects of Islamic radicalization in the country. While there are different views on the religious affinities of the population, most analyses put the Muslim population at about half of the declared 140 millions, with the Christian population forming about 60 million and the other 10 million being adherents of traditional religion.¹⁷ This approximate population of about 70 million Muslims and 60 million Christians means that Nigeria has one of the largest populations of Muslims and Christians in any country on the African continent and one of the largest in the world.¹⁸ The

¹⁶ Census has always been a major issue in Nigeria, as each state always wants to manipulate figures to attract more funds from the Federal Government. To ensure that religion does not play any role, religious affinities are often not made an issue in census.

¹⁷ *CLA World Fact Book*. It must also be pointed out that this has been an issue of controversy in Nigeria. Christians have always disputed these figures and have persistently argued that Muslims figures have been influenced by Hausa/Fulani oligarchy that has ruled Nigeria for most of the post-independent period.

¹⁸ Indeed, the 60 million population of Muslim comes only after Egypt in the continent.

widely held assumption is that the religious division of the country also falls in line with its ethno-geographical divide, with the North being largely Muslims, the East being mostly Christians, and the West an admixture of Christians, Muslims and traditional religion adherents. This assumption, while largely correct, is still somewhat simplistic. Although Muslim adherents dominate the Northern population, the region is far from being religiously monolithic. There are specific sections of Northern Nigeria that are largely Christians.¹⁹ Indeed, as will be shown later in this Country Report, it is the efforts to address some of the complexities inherent in this intermix that are behind many of the country's religious conflicts.

Also important to point out at this early stage of this study is how attitudes to Islam among different Nigeria's ethnic groups relate to understanding the ethnic dimension of radicalisation and violence in the country. Right from the beginning, there had been a difference between the Hausa/Fulani North and the Yoruba South-West regarding the attitude to Islam. The Yorubas have always had a relaxed attitude towards the religion, with considerable allowance given to the mixing of Islam with other religious practices. Indeed, Joseph Kenny captures this reality succinctly, when he notes:

While Northern Islam has been firmly reformist and separatist with regards to anything non-Islamic, Yoruba Muslims have been accommodating. The Yoruba people are first of all Yoruba, secondly Muslims or Christians and lastly Nigerians, so that in one family you can find both Muslims and Christians and some involvement in the traditional religion.²⁰

This is a tendency that is also found among the Christians in Yoruba-land, where radical "born-again" proselytisers mix and relate freely with the merely "born-into-Christianity" alcoholic. It is also, important, however, to admit that there are those who see the whole situation in a social-relation framework than the dilution of religious purity. These people see the whole situation more as a case of Liberal Yorubas versus Conservative Hausas.

The practice described above has at least three implications for a study of Islamic radicalisation. First, the strict adherence to Islamic beliefs makes Hausa/Fulani Muslims owe greater allegiance to their religion than to their ethnicity or even the Nigerian state, a situation which Yoruba

¹⁹ Not long after colonization, some minorities in the north, including some ancient ones like the Gbagyi in the Kaduna area, converted to Catholicism and various Protestant sects, although the Emir of Zaria continued to assert his jurisdiction over Middle Belt Minorities

²⁰ Joseph Kenny, *The Spread of Islam in Nigeria: A Historical Survey*, 9.

Muslims, at least for a very long time, found somewhat difficult to countenance.²¹ Second, it explains why occasionally Muslims from the Northern part of the country consider themselves “superior” to Yoruba Muslims, whose version of Islam they believe to be adulterated.²² Third, it underlines why traditional Yoruba chieftaincy titles percolated Muslims positions in mosques.²³

The three dominant religions in Nigeria have considerable respect for the spiritual leadership provided by their leaders and this has been a major issue underlining tension and even radicalisation. By nature, people in West Africa respect authority, but this becomes all the more profound when it is believed that the authority is “divinely” ordained. Indeed, a lot of conflicts that have occurred in Nigeria can be linked to the ways these doctrines have been twisted by those providing spiritual guidance, especially those who saw their leadership positions as opportunities to satisfy personal motives. Indeed, the opinion of many of those who took part in the focus group discussions and Interviews for this study was that the leadership of most radical Christian churches have been geared towards material acquisition and the twisting of the minds of their congregation towards surrendering their financial resources to the church, while the Muslim leaders have geared their followers towards violent radical dispositions.

Before concluding this section, there is the need to investigate the position of the Nigerian Constitution on the issue of religion, especially as it is important to understand the extent to which the constitution provides clarity in the relationship between the state and religion and interrogate the extent to which the constitution may have intentionally or unwittingly encouraged radicalisation and attendant violence. The current Nigerian Constitution is at best confusing on the nature of this relationship and the source of this confusion is worth recording because of its relevance to radicalisation in the country. The antecedents can be traced to the mid-1970s, when during the debate for the promulgation of the 1979 constitution calls came from some Muslims members of the Constituent Assembly for the incorporation of Sharia law. Specifically, the Sharia Court that was demanded at this stage was to deal with issues like: (i) the sharing of inheritance among members of a family; settling marital disputes; settling other issues of relationships among relatives; and settling the issue of the custody of children and other similar civil matters. This polarised the country, especially

²¹ This is discussed at some length in Rose C. Uzoma, “Religious Pluralism, Cultural Differences and Social Stability in Nigeria”, *Brigham Young University Law Review*, Summer, 2004, pp 651 – 664.

²² Discussions I had with many Muslims from the southern part of the country confirm that there is a sort of hierarchy in the minds of Hausa Muslims, with the Arab Muslims coming on top, the Hausa Muslims coming a close second and the Yoruba Muslims coming a distant third.

²³ Such titles in Mosques include, *Baba Adinni*, *Iyalode Adinni*, *Balogun Adinni*, while in Churches such positions include *Baba Ijo*, *Iya Ijo*, *Balogun Ijo*, etc. This has brought other complications, with the usually rivalries associated with installation of these titles in secular societies also coming into Mosques and Churches.

as most of those making case for Sharia introduction were from Northern Nigeria. This problem was not resolved until the military overthrew the republic in 1983. The secularity of Nigeria became confused when the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida took Nigeria into the Organisation of Islamic Conferences of States (OIC), albeit with an observer status in 1985. The interpretation given to this decision was that the Babangida administration wanted to declare Islam as the state religion in Nigeria.²⁴ This tendency was not helped by the arguments made by many Muslims that Nigeria's membership of the organisation can be justified because the country had only then recently recognised the state of Israel. All these debates and controversies continued until a new dawn of democratic administration emerged in the country in 1999.

Two sections of the Nigerian Constitution seem to contradict each other on the issue of religion and the state. These are Sections 10 and 275. Because of the controversies that emerged as a result of the inclusion of the Sharia in the Nigeria constitution,²⁵ a sort of compromise was reached, with the Muslims having Section 275, which recognises a Sharia Court of Appeal (subject only to the Supreme Court) and the Christians having section 10 which rather vaguely states that "the government of the Federation or a state shall not adopt any religion as a state religion". Consequently, successive administrations have been striving to strike an uneasy balance between these contradictions.²⁶ The extent to which this was problematic will be appreciated when one considers the nature of radicalisation in the country.

The Nature of Islamic Radicalisation

It is, perhaps, necessary to preface this section with a brief contextualization of what is meant by "radicalisation". Here, the concept is taken as the process of strict adherence to a belief-system that involves the use of non-conventional means to aspire and effect change along the lines of what is considered an ideal past or an envisioned future in the society. From this definition, a number of issues emerge in the contextualization of radicalisation of which six are particularly important:

²⁴ This was the belief of many Christians in the country and Churches across the country declared sessions of "prayer and fasting" to ensure the failure of the attempt to "Islamise Nigeria". Greater controversies got into the debate when an attempt to violent overthrow the Babangida administration in 1990 cited this development as one of the underlining allegations against the administration.

²⁵ These controversies were long and bitter, resulting at a point, in a Muslim Walk-out from the Constitutional discussions.

²⁶ This was particularly precarious during the Shagari administration (1979 – 1985). For example, the administration in 1980 established a Christian Pilgrim Board to make up for the Muslim Board, and after the administration built two Mosques and a praying grounds in Abuja, it donated N10 million for Christians to build a Cathedral.

- (a) Radicalisation is a process, not an event, as it is the dynamics formed by the complex interaction of multiple events, actors, relationship, beliefs and institutions;
- (b) The “non-conventionality” of the process means the resort to alternative behaviour, attitude, values and moral standards that are diametrically opposed to the status-quo;
- (c) It is a phenomenon that operates at multiple levels – individual (micro), group (meso) and societal (macro).
- (d) It is a social reality that transcends different spheres of life, even though in the context of this study, we are limiting it to religion.
- (e) It is a process that emphasizes change, which means the transformation of socio-economic, cultural and political values, institutional practices and beliefs systems in a given context – individual, group or society; and
- (f) It is underlined by belief and value systems, which are the prime or active conviction about certain principles, world views and visions about human and societal existence.

Consequently, a radical group can be defined as a group that professes a belief system that readily rejects the status quo and actively aspires to an ideal past or envisioned future and embedded in the paradox of past as future and change as a return to the past.

Any discussion on Islamic radicalization in Nigeria must first acknowledge two things. The first is that the phenomenon is not a post-independence development. As noted above, there were doctrinal differences between different Islamic sects, especially the Quadriyya and Tijaniyya sects, during the colonial era which, as Toyin Falola noted, resulted in violent clashes and continued up until independence in 1960.²⁷ At the centre of these violent contacts was the assumption by each of these sects that the other was not preaching the message of the Holy Prophet in the right way. The second issue that should be considered as a preface to the discussion in this section is that radicalisation is not a monopoly of the Islamic religion, as the three religions in the country, Christianity, Islam and traditional religion, have all undergone phases of radicalisation in the last few decades, albeit on different scales and in different ways. Indeed, as will be shown in this study, some of the manifestations of Islamic radicalisation can only be understood when considered against the activities of other religions, especially Christianity.

But before going into the details of Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria, there is the need first to identify the belief-contents of radical Islamic groups in the country and how these later metamorphose into violence. Like all Muslims, most of the radical Islamic groups in Nigeria hold on to the five tenets of Islam: the belief that there is only "one God", Allah, who is the creator of the universe; the belief in the Angels who intercede with Allah for the forgiveness of the faithful; the

²⁷ Toyin Falola, op-cit, p. 5

belief in Muhammad as the last of the great prophets (with Jewish prophets and Jesus as his predecessors); the belief in the Qur'an, as the last of the sacred books; the belief that life on Earth is a test and only a preparation for the eternal life to come. Again, like other Muslims around the world, most Nigeria radical groups also hold sacred the five pillars of Islam: *Shahadah* (Profession of faith), *As-Salat* (Prayer) *Zakat* (Gifts) *Saum* (Fasting) and *Hajj* (Holy Pilgrimage). However, some of the radical groups in the country believe that there are some developments in the country that make it difficult or even impossible, for them to carry out the tenets and pillars of Islam. In their belief, some of these hindrances are caused by the government, while others are rooted in the nature of the evolution of the Nigerian state, which many of them believe is strongly skewed in favour of Christians. But apart from these, there are also many who believe that the Islamic religion ought to be practiced exactly in the ways Prophet Mohammed stipulated it in his time. It is the belief of these people that many of the problems facing Nigeria today can only be addressed if the country adheres to the practice of Islamic doctrine as laid down in the Qur'an by the Prophet Mohammed.²⁸ Radical Islamic groups also believe that there is a mutually reinforcing link between global developments (as these relate to Muslims) and the role of Islamic groups in Nigeria.

But while most radical groups have held the five tenets and the five pillars of Islam sacred and have wished to operate within it, there have also been some that have modified them and have espoused versions of Islamic religion that are fundamentally different from the Qur'an. Among the tenets of Islam that have been violated by some of these groups include the one that recognises Prophet Mohammed as the last of the Prophets. There have been cases of where some leaders of radical groups in Nigeria have come up to argue that they are also prophets sent by God and they have succeeded in getting adherents that later introduced violence to religion.²⁹

In post-independence Nigeria, Islamic radicalisation would seem to have come in three hardly distinguishable phases. The first was around the early 1970s, when the late Mohammed Marwa, widely known as Maitatsine, began espousing radical Islamic preaching in Northern Nigeria. This was to lead to massive riots that engrossed the Northern city of Kano and resulted in the deaths of several thousand people.³⁰ A summary of the story of Maitatsine is worth presenting here because

²⁸ These are some of the views expressed during some of the Focus Group Discussions held across the country, especially those undertaken in some parts of Northern Nigeria.

²⁹ It also needs to be pointed out that this is not a practice that is only found in the Islamic religion, as there have also been cases of people in Nigeria coming up to say that they are Jesus Christ and have succeeded in winning significant converts to their doctrine. Perhaps the most popular of this is the famous "Jesus of Oyingbo".

³⁰ The name "Maitatsine" was given to Marwa because he often ended his public preaching with the Hausa word "*Wanda bata yarda ba Allah tatsine*" (meaning "May God curse whosoever does not agree with me").

the emergence of his doctrine introduced a completely new dimension to Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria. It also brought out some of the internal and external dimensions of extremism that were to later surface in the politics of radicalisation in the country. Maitatsine was from Marwa, a town in northern Cameroon and he migrated to Nigeria in the early 1940s. By the late 1950s, he had started his controversial preaching, claiming that he had divine revelations that superseded those of Prophet Mohammed. He was sent back to Cameroon in the 1960s but was allowed back into Nigeria in 1972, allegedly because powerful politicians who regularly consulted him for mystical powers wanted him to be within the country.³¹ On his return to Nigeria, Marwa and his group intensified their militaristic positions and established their own mosques that attacked established Muslim order. Specifically, the group focused attention on the marginal and poverty-stricken sections of the population whose rejection by the more established urban groups fostered this religious opposition. A level of acceptance came for him from other Muslims after he performed a holy pilgrimage to Mecca, but this was just a prelude to a major outburst. In 1980, Maitatsine struck with Nigeria's first case of violent Islamic radicalisation. The riots began in Kano but were to spread to some other parts of Northern Nigeria - even after Maitatsine had been killed by the Nigerian security forces in 1980. The Maitatsine crisis exhibited many key issues that were later to become common features in Nigeria's Islamic radicalisation, including the politics of external dimension, use of marginalised groups, intra-Islamic differences and alleged government connivance.

The second and by far more extensive phase came in the early 1980s, when the successful revolution of the Iranian people against their Shah led to an awakening of Islamist tendencies in Northern Nigeria. The emergence of an Islamic government under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini and the subsequent humiliation it meted out to the US provided inspiration to Muslims the world over and in particular, the youths, saw in Islam a viable alternative to the bi-polar systems of capitalism or communism. The Islamist revival began in the 1980s, as young Muslims, radicalised by the revolution, began introducing variants of Islam that were of more radical dispositions. Another tendency that underlined the growth of radical Islamic tendencies during this period was the entrance into the country of radical Islamic teachings from other parts of West Africa, especially Senegal. It was not uncommon during this period to get audiocassettes containing radical teachings of these Islamic scholars in market places and commercial motor garages across northern Nigeria. It should however be noted too that the new Islamism filled gaps left by the near-collapse of local services, from road upkeep to education. At a time of dreadful mismanagement, new Muslim groups stepped into the breach just as evangelical churches did in the Southern part of the country.

³¹ I lived in Kano for one year shortly after the riots and this was the view that was prevalent in the city.

But there was also an internal dimension to Islamic radicalisation during this second phase. Muslim youths who, operating against the assumed belief that Christians had enjoyed advantages, came up to assert Islamic doctrine and called for the establishment of an order that would recognise the doctrine in some parts of the country. In short, they wanted a situation where the advantage allegedly enjoyed by the Christians as a result of Colonialism will now be reversed. Although the largely Muslim North dominated national politics during the First Republic, it was difficult to advance any clear Muslim agenda because the structures bequeathed by Colonialism made this particularly difficult.³²

During this phase, the first group to come out clearly as a radical group was the “Muslim Brothers”, led by Sheikh Ibraheem El Zakzaky. It is important to discuss El Zakzaky because of the major role he is playing in Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria. Born on 5th May 1953 in Zaria, northern Nigeria, he started Qur’anic and Islamic education from a tender age and remained there till the age of 16. From 1971 to 1975, he attended the School of Arabic Studies (SAS) which was founded in 1934 Kano and often considered the precursor of Bayero University. He undertook private studies and later obtained A-level grades in Government, Economics and Hausa/Islamic Studies. After this, he proceeded to the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, where he took a degree in Economics. While he was at ABU, he was an active member of the Muslim Student Society (MSS) at both campus and national levels and in 1978, when he was the Secretary General of the ABU Branch of MSS, he was one of those who championed the nation-wide demonstration in support of the inclusion of Sharia in the Nigeria constitution. He was later elected Vice President (International Affairs) of the national body of the MSS in 1979. El Zakzaky has been jailed several times for his radical views, especially during the military regimes. Charges against him have often been those of sedition or inciting disaffection against government.³³ Fired by the success of the Iranian people, many joined his group in his struggle for an Islamic state in Nigeria to be constructed on the ashes of the existing state, which was built on ignorance or *jahiliyya* (a term used in reference to pre-Islamic Arab-society).

The rhetoric of the Nigerian Muslim Brothers had a distinct quality of revolutionary idealism found in the works of the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb.³⁴ His major work, *Al-Ma’alim fi’l-Tariq* (then widely circulated in English translation as *Milestones*) was compulsory reading for members of the movement. His thesis of irreconcilable dichotomy and the struggle between Islam and *jahaliyya* played

³² One issue was not to go to work on Friday – in line with the Christians who have their holy day, Sunday, as a work-free day.

³³ See the official website of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, <http://www.islamicmovement.org/biozakzaky.htm>

³⁴ See Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, op-cit

a critical role in shaping the mindset of this group, as it did in the case of many Islamist groups in the Middle East that went under the generic name of Al Takfir wa'l-Hijra. Although the Muslim Brothers started as a Sunni group, the close association with Iran and the fact that several of their members were given scholarship by Iran's government to study at the city of Qam, led inevitably to their infiltration by Shiite doctrine. The leader, El-Zakzaky, was himself soon to be seen as a Shiite, a fact that led to rebellion and fragmentation in the movement. A splinter group was formed, led by some of Zakzaky's most loyal members, including Abubakar Mujahid, (Zaria) Aminu Gusau (Zamfara) and Ahmad Shuaibu (Kano). This group, however, maintained that its disagreement with Zakzaky was purely doctrinal in that they rejected Shiite theology. They, however, claimed to remain committed to the revolutionary process of *Islamisation* being undertaken by the Muslim Brothers, while sticking to Sunni orthodoxy.

Although these two groups represented what may be called the fundamentalist currents in Northern Nigeria during this period, there were other groups which need to be mentioned. First was the Jamaatu Izalat al Bid'ah wa Iqamat al – Sumah (Group for the Eradication of Innovation and Establishment of Tradition) which was inspired by the former Grand Qadi of Northern Nigeria, late Sheik Abubakar Gumi. The group differed from the Muslim Brothers in a number of ways. The Izalat Movement did not, as a policy, challenge the State or political authority. Gumi was, in fact, the officially sanctioned scholar with unhindered access to the corridors of power in Nigeria. The Izalat movement primarily attacked Muslim Sufi groups for “innovation” and “apostasy” and fought against such “innovation” as the Sufi's genuflection in greeting elders, the keeping of concubines by traditional rulers, celebration of the Prophet's birthday, visiting graves and tombs of dead scholars and denial of women rights to a proper education. The movement was in conflict with civil, as opposed to political, society, and Gumi was seen as an *enfant terrible* by traditional rulers and traditional scholars. The age-old enmity between Muslim scholars of the Ash-ari/Sufi tradition and the Ibn Tamiyya/ Wahhabis also played itself out in the Nigerian scene. By contrast, the Muslim Brothers tended to stress the essential unity of the Muslim Ummah and to see their principal conflict as being one with political authority whose overthrow was their *raison d'être*. Where they had conflicts with leaders of civil society, it was whether they perceived them to be in alliance with the forces of *Jabilliyah* and against the revolution. By the late 1990s, it appeared as if Zakzaky was getting a bit temperate in his radicalisation and some of his more radical followers had begun to think of another source of inspiration. This they seemed to find in Abubakar Mujahid, who broke away from Zakzaky to establish the *Ja'amatul Tajidmul Islamia*, the movement of Islamic Revival. As will be shown later, nothing shows the divergence of both leaders with regards to radicalisation more than their attitudes to the September 11 attack on the United States.

The third phase of radicalisation in Nigeria came with the introduction of the Sharia penal code in some states in 1999. It was this phase that also captured the national reaction to global war against terrorism. There is the need, at this stage, to discuss the politics of Sharia imposition in Nigeria. While there had been calls for the imposition of Sharia since the Second Republic, the first major and practical step was taken in 1999, when the governor of one of the states in the Northern Nigeria, Ahmed Sani Yerima of Zamfara State, introduced Sharia penal code. This introduction was to have contagious effects on many of the states in Northern Nigeria such that within three years of the introduction in Zamfara State, virtually all the states in Northern Nigeria had adopted this code of laws. As will be shown later in this paper, the introduction of Sharia created controversies on several fronts and many of these are crucial issues in understanding the complexities of Islamic radicalisation in the country. Most Muslims in the North follow orthodox Sunni Islam and the Maliki School of Sharia jurisprudence. Shiite Islam, in its Iranian variant, has also attracted some adepts. These include the Shiite leader, Sheikh El Zakzaky, who initially opposed applying Sharia in Kano because he argued that the underlying socio-economic conditions necessary for its proper application were not present.

By the early 2000s, it was observed that there were local flavours to radicalisation in Northern Nigeria and these can sometimes be complex to untangle. In Kano, many Islamic sects co-exist. The traditional sects, all of which are followers of Sunni Islam, include the Qadriyya, the Tijaniyya, the Tariqa, the Malikiya, the Ahmadiya and the Islamiya. Another group is the Da'awa.³⁵ There are, however, the newer and more fundamentalist sects. These include groups like the Izala and the Shiite. There are areas of convergence and divergence between the two. For example, while the Izala tends to attract young and educated people, the Shiite was less discriminatory. Interestingly, however, both groups are believed to be opposed to applying Sharia throughout Nigeria until the political affairs of the country had been taken over by religious leaders. Another slightly peculiar thing about Kano is that, whereas in other places *Hisba* (Islamic fundamentalist vigilantes who oversee the implementation of the Sharia) includes representatives of all sects, in Kano, it was dominated by the Izalas and Da'awa. In Katsina, the Sunni group comprises several sects of which five are particularly important. These are Qadriyya, Tijani, Tarika, Shia and Izala. Some of these groups have programmes that focus on Sharia. There are slight variations in membership and in their approaches to politics. For example, the Izala, as in the case of Kano drew its followership from young and educated people, the others appear to attract more diverse membership. Concerning their attitude to politics, the Shia sect members follow Shiite teachings. Local indigenous political leaders

³⁵ It should be noted that the word Da'awa has been used in different contexts, three of which are particularly important: some use the term to designate a separate sect, some use it as a synonym for hisba – the group that enforces Sharia provisions – while still others use it to denote the preaching arms of the Hisba.

view them as radicals and believe that they are committed to the overthrow of existing government. Other sects seem less committed to politics and are more centred on the practice of Islam as a non-militant doctrine.

When the terrorist attack on the United States occurred in September 2001, reactions of Nigerian radical groups were somewhat confusing. The best known radical leader in the country during the period, Sheikh El Zakzaky, condemned the attack but was also quick to condemn what he saw as President George Bush's efforts to consider Muslims all over the world as evil. He sees the September 11 attack as an attempt by the enemies of Islam to use adherents of the religion to destroy it. He said the attack was used as a cover to invade, destroy and take control of the resources of the oil-rich Muslim nation-states, using violent Muslims to launch an attack on the US and provide a pretext for such an invasion. On his part, Mujihad was of the opinion that the context of the attack and America's controversial foreign policy in the Middle East made the attack understandable, if not, in fact, justifiable. While it will be inaccurate to draw ethnic inferences from national responses to the attack on the United States, it appeared that greater support came for it from the northern parts of the country while support, even from South-Western Muslims, was significantly reduced. This was effectively demonstrated during the Focus Group Discussions held in these parts of the country. Compare these two responses: In Kano, one of the participants said:

"Nobody does what America does around the world without expecting a reaction. The best way I can explain our reaction to the whole attack was just to mention the name of a Television Programme here in Nigeria: 'The Rich also cry'. Americas need to know that they are human beings and that they are Vulnerable".

The response also from a Muslim in Ile Ife, in the South-West, was quite different:

"The attack was unnecessary and unjustified. But if you want to launch an attack on the US and cause damage, at least it can be done with the most minimal loss of live. The attack on the Twin Tower could have been done on a Sunday, when there would not be many people in the office. With this, you could have sent the same message with far significantly less number of Civilian Casualties"

An international subject around which there seemed to be a form of unity among radical Muslims in Nigeria is the attitude towards the state of Israel. All the known radical groups in Nigeria are united in their belief that Israel's attitude in the Middle East is unjust. Sheikh Zakzaky, as late as May 2008, claimed:

that the state of Israel was created "on the basis of terrorism and what is not yours is not yours, no matter years of oppression and hostage it

would slip someday along with those supporting them. Israel will fall with her allies certainly".³⁶

He was much more forceful when he attacked the notion that the success of the Jews in Middle East was due to their smartness and intelligence, saying:

they are not smart, intelligent and strategist they are just human beings, their aims are just unjustifiable and inhuman, do you call people that perpetrated all these inhuman acts smart, they have no human standard and there is no point of praising them, it is just like saying armed robbers are smart and intelligent"³⁷.

But since the September 11 attack on the United States, there has been a resurgence of radical tendencies in Nigeria. While it is impossible to identify all the radical groups that have emerged since the war on terror began, some of their names and their origin can be identified here. One of the groups, *Al sunna Wal Jamma* (Followers of the Prophet) formed around 2001. Its members are highly educated and experienced in the handling of weapons. It is believed that they first set up a camp around Kanamma, a small town in Yobe State very close to the border with Niger Republic, around late 2002 and early 2003. What first brought them to public attention apart from their preaching and their calls for Islamic purity was their total lack of respect for local traditions, especially property rights. They farmed and fished everywhere, especially on the bank of the Yobe River owned by particular families. They claimed that "Everything belonged to Allah".

Another militant group, Nigerian Taliban, emerged in 2002 and demanded that all the 12 states in the North should declare Sharia. It also began attacking symbols of the government, especially the police. They originally referred to themselves as *Muhajirun* (meaning Migrants). They were composed mainly of religious students. Specifically, they agitate for an Islamic state that is run in strict accordance with an extremist interpretation of the Muslim faith. The group first launched a rebellion in Yobe State. After the army put down the uprising, "it discovered that the group had been funded by the Saudi *al-Muntada al-Islami* "charity" whose other "good works" include educating aspiring African clerics in Saudi institutions and setting them up in its own network of mosques and schools back in their native lands upon graduation so they may recruit members for extremist groups".³⁸ In April 2007, there was a new wave of attacks in Kano, with radical groups protesting

³⁶ *Leadership Newspaper*, Abuja, 21 May 2008

³⁷ Sheik Ibrahim Zakzaky was speaking during a one day symposium, organised by the Resource Forum of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, titled 'The Creation of the Illegal State of Israel' which was held at Arewa House Kaduna. *Leadership Newspaper*, Abuja, 21 May 2008.

³⁸ J. Peter Pham, "Nigerian Taliban" Attack Police
tank.nationalreview.com/post/?q=MjEzM2RhNGQ0ZjEyOTQxZDjiMDk2ODZk

that governments in Northern Nigeria were not enforcing Islamic laws strictly enough. They also attacked what they saw as attempts to “Christianise” Kano. This was after the Kano leaders sought to offset the influence of Saudi Arabia and Iran, which are funding hard-line Islamist schools that some fear are educating a generation of extremists.³⁹

Yet another organisation that has become very prominent in the politics of radicalisation is the Tabliq group. This group is quite distinct in the way its members dress with their trousers having a noticeable distance from their sandals. They are a group who believe in missionary enterprise with beliefs similar to the Franciscan group. Although unlike the latter, they have not taken an oath of poverty, they have, nevertheless, renounced all they have acquired in the previous life. Members of the group also undertook most of their journeys by foot, possibly in an effort to conserve the little money they have. This group is more prominent in Lagos and Kwara states. It has a major presence in a village about 10 kilometres on the Ilorin-Ogbomosho road. Around 2001, members of this group came into Ogbomosho, a town in Oyo state. Although the motive of their coming was not known, people got concerned when they saw its members taking photographs of Churches in the town. This was brought to the attention of the *Soun* (the paramount ruler) who ordered all the hunters and the police in the town to round up all the sect members and expel them from Ogbomosho with a stern warning that they should never come back into the town. Currently, the Tabliq remain a very strong radical group in some parts of Lagos and the South West. Again as would be shown later, the sect also has areas of disagreements with other Muslim sects.

But radicalisation, in its links to violence, has also brought a number of other special considerations, especially ethnicity, chieftaincy matters, natural resource governance and others. For example, in many parts of the north, but most especially in Kano, religious radicalisation’s links to violence have also manifested through the economic and commercial rivalry between the southern Ibo traders living in the Sabon-gari quarters of the city and the indigenous Hausa-Fulani. It is thus common that any time there is religious violence in the city, the shops of Ibo traders are often some of the primary targets. The fact too that most Ibos are Christians easily reinforces the importance of religion to what is largely an issue of commercial rivalry. The example of how the politics of natural resource governance can underline religious radicalisation and political violence can be seen in the 2002 and 2003 violence in Plateau State, where the predominantly Christian Tarok farmers consider the mostly Muslim Hausa cattle herders outsiders and accuse them of stealing land and trying to usurp political power. This led to the burning down of villages. An example of the link between chieftaincy disputes and religious violence can be seen in the May 1999 violence, which emerged over the succession of an emir, resulting in about 100 deaths, while the November 2008 riots in Jos shows

³⁹ This is discussed later in this paper.

how political and election issues can bring out issues relating to religious fundamentalism. In concluding discussions on the radicalisation of Muslims in Nigeria, two major issues come out distinctly. The first is that often its expression is violent, and more often things are seen in line with a jihad or holy war which has endorsement in the Holy Qur'an. Second, most of the expression has been in the Northern part of the country where the religion is dominant. All these considerations are discussed under the broader subject of the dynamics of radicalisation in Nigeria.

The Dynamics of Radicalisation

This section on the dynamics of radicalisation in Nigeria addresses five interwoven issues that shed light on radicalisation and violence in the country. These are, the identification of relevant socio-economic and political underpinnings; the services provided and activities organised by the groups; their links with other organisations within the country and the pattern and method of recruitment and the nature of membership of radical groups.

(a) Identification of relevant socio-economic and political underpinnings

A detailed look at Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria reveals that it has not taken place outside the country's socio-economic and political contexts. Indeed, while there were cases where external considerations, including developments in the Middle East, may sometimes be issues underlining the occurrence of radical tendencies in Nigeria, the primary reasons for most cases of radicalisation in the country have been domestic socio-economic and political factors. An issue that has always been mentioned in explaining the massive move towards radical tendencies in the country has been the downward plunge in the economic well-being of the population. The issues associated with Nigeria's economic plight have been recorded in several studies, thus making a rehash unnecessary in this paper.⁴⁰ However, what can be said is that by the mid-1980s, the enormous wealth that had accrued from the country's oil deposits had been mismanaged and the implications of the downward plunge in the country's economy had become manifest. It was indeed not long afterwards that the country began serious negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

How Nigerians reacted to the downward plunge in their economic well-being is linked to radicalisation in a number of ways. First, it resulted in a situation where many people, unaware of any other ways of meeting the pressure created by the change in economic tide, turned to religion. Indeed, the period of economic decline in Nigeria witnessed the massive proliferation of radical tendencies in Nigeria. Many youths who could not find gainful employment turned around to take

⁴⁰ For more on this, see, Adebayo Olukoshi, (Ed.) *The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*, London: James Currey, 1993.

their religion more seriously in the hope that solace could come by being closer to God. But the area of economic deprivation that is more crucial in understanding the politics of radicalised violence is the vulnerability and exclusion it has created for youths in the country. Many youths, unable to make a living, became tools in the hands of those who had hidden agenda. This tendency is particularly prominent in Northern Nigeria where homeless youths, popularly known as *Almajiris*, are the key participants in most of the cases of religious violence in the country.⁴¹

The impacts of the political situation have also been as profound. Significant political developments occurred in Nigeria between 1980 and 2007. During the period, the country witnessed two civilian administrations, five military coups, (two executed, one attempted and two alleged) a benevolent military rule, an annulled election, an interim administration and a brutal dictatorship. All these left lasting impacts on the country and the consequences can be seen in the country's massive move towards religious radicalisation. In a rather curious way, it would appear that while economic deprivation drove more Christians towards the direction of radicalisation, political developments and uncertainties seems to have had more impacts on Muslims. Indeed, with the coming of the Second Republic in 1979 and the controversies surrounding the introduction of Sharia into the constitution, some forms of Muslim radicalisation seem to have begun in the country and this was to continue all through the era of political uncertainties up until the Third Republic.

Since the September 11 attack on the United States introduced a new dimension to global radicalisation, the situation in Nigeria has continued to be more of a response to domestic situation than reaction to external developments. Immediately after the attack there were cases of jubilation in some parts of Northern Nigeria,⁴² a situation that changed to violent demonstration after the United States attacked Afghanistan in retaliation. But these were just cases of spontaneous reaction to a global event of unprecedented proportion, rather than an indication of the "external" taking over from the "internal" in explaining radicalisation in the country. After this, other domestic issues took over from the external in explaining radicalisation in the Nigeria. In the many focus group discussions held in the country, participants recognise that socio-economic and political issues are crucial to understanding the causes of radicalisation and in why radicalisation turns into violence.

⁴¹ The *Almajiri* factor is a crucial one in understanding the politics of religion in Northern Nigeria. In its origin, the word *Almajiri* is an Arabic word for someone who leaves his home in search of knowledge in Islamic religion. Ideally, the communities should support these children as they leave their families to become a servant of Allah. In reality, however, across northern Nigeria, many young boys are leaving their homes only to end up in the streets begging.

⁴² Interviews and discussion in Kano

(b) *Services provided and Activities undertaken by Islamic Radical Groups*

Religious organisations with radical tendencies have also gone into other practices like micro-financing, housing and land projects, small scale business projects, schools and even hospitals. While the intention of most of these initiatives is to bring together members by establishing forms of unity that transcends religion, there is also the economic motive of making profit to further advance the course of the group. In recent times, radical Islamic groups in Nigeria have gone into provision of education. In a situation where government-run schools are badly managed and where private schools have taken over in the country, education has become a major area where private entrepreneurs have turned into and religious organisations have played an important role in this area. There are also efforts to bring Muslim youths together in vocational training. For example, the Muslims Students Society of Nigeria organised the construction of a multi-million Naira Islamic Vocation Course (IVC). Also important to consider at this stage is the effort to ensure the continued encouragement of young Muslim children to attend Qur'anic schools in order to get them deeply rooted into the religion at a very early age. Although this has always been the practice in the northern part of the country, the practice now seems to be coming down to the South-West. This has not, however, been without its own problems.⁴³

(c) *The pattern and method of recruitment into Islamic Radicalisation*

Recruitment into the membership of radical Islamic groups has taken different forms. Muslim radicalisation has sought membership through similar methods as Christians, even though it has to be conceded from the outset that Christians seems to have perfected some of these methods better than Muslims.⁴⁴ However, it needs to be pointed out that while Christians may have perfected ways of evangelising better than Muslims the latter had an advantage over Christians because the concept of “jihad” - which involves ensuring the bringing in of converts into the religious fold - is more established in the Islamic religion. Consequently, engaging in the process of bringing about converts is more cardinal among Muslims than Christians whose religion, while also encouraging the bringing in of converts seems to be less demanding in the ways it admonishes adherents to ensure this. During the focus group discussion held at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, the issue of recruitment came up and some of the participants expressed their views on the process.

⁴³ For example, in early 2009, Police arrested one Mallam Shuabu, Umaru of the Umar Bumi Fadali Islamic School in Ojota, Lagos for allegedly having sex with 10 under-aged boys. His escapades became known when one of his victims started having haemorrhage. He was also alleged to have threatened the boys with death if they told their parents. See, *Sunday Independent* (Lagos) February 1, 2009.

⁴⁴ Interview with Professor Hakeem Danmole

Two views expressed by a Muslim and Christian participants are worth recording: A Muslim participant noted:

Every Muslim must win converts. It is a cardinal injunction. However, the views often expressed that Muslims are using force to get converts is wrong. The Quran only allows the use of force in the defence of the Islamic religion and not as a process of winning converts. Any Muslims who aspires to win converts by force has read his Quran upside down.

A Christian participant expressed his own views:

Winning converts has become a form of rivalry on the campus. In the past, it was Christians holding crusades but now Muslims are now holding their own mass rally to convert people to their religion. They are even adopting some of the strategies used by Christians, including distribution of tracts and inviting Moslem leaders from all over the country to come and awake Islamic religion on campuses

Some of the consequences of consequences of this recruitment process become clear when one considers the nature of the membership of the radical Islamic groups.

(d) *The Nature of Membership of Radical Islamic Groups*

Like most other things surrounding radicalisation in Nigeria, it is difficult to be categorical in explaining the nature of membership of radical groups in the country, as they cut across a very broad spectrum. However, some things are noticeable. First is that there are more youths being radicalised; and second is that more males seem to have gravitated towards radicalisation than females. But Muslim youths who have held radical views come in three categories: those who are genuinely committed to the religion and feel concerned about whatever they see as a desecration of the religion; those who may be described as *ad-hoc* radicals who only follow instructions to go on rampage once there is an instruction to that effect from “spiritual” leaders and revert back to their “ordinary” ways of life afterwards; and those who may be described as “opportunistic radicals”, who only seize the opportunity of the moment to loot and vandalise, after which they wait anxiously for another opportunity. However, in the process of militant activities, it is difficult to identify who belongs to what among these individuals.

Below is the list of some Islamic organisations registered in Nigeria

Ahmadiyya Movement in Nigeria

Jamaatul Nasril Islam

The Council of Ulama

Federation of Muslim Women Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN)

Ijebuode Muslim Friendly society

Isawa Movement

Islam in Africa Organization (IAO)

Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN)
 Nigerian Muslims brothers
 Jamaatu Izalat Al-Bida Wa Iqamatus al-sunna (Izala)
 Jamatul Taqwiyyat-l islamiyyat
 National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations of Nigeria NACOMYO
 National Joint Muslim Organization *NAJOMO*
 Qadirriya Tariqa
 Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs
 Tijaniyya Tariqa has seven different organs under its umbrella
 Hamahullah Rariqa
 NASFAT
 Nasrul-Lahi-il-Faith
 Nurudeen Society
 Nawar-ud-deen Society
 Hezbollah Movement Nigeria
 Young Muslim Brother and Sister YOMBAS)
 Quareed Islamic Society in Nigeria
 Fit Arul Islam Organization
 Islam Missionaries Association of Nigeria
 Hizbullahi al-Ghalib (HLA) Society
 Sirajudeen Society of Nigeria
 Shamsuddeen Society of Nigeria
 Muyiddeen Society of Nigeria
 Qamarul-Islam Society
 Shamsul-Arifuna Society
 Muinud-deen Society of Nigeria
 Ahbabuddeen il Islamiyya Society of Nigeria
 Nigerian Taliban
 Al Sunna Wal Jamma
 Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs(SCIA)
 Daawah Coordinating Council of Nigeria(DCCN)
 Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria (SCSN)
 Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI)
 Islamic Forum of Nigeria (IFN)
 Islamic Education Trust (IET)
 Jama'atul Izalatul Bidia Waikamatussunna (JIBWIS).**
 Muslim Corpers Association of Nigeria (MCAN)
 Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN)
 National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations(NACOMYO)
 Council Ulama of Nigeria (CUN)
 Centre of Islamic Information
 Islamic Trust of Nigeria (ITN)
 Council of Daawah and Welfare of Converts (CODAWOCO)
 Jama'tul Muslimeen
 Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS)
 Federation of Muslim Women Associations In Nigeria (FOMWAN)
 Muslim Sisters' Organisation (MSO)
 Third World Relief Agency (TWRA)
 International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO)
 Muslim World League (MWL)
 Munazzamah Al-daawah Al-Islamyyah
 World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY)

International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO)
 International Islamic Federation of Students Organizations (IIFSO)
 University of Nsukka Muslim Community
 International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)
 Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria
 Islamic Foundation of Nigeria (IFN)
 Benue State Daawah Committee
 Islamic Missionaries Association of Nigeria (IMAN)
 Abu Sheriffideen Organization
 Adabiyyah Kamaliyah of Nigeria
 Council of Daawah and Guidance
 Abuja Muslim Forum
 Abuja Muslim Women in Daawah
 Muslim Public Affairs Centre (MPAC)
 Islamic Propagation Centre
 Nigeria Islamic Centre (NIC)
 Fityanul Islam
 The Young Muslims
 Islamic Health Students Association of Nigeria (IHSAN)
 Islamic Medical Association of Nigeria (IMAN)
 Jama'atul Al-Nahdal Al-Islamiyya
 Association of Muslims Professionals
 National Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS)
 Jama'atu Shababul Islam
 Jama'atul Tajdidul Islam (JTI)
 Almntadatul Al-Islam
 The Muslim Congress

(c) *Links with other organisations within the country*

In discussing the association of religious groups with radical tendencies, there seems to be a dichotomy between Christians and Muslims. Among the Christian radical groups, there often seem to be a boisterous display of superficial camaraderie. Although there are sometimes rivalries, attempts are always made to ensure that these are hidden under the often advanced claim that all are working towards winning converts for the Kingdom of God. Indeed, there are no known violent conflicts between different segments of Pentecostal churches in the country, even if there are rivalries of members poaching between them.⁴⁵ Not exactly the same can be said among the Muslim radical groups, where, as will be shown later in the paper, there have been many cases of violent contacts among groups that are espousing radical tendencies. However, before the picture of Islamic

⁴⁵ This is also an issue that has often been raised against the Redeemed Church of God. Because of the church's policy of having branches within one mile radius, there is a proliferation of Redeemed Churches. This has thus made the church to have locations in places where there are other Pentecostal churches. Inevitably in situations like this, allegation of membership poaching becomes common.

radicalisation in the country becomes clear, the extent to which is a reaction to other forms of religious radicalisation is worth discussing.

Islamic Radicalisation as a Reaction to other forms of Religious Radicalisation

It was discovered in the process of this study that an important aspect of Islamic radicalisation has been the desire of the adherents of the religion to react to the somewhat massive evangelisation exercise being undertaken by Christians. Indeed, this has been one of the most important aspects of Islamic radicalisation in the country. Many Muslims felt that unless an aggressive exercise was launched to address the trend of Christian radicalisation, many Muslim youths would be converted into Christianity. The Sultan of Sokoto and the Spiritual head of all the Muslims in Nigeria, Alhaji Abubakar Saad III, vowed to counter the upsurge of Christian evangelisation in Nigeria with the message of Islam. While speaking during a meeting of Northern Traditional rulers (Emirs) at Arewa House Kaduna State, Sadiq III lamented the increasing activities of Christian evangelical organizations and vowed to counter it with Islamic religion. The Sultan who is also the President General of the Jama'atu Nasil Islam (JNI) said the spread of Christianity has made it all more urgent that the message of Islam shall be heard loud and clear and the JNI must play a leading role in this endeavour". He noted:

The rise of secularism and the increasing activities of western evangelical organizations have made it all the more urgent that the message of Islam shall be heard loud and clear and the JNI must play a leading role in this endeavour. The JNI, in the next few years, needs to establish a proactive and virile Da'wah agency to respond to these challenges. This agency must be able to deploy full time Da'wah workers in its strategic areas of operation and make maximum use of emerging media technology ... We must first and foremost develop a five-year action plan to rehabilitate, reposition and expand the coverage of the schools currently under the management of the JNI.⁴⁶

The nature and extent of this indeed makes a brief discussion of Christian radicalisation important for this study, especially as some of the most violent forms of radicalisation have manifested along Christian-Muslim divide.

In discussing the nature of Christian radicalisation, it has to be noted that existing academic literature on Christian radicalisation in Nigeria seems to place the origin to the emergence of radical Christian activities among University students in the early 1970s, especially through the activities of

⁴⁶ John Shiklam, "Nigeria: Sultan - We Must Counter Christians" *Daily Champion*, July 3 2007

the groups such as the Scripture Union (SU).⁴⁷ This again has been linked to the radicalisation phenomenon that was prevalent in the United States during the 1960s. However, while Pentecostal Christianity in the country can be put at this date, I want to argue that radical Christianity has a fairly longer antecedent. Indeed, it is certain that as early as the 1930s, Christian denominations depicting orthodox churches as professing a watered-down version of Christianity had begun to emerge in Nigeria. The specific aspect which the radicals of this period found particularly unacceptable was the tolerance orthodox churches seemed to give to traditional practices. To the radicals, there was no place in the Christian faith for any form of practices that allowed for traditional religion. One of the first groups to express radical Christian doctrine was the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) under the late Rev. John Ayo Babalola. The Church began what may be considered as the first revivalist mission in Nigeria and it targeted attacks on traditional idol worshipping.⁴⁸ For a long time, the CAC remained the dominant radical Christian church in Nigeria and many key individuals who were later to occupy prominent positions in advancing radical Christian views in the country had the roots of their development in this Church.

The CAC attracted people of all generations but mostly adults, but by early 1970s, a group of youths had begun to express radical Christian views in Nigeria. Most of these groups were known as members of the Scripture Union (SU) and they were dominant in academic institutions, especially Universities and Polytechnics across Southern parts of the country. Another association that emerged shortly afterwards but which was more dominant among junior secondary school students was the Students Christian Movement (SCM).⁴⁹ Although the groups believe in the Holy Bible like other orthodox Christians, there was also a point of departure, which was the ability to “speak in tongues”. The SU argued that the promise made by Jesus Christ on the day of Pentecost (Acts Chapter 2 vs. 4) that the Holy Spirit would descend and the Christians will be able to speak in unknown tongue was an essential element of the Christian faith. Most of the orthodox Churches did not share this belief. It needs to be pointed out that this did not result in any major dispute between the “radical” and the

⁴⁷ Mathews Ojo has written extensively on this. See the following, among others, “The Contextual Significance of the Charismatic Movements in Independent Nigeria, *Africa* No. 58 (Vol. 2) 1988, pp. 175 – 192; American Pentecostalism and the Growth of Pentecostal Charismatic Movement in Nigeria, pp. 155 – 167.

⁴⁸ In a dedication of one his books, one of Nigeria’s radical Christian leaders, Dr. Olukoya, attested to the fact that Joseph Ayo Babaola was a path breaker in the evangelization of Nigeria and that none has equaled, not to talk of surpassing his contribution to radical Christianity in Nigeria. Even giving allowance for overstatement, this is a testimony to the contribution of Babalola to the emergence of radical Christianity in Nigeria. The CAC has now built a Church in his name.

⁴⁹ I was a member of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) between 1973 and 1977. Although nothing radical was taught to members, we were encouraged to live more disciplined life that was in line with Christian doctrine.

“conservative” groups. Indeed, because most of the radical groups were youths, the orthodox churches were able to explain away their doctrine under exuberance and with the hope that they would soon “outgrow” it and come back to “reality”. However, contrary to the thinking of the orthodox churches, the groups continue to wax stronger and they in turn began to alter the practices of the orthodox churches.

Christians who have subscribed to radical tendencies have often come under the name “Pentecostal”, a name which was derived from the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and they spoke in unknown tongues. It is impossible to estimate the number of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, but they run into hundreds of thousands, with a followership of several millions, mostly youths. Because of the number of such churches, it is impossible to discuss the origin of all of them. This thus leaves us to identify few prominent ones. Here I extract key issues underlining the nature of Christian radicalisation by looking at three of these Churches: the Deeper Christian Life Ministry, the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Living Faith Church, also known as Winners’ Chapel.

The Deeper Life Ministry is under the leadership of William Folorunso Kumuyi, an academic who later turned to full-time preaching. Kumuyi’s ascendance into the position was something of an irony, as he was educated by and later obtained a scholarship from Nigeria’s most acclaimed atheist, late Tai Solarin.⁵⁰ A number of doctrinal issues are crucial to the Deeper Life Church. The first of these is the whole idea of restitution, which Kumuyi believed must follow the experience of conversion.⁵¹ Second, is the belief that all Christians must have a personal conversion experience; third is sanctification; and fourth is evangelisation.⁵² However, the Pentecostal Church with the greatest influence in the country and one of the fastest growing Churches in the world is the Redeemed Christian Church of God, (RCCG). The Church is currently under the leadership of Enoch Adejare Adeboye, also a former University Lecturer at the University of Lagos. Since 1981, there has been a population explosion in the church. There could be up to 50,000 “parishes” of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria. On the international scene, the church is present in many countries in the world. One of the well-known programs of the church is the Holy Ghost

⁵⁰ Tai Solarin was the founder and first Principal of Mayflower School, Ikenne. He brought up his students to be self-reliant and disciplined and taught them God was irrelevant to African development.

⁵¹ Kumuyi himself practiced this. After he became converted, he made restitution by writing to the West African Examination Council (WAEC) admitting that he had impersonated other candidates in examinations. He claimed he was pardoned.

⁵² A member of the Church told me that this was a misinterpretation of Kumuyi’s message, especially as Kumuyi himself later used the same television for evangelism.

Service, an all night miracle service that holds on the first Friday of every month at the Redemption Camp at Km. 46, Lagos-Ibadan expressway. The Holy Ghost Service is now held quarterly in London and in other parts of the world. Another major service is the Holy Ghost congress which is held in the second week of December every year at the Redemption Camp. On its part, the Living Faith Church, also known as Winners' Chapel, established by an architect, David Oyedepo, in 1981 in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria. It has branches in over 50 countries across the world; in Nigeria alone, it has more than 400 local branches. Unlike the Redeemed Church that has a vision of establishing a church within every 100 metres, the Winners Chapel has the policy of having only one Church in a town. The church teaches that both divine healing and material prosperity are benefits of submission to God's will. The international headquarters of Winners' Chapel is called Faith-Tabernacle, built inside a 5,000 acre church complex called Canaan-land, in Ota, a suburb of Lagos. Faith Tabernacle is the largest church building in the world, with a sitting capacity of 50,000 people and an outside overflow capacity of over 250,000. Other properties inside Canaan-land include Covenant University, a chain of Secondary and Primary schools in Nigeria. It also has its own Bible School, called Word of Faith Bible Institute (WOFBI) which is the biggest such group in Nigeria with branches in over 30 countries worldwide. Other assets of the Church include aircrafts and a fleet of over 350 buses that convey worshippers to and fro Faith-Tabernacle, Canaan-land. The Church also owns Dominion Publishing House, which turns out books and other materials written by Oyedepo.

It is impossible to get the exact number of individuals who have become radicalised under the Pentecostal umbrella, but a number of things are known about the groups. First, many of those who have become radicalised are mostly between the ages of 15 and 40. While most of them are from Christian backgrounds of various orthodox denominations, some had also been Muslims. At the beginning of "Pentecostalism" in Nigeria, most of the activities were predominant in the southern parts of the country, but as time went on, inroads were made into the North and many radical Churches made their way to establish churches in areas that are largely populated by Muslims. These Pentecostal churches did not have any short supply of worshippers, especially as there were many southerners resident in Northern Nigeria.⁵³

Also worth noting here is what may be described as the "professional" dimension of radicalisation, which took the form of Christian professionals coming together to form associations under the banner of religion. Of all the groups, perhaps the best known is Businessmen Christian

⁵³ But there is also a pattern to the establishment of many of these churches as all the Churches in core Northern areas of Nigeria like Kano are located in the sections of the country where non-indigenes live. This area is often known as *Sabon-gari*, meaning, "New settlement". During my recent visit to Kano (May 2008), I worshipped at a radical Church in Kano and observed that the doctrine espoused are not different from what radical Christians in Southern Nigeria do.

Fellowship. The primary aim of this group is to advance Christian religion through the establishment of honest business principles. Although most members are businessmen, it is also open to those who may not be in business but belong to other professions that give them social and financial clout. The last decade has also witnessed increased radicalisation on university campuses, where Christian lecturers with radical Christian views have become important power blocks in University campuses and those contesting political offices within Universities have to seek the support of this block. Christian lecturers organise weekly meetings in Staff Quarters and many of them have become Associate Pastors in many Pentecostal Churches.⁵⁴

Some features are common with many other radical Christian churches, two of which are worth pointing out here. The first is that many of them are run as “Family Affairs”, with the wife and in some cases the children of the leader also deeply involved in the management of the church. In many cases, wives of such founders wield significant influences, sometimes acting as co-Pastors and they have been described with various appellations. Often they are showered with gifts and flattered with trivialities. A second feature is the attitude of some Pentecostal Churches to material wealth. A survey of Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria shows considerable flamboyance, with many of the leaders driving the gospel of Christianity on the wheels of material evidence, with at least one of them having a private jet. Indeed, the focus of Christian radical churches in Nigeria has been towards four main issues: Faith; Prosperity; Miracles and Holiness. Below is a list of some of these churches and the areas of their focus

A typology of Nigerian Pentecostalism

Faith	Prosperity	Miracles	Holiness
Faith Tabernacle/ Aladura	Household of God (Chris Okotie)	The Synagogue of all Nations (T. B. Joshua)	Wesleyan/Apostolic
Redeemed Church of God (Pastor E. Adeboye)	The Church of God Mission (Bishop Benson Idahosa)	Aladura	Deeper Life Bible Church (William F. Kumuyi)
Latter Days Assembly (Pastor Tunde Bakare)	The Living Faith, a.k.a Living Faith (Pastor David Oyedepo)	Christ Embassy (Chris Okotie)	Mountain of Fire and Miracle
Grace Outreach Church	Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC)	Living Christ Mission for the Miracle	
Foursquare Gospel	Household of God	Sword of the Spirit	

⁵⁴ A survey carried out at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, in the country’s south-west region reveals that there is no faculty in the University that do not have one of the teaching staff also serving as a Pastor or Assistant pastor of a Pentecostal Church.

Church	(Pastor Chris Okotie)		
Victory Christian Church	House on the Rock (Pastor Paul Adefarasin)	CAC (Agbala Itura)	
Liberty Gospel Church	Word of Life Bible Church	Christ Mustard Mission	
Christ Chapel (Tunde Joda)	Royal House of Grace	Evangelical Church of Yaweh	
The Redeemed Evangelical Mission (Pastor Mike Okonkwo)	Revival Assembly	Bethel Ministry	
Redemption Ministries		Mountain of Fire and Miracle	
		World Bible Church (Pastor Samson) Ayorinde	
		Zoe Ministry (Pastor Partick Anwuzua)	
		Christ Embassy (Chris Oyakhilome)	

But apart from the table presented above, there also seems to be a sort of area of “specialisation” of some of these Pentecostal Christians. According to Olusegun Fakoya,

Liberty gospel Church of Helen Ukpabio specialises in witch-hunting, especially among children; the Laughter Foundation provides barren women with the “fruit of the womb”; Synagogue of All Nations of Pastor TB Joshua is especially specialised in the healing of those suffering from HIV/AIDS; Mountain of Fire and Miracles specialises in casting out demons of all specifications.⁵⁵

Many Muslims see all these as fraudulent and think that they should advance their own religion in a way to counter some of the practices of Christian radicals and their ways of worshipping. Discussions held in Focus groups also confirm that Islamic radicals also have objections to the new trend in radical Christian evangelism which allows Pentecostal Christians to partake in sonorous and erotic dances in Churches, especially during “Praise Worship”. Muslim radicals argued that while the wordings of many of these songs are “Godly”, the time, tempo and sensuous nature of the dances associated with them are seducing and potentially harmful. The pattern of worship – which also involves dances and exhibition of erotic parts of the body, is also considered by some Muslims who took part in the discussion as being unhealthy and tempting.⁵⁶ Finally, Muslims have argued that some of the practices in Pentecostal Churches, which makes many of the Churches to have

⁵⁵ Olusegun Fakoya, “The Gospel of Materialism: Nigerian Pentecostalism and Hypocrisy, Nigerians in American magazine, September 2008

⁵⁶ As somebody puts it: “The Pastor hears the wordings of the songs, but he also has eyes to see the wriggly anatomy of the body as well”.

structures of a Commercial enterprise, make them to more of a business venture, instead of the religious outfit they claim to be. In short, the way Christians have gone about evangelisation is such that has spurred reactions from Muslims, especially youths. Consequently, adherents of the religion feared that something has to be done to counter this and prevent many Muslims, especially youths from getting converted to Christian religion.

Islamic radicalisation has also tended to respond violently to situations where former Muslims who had turned to radical Christians have tended to use their knowledge of the Islamic religion to draw comparison with Christianity. While exact figures of the cases of carpet-crossing from one religion to the other in Nigeria are not available, it would seem that more Muslims have crossed to Christianity. While Muslim radicals are understandably opposed to this practice, they are often-times willing to let such “miscreants” go, provided they do not say or do anything that brings Islamic religion into disrepute to impress their new Christian religion.⁵⁷ On the occasions where Muslims who turned into Christianity had openly condemned the Islamic religion, there have been known to be conflicts, with Islamic radicals often violently attacking those who attend such “crusades” where comparisons between Islam and Christianity is being made by former Muslims. An example of this category of conflict occurred in Iwo, Osun state, in October 2007 when, during a Christian “crusade”, a former Muslim who had become Christian told the audience: “if you want to know about God, go to the Qur’an, but if you really want to know God, go to the Bible”. Muslims found this unacceptable, as they argued that the statement presupposes that Quran only talked about God without really revealing God. Issues like this have been known to result in violence.

Islamic Radical Groups and Violence

Between 1980 and 2008, violence associated with Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria could have claimed up to 50,000 lives, while up to five million could have been displaced. However, in discussing these conflicts, it needs to be pointed out from the outset that the manifestations of these conflicts are complex and confusing. While most of the time these conflicts can easily be traced to radical dispositions of religious views, sometimes ethnicity and local politics often conceal, even if superficially, the religious aspects of these conflicts. The objective of this section is not to discuss the hundreds of conflicts surrounding religious radicalization. While the key ones will be discussed, the sole objective of the section is basically twofold: first is to identify the causes of these violent incidences and second is to discuss their manifestations.

(a) Causes of Violence

⁵⁷ One of my research Assistants who comes from this part of Nigeria and actually witnessed the disagreement took me to the convert who explained the events of the day to me.

In Nigeria, violence associated with Islamic radicalisation has a number of causes, four of which are particularly important. These are: efforts to prevent a return to what is seen as the era of *Jabiliyya*; protestations against the desecration of the Holy Qur'an and the name of Prophet Mohammed; domestic political, socio-economic and resource- management issues; and reaction to international affairs.

(i) Attempt to prevent a return to the era of “*Jabiliyya*”

An issue that seems to underline Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria is the need to ensure that Nigerian society does not go back to the period of darkness that was prevailing before the arrival of Christianity and Islam when people were worshipping local gods. Indeed, while Muslims are willing to tolerate Christianity and did have instruction from Prophet Mohammed to treat adherents of the religion with respect, there was to be no such recognition or respect for those described as “idol worshippers”. However, in the last decade or so, support for traditional religion enjoyed some form of upsurge, especially in some parts of the country. There emerged groups of people, mostly youths, who have now taken the resolve to revisit what they saw as encroachment of the traditional belief by “foreign” religions. While the activities of these have been spontaneous and often sporadic, they are worth mentioning in any study discussing radicalisation. This tendency seems to be more prevalent in the South Western part of the country, where Islam, Christianity and traditional religion have historically co-existed. As recent as the late 1970s, there have been cases of recorded clashes, especially between traditional worshippers and Muslims and these have mostly been during traditional festivals, especially masquerades.⁵⁸ At the centre of the clashes there have always been the alleged attempts by Muslim radicals to prevent the traditional worshippers from celebrating their festivals.

Another variant of traditional religious radicalisation manifests itself through ethno-patriotism, and again this is more dominant in the South-West, even if it also exists in other parts of the country. Under this pattern, people claiming to be championing ethnic causes in what they see as the zero-sum nature of national politics have gone into traditional religions to find common bonds of

⁵⁸ This was particularly prominent in the south-western town of Ibadan, where a Muslim radical preacher, popularly known as *Ajagbemokeferi* (One who stands firm and rebuke the Infidel) led a Muslim revolt against one of the town's most sacred traditions, the *Oloolu* Masquerade celebration. Under the tradition, it is forbidden for the *Oloolu* Masquerade to be seen by women. As a mark of demonstrative defiance, *Ajagbemokeferi* lined up all his wives on the main path of the Masquerade. This led to major violence in the town and it divided the town between those felt the Islamic clergy was excessive in his radicalism and those who believe that the masquerade gender-insensitive principle should be discarded. There was also the popular Apalara case in Lagos.

unity.⁵⁹ Although the primary objective of these ethno-nationalist groupings is to protect the cause of particular ethnic groups and to ensure fairness and justice, even if through unorthodox processes, they seem to give implicit indictments to Christianity and Islam, which they claim have not succeeded in ridding the country of corruption and bad governance. The fact that most of those who have (mis-)ruled the country since independence profess to either Christianity or Islamic religion seem to give the traditionalists the moral high-ground to call for better recognition of religion that they claim has not let the nation down.⁶⁰ Islamic radicals are also concerned about what they see as the unintended exaltation of traditional worship through the proliferation of home videos where Juju and local charms feature prominently.⁶¹

(ii) The issue of “Desecration” of the Quran and the name of the Holy Prophet

At the centre of political violence and Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria is the issue of “desecration” of the Quran. This thus calls for a brief discussion of the attitude of Muslims and Christians to this subject. Basically, both the Christians and the Muslims have different attitudes to their “Holy” books, the Bible and the Quran. While the Christians are free in the ways they handle the Bible and can put it under their pillow for “protection” and on their dining table for use before meals, the Muslims hold their Qur’an in respect that borders on awe. For example, the Qur’an cannot be put on the bed, especially on ones where love is made between couples. It should not be put on the floor, table or any place where anyone that has not performed ablution can have access to it. The tendency for Christians not to treat the Qur’an with the level of respect that Muslims accord it has been a source of problems, and a number of conflicts have been linked to this.

Closely related to this is the extent of respect that should be given to the Prophet Mohammed. Radical Muslims are unequivocal in their demand for respect for the Prophet, while Christians are less inclined to giving the Prophet any special attention. While most Christians are

⁵⁹ This has become a major issue during the third republic when traditional shrines became key issues in national politics. In the eastern part of the country, the Okija shrine came to national attention and many governors and top politicians in the region, most of who claim to be devout Christians have allegedly gone to the shrine to swear oaths of allegiances. Indeed, the Election Tribunal in one of the states nullified the election of one of the state Governors for belonging to the Okija Shrine.

⁶⁰ There have, in recent times, been calls from many adherents of traditional religions in the country that oaths of office for political appointees should be taken using traditional means because those who took oaths with the Bible and the Quran have not had any hesitations to steal and loot government’s treasury. The viciousness with which those who violates oaths to which these traditional gods have been called to witness is believed will caution oath takers from engaging in actions that are not in the nation’s best interest.

⁶¹ The role of home-video in the subtle propagation of religious radicalisation is becoming a major issue in Nigeria and this should constitute a major source of academic research.

willing to respect the sensitivity of Muslims by not desecrating the name, they do not have any special desire to accord the name any special respect. Saying the usual “Peace be unto him” after the mention of his name, for example, is not what Christians are inclined to do.⁶² While many Muslims are willing to accept this, they take seriously any conscious attempt to desecrate the name. Again as will be shown later, this has been at the centre of violence in Nigeria.

The focus group discussions undertaken show slight differences as to the manifestation of this issue as a cause of violent radicalisation. While all those who took part in the discussions recognise it as a cause of problem, many of those who took part in the discussion in the South-West argue that it needs not be an issue. While some of the Muslim participants in these discussions claimed that they will be offended with any form of desecration of the Quran or that of the Holy Prophet, they also claim that they will not be violent over this. The position here contradicts with that expressed in the North where some of the participants argue that there are “legitimate” grounds to be violent over any issue of desecration.⁶³ As will be shown later in this study, there seems to be four types of desecration. These are: “deliberate” desecration, where all sides seem to agree that the name of the Holy Prophet or the Quran has been deliberately desecrated; “alleged” desecration, where a third party alleged that someone has desecrated the name of the Quran or that of Prophet Mohammed; “perceived” desecration, where actions are seen, often wrongly, as a desecrating the name of Prophet Mohammed or that of the Islamic Holy book; and “unintended” desecration where actions have been taken in ways that unknowingly desecrated the religion.

(iii) Domestic socio-economic and political issues

Violence associated with Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria has exploited a number of local issues to find expression. Of these, political differences, economic deprivation and disputes over the ownership, management and control of Natural Resources have played the most important roles. Indeed, there are many who are of the opinion that economic deprivation is often at the centre of many of these conflicts and that politicians have only exploited the whole situation to their selfish advantage. Indeed, as discussed earlier and as would be shown later in this study, many of the conflicts are linked to local issues and how they are exploited by the political and sometimes, religious, elites.

⁶² This came up during one of the Focus Group Discussion (in Ibadan) where one of the Christians participants claims that he would not add the required “peace be unto Him” after mentioning the name of Prophet Mohammed. Although this did not cause any tension, the level of anger on some of the Muslim participants was clearly noticeable.

⁶³ When informed that the response from focus group participants in the South West was somewhat different, they insists that their own position is what the Quran preaches and that any Muslim that thinks otherwise should have the source of its doctrine questioned.

(iv) International Issues

Also important as a cause of conflict in Nigeria are key international issues that relate to the Islamic world. Although it needs to be pointed out quite clearly that this has been to a far lesser degree than local political and economic issues. Among the key international developments that have evoked radical Islamic reactions are the developments in the Middle East where views often expressed are in support of the Palestinians in what is seen as their struggle against Israel. Actions taken by Israel against Palestinians and other Arab countries have provoked riots in Nigeria. In recent times, the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan have added to the radicalisation of Muslims in Nigeria and this has evoked considerable anti-Western feelings in the country. Having discussed some of the causes of the violence, this paper now proceeds to discuss the manifestations.

(b) *Manifestations*

In this section, I will only identify few cases of violent conflicts that touch on the three strands of violent conflicts: between Christians and Muslims; among different Muslim sects and between Christians and Muslims on one side and the Islamic traditional religion on the other. Most of these conflicts have taken place in Northern Nigeria and have been concentrated mainly in towns like Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, Maiduguri, Bauchi and Jos. In most of the conflicts involving Muslims and Christians, the origin has always been linked to alleged insensitivity of the latter to Islamic doctrine, including alleged desecration of the Qur'an and lack of respect to Prophet Mohammed. What, however, seems common to all the conflicts is that they are rooted to local issues, including inability to handle economic stress and socio-political and ethnic differences, than to any external consideration.

In recent times, three conflicts between Christians and Muslims dominated national attention. The first was the crisis in Jos and it emerged when a lady who was allegedly dressed in a manner that exposed parts of her body, attempted to pass through a barricade mounted by Muslims during a Friday prayers. She was prevented from passing and was attacked. In response, Christians fought back and the entire state went up in flames, requiring the intervention of the Federal Government to send in armed soldiers to quell riots that later spread across the entire state. But the crisis in Jos can only be understood against wider national politics. There were political crisis within Plateau State and tensions were rising between the major ethnic groups in the state. The crisis was later to result in a state of emergency being declared in the state by the Federal Government. The second conflict was the Kano conflict. In this case, an Ibo woman whose family had recently moved into a new house used the Arabic section of the manual of a transistor radio to clean up her child who had just excreted. In the meantime, a Hausa Muslim who had been invited into the house to

assist in making some repairs saw this and presumed that the Arabic manual was the Qur'an. He drew the attention of other Muslims to the fact that the Ibo Christian family had desecrated the Qur'an. As the unsuspecting husband of the woman returned home from work, he was attacked and killed. This was to result in major conflict between the Christians and the Muslims in Kano. The third was in Jos in November 2008 when the conduct of a local government election resulted in mayhem which resulted in the death of several hundreds of people.

A number of violent conflicts have emerged as a result of alleged "desecration" of the Holy Quran, two of which are recorded here. In March 2007, a Christian teacher, Ms. Oluwatoyin Olusesin, who was invigilating an examination in Islamic Religion in Gandu, Gombe State, caught a student cheating in the examination hall. She then seized the item the student was using to cheat. After the end of the exam, the student informed other students that the teacher had desecrated the Qur'an and she was killed. Again in February 2006, another alleged desecration sparked riots when a school teacher seized a copy of the Qur'an in Bauchi from an inattentive student who was reading it during the lesson. This was seen as a desecration and in the ensuing riots more than 50 Christians were killed.

But apart from all the above conflicts that have been discussed, there are some issues that are also important in underlining the perception of both Christians and Muslims. In most cases where radicalisation has resulted in violent conflicts in Nigeria, there seems to be two issues at the root of the problem. These are provocation and irritation. The issue of provocation has emerged because the distinction between ethnicity and religion in the country is somewhat blurred. Consequently, there have always been cases where Muslims, especially those from the Northern parts of the country, have claimed that they have been provoked by disparaging remarks made by Southerners (who are often Christians) against their ethnicity and their religion. This "double insult" on ethnicity and religion is something that Muslims in the North often claim to be sources of the great anger that often underline violence. In one of the focus group discussions in Northern Nigeria, one of the participants confirmed that he had physically assaulted a Christian Yoruba lady who passed a disparaging remark against his religion and his ethnicity.

On its part, the aspect of irritation has many dimensions, two of which are very important. The first of these is the disturbance that often comes from loud-speakers of churches and mosques at moments of the day that constitute disturbances for non-adherents of the faith. For example, a major source of complaints for most Muslims is the allnight loudspeaker usage of Christian churches claiming to be doing night vigils in residential areas, while Christians have complained at the ways mosques in the neighbourhood wake people up with their loudspeakers for the daily 5 am prayers. The second aspect of irritation comes as a result of traffic disturbances associated with the religious programmes. As mentioned earlier, this was at the centre of the religious conflict in Jos, when

Muslims barricaded the road and prevented Christians from passing. But it should also be pointed out that Christians have shown similar insensitivity. For example, the holding of church conventions on Lagos-Ibadan Expressway has been known to result in traffic delays sometimes lasting for several hours.⁶⁴

Two political issues have created religious conflict of serious proportion. The first was the crisis over the Miss World Beauty Pageant in May 2004. The crisis brought out all the complexities of national politics. Sometime in 2003, Nigeria was selected to host the Miss World Beauty Pageant. It was widely believed that the country won the bid because a Nigerian contestant, Agbani Darego, had won the competition the previous year. But controversy began almost immediately after the announcement of Nigeria's hosting of the competition and this came from two quarters. First were those who objected to Nigeria's hosting of the competition because of the country's alleged abuse of women. Those in this group cited the condemnation to death by stoning passed by a Sharia court on a Nigeria woman, Amina Lawal, for allegedly having a child outside wedlock. Indeed, some of the contestants withdrew because of what they saw as Nigeria's insensitive treatment of women. The second quarter of protest came from within the country and it comprised mainly of those who saw the competition as a debasement of women. These people saw the exercise as promoting promiscuity as it offends female modesty and sexual morality.

But while objections to this remained contained, crisis erupted when a columnist with a national newspaper, *This Day*, Isioma Daniel, criticised Muslims who opposed the competition and argued that Prophet Mohamed would probably have loved to marry one of the contestants. This was greeted with spontaneous riots across the country and a *fatwa* was pronounced on the writer who was forced to flee the country. Despite two front-page apologies by the newspaper, riots continued for many days, resulting in the death of more than 100 people and the organisers of the competition had to move the venue to London.

The *fatwa* pronounced on Isioma turned out to be very controversial even among Muslim clerics and scholars both within and outside Nigeria. Within the country, there were those who argued that the *fatwa* declaration was inappropriate since Isioma is not a Muslim and that she and her newspaper had apologised for the article that caused offence. Indeed, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs accepted the apology and was not willing to endorse the *fatwa*. There were also those who argued that while Isioma not being a Muslim did not invalidate the *fatwa*, the apology that was tendered nullified it. Outside Nigeria, reactions were mixed; an official of the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Sheikh Saad al-Salah, said that it would be inappropriate to kill a person who is not a Muslim and had apologised for her action. However, regardless of the opinion on the matter, the

⁶⁴ See Sola Akinrinade, *Express-Way Religiosity*, an Unpublished Manuscript.

Nigeria government said that it would not allow the *fatwa* to be carried out. The killing of Ibos in Northern Nigeria resulted in reprisal killing in Onitsha when the bodies of some of the dead arrived from the north. Within days, over 100 Muslims in Onitsha had been killed and several Mosques burnt.

The second political issue that has caused national crisis along the line of radicalisation was the politics of the introduction of the Sharia. As noted earlier, shortly after the birth of democracy in 1999, one of the states in Northern Nigeria, Zamfara State, introduced the Sharia law. Within few months of the introduction in Zamfara State, other Northern states adopted the law, and within two years, all the states in the Northern part of the country had adopted Sharia. As would be expected, the reaction of non-Muslim residents in the North was apprehensive and riots broke out in several parts of the country. Although it is the case that many of the states in Northern Nigeria have adopted Sharia, there are various degrees of application. While states like Zamfara and Katsina are applying the codes, others are not. Included in the application of the code are penalties for specific violations like flogging for drinking alcohol, amputation for stealing, stoning for proven adultery.

There have been a number of punishments carried out in compliance with Sharia. In January 2000, the first amputation for stealing was carried out on Buba Jangebe for stealing a cow⁶⁵ and shortly afterwards, one Lawali Isa lost his right hand for stealing three bicycles.⁶⁶ What is particularly important in both cases was that the victim claimed to be satisfied with the punishment and claimed to be happy that they had become a “better human being”. In fact, in neither case was there any appeal against the initial sentence. What has again brought Sharia to the focus of controversy in Nigeria has been the alleged gender partiality of the punishments for sexual “offences”. In 2001, in Zamfara state, a woman found guilty of fornication was given 100 lashes, despite her protests that she had been raped.⁶⁷ Again in October 2001 in Sokoto, an Islamic Court sentenced a 30 years old pregnant woman to death by stoning after she was found guilty of having pre-marital sex while the man identified as her lover was released because of “insufficient evidence”. Again, in 2002, there was another punitive implementation of Sharia, when a 17-year old girl, Bariya Magazu, was given 180 lashes of the whip for becoming pregnant out of wedlock.⁶⁸ As would be expected, the gender

⁶⁵ Eyewitness: Nigeria's Sharia amputees, Thursday, 19 December, 2002
news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/2587039.stm -

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Ivan Watson, “Nigerian Girl Flogged for Premarital Sex”, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 January 2001.

⁶⁸ See, Teenage Mother Sentenced To 180 Lashes For Childbearing - Bariya Ibrahim Magazu
findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2872/is_1_27/ai_71563379...

imbalance in the punishment has attracted serious criticisms from local and international women groups.

There is often the tendency to see violent clashes mainly between Christians and Muslims. This is understandable but inaccurate, as there is also a third dimension which is often ignored – the traditional religion dimension. It was discovered while undertaking this research that radical Christians and Muslims have also violated the rights of traditional religion adherents and this has caused violence. Indeed, while Muslims can tolerate Christians, as they argue that Prophet Mohammed recognised Christianity as an authentic one recognised by God, there is to be no place at all for what they describe as “idol worshipping”. Radical Christians too have zero-tolerance for those who hold on to traditional religion and there have been recorded cases of violence. Some recent examples of attacks by Christians and Muslims are worth recording. In 2004, radical Christians in Anambra State set ablaze shrines of traditional worshippers, destroying many priceless artefacts. This led to social unrest that was only brought under control by the intervention of the police. Also in Ofa, Kwara State, the rights of traditional religion worshippers were violated when Muslims insisted that the Shrine of Moremi, located at the palace of the king to commemorate the brave and altruistic Yoruba princess must be removed because it is close to a Mosque that was built more than a hundred years after the location of the shrine.⁶⁹ In 2001, an Oro cult festival in Sagamu was defiled by the Muslim Hausa-Fulani residents, resulting in a temporary spread of anomie. In September 2005, the sleepy town of Iwo, Osun state became a theatre of war when a group of Muslims called Tahun took on the community's masquerade cult in open combat.⁷⁰ The latest case of Christian radicalisation against traditional religion was recorded in January 2009 in Obosiland in Idemili North Local Government area of Anambra State, where a certain Pastor Ephraim, the founder of the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministry, went about destroying ancient shrines.⁷¹

Nigeria woke up to another major religious revolt in July 2009, when a sect, known as the *Boko Haram*, went on riot in the northern Nigerian city of Bauchi. The riots later spread to some of the neighbouring states, resulting in the death of hundreds of people. The group was believed to have been established in 2002 by one Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri and within two years had spread to other neighbouring states including Bauchi and Yobe. What made the riots a cause of considerable concern was that unlike most other cases of religious disturbances in Nigeria, they did not come as a result of disagreement between Christians and Muslims or as a consequence of an

⁶⁹ See *This Day*, (Lagos) 27 February 2004

⁷⁰ See Ruben Abati The Gruesome Murder Of Oluwatoyin Olusesan, NVS 25/3/07

⁷¹ *The Nation*, (Lagos) February 4, 2009.

objection to a singular occurrence like the Miss World Beauty Pageant. Rather, it came as a result of a doctrinal decision by a sect to impose its will on the nation, very similar to the Maitatsine that first drew national attention to the consequences of radicalisation. In terms of its operation, one uniquely important thing about the Boko Haram group was its use of women and the inclusion of women in its rank and activities.

The main objective of this group is obvious from its name, as Boko Haram in Hausa language means “Western education is forbidden (under Islam)”. This was to create the first controversy about the activity of the group. After the riots, many media groups in Nigeria translated “Boko Haram” to mean “Western education is a sin”. This was to force the new leader that took over after Yusuf’s death, Mallam Sanni Umaru, to come up with a clarification:

Boko Haram does not in any way mean 'Western Education is a sin' as the infidel media continue to portray us. Boko Haram actually means 'Western Civilisation' is forbidden. The difference is that while the first gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West, that is Europe, which is not true, the second affirms our believe in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not Education), for culture is broader, it includes education but not determined by Western Education. In this case we are talking of Western Ways of life which include: constitutional provision as it relates to, for instance the rights and privileges of Women, the idea of homosexuality, lesbianism, sanctions in cases of terrible crimes like drug trafficking, rape of infants, multi-party democracy in an overwhelmingly Islamic country like Nigeria, blue films, prostitution, drinking beer and alcohol and many others that are opposed to Islamic civilisation.

But why there may be problems with semantics, the objective of the group was clear: to eradicate western education and establish Sharia law all across Nigeria. His philosophy against western education was because it teaches “heresy”.⁷² But there were those who pointed out contradiction in his hatred for western education because he was also allegedly in love with computers and western technology. The group struck up to a thousand people who allegedly refuse to convert to Islam. In response, the Nigerian military and police fought back, killing and arresting many members of the organisation. The leader of the group, Mohammed Yusuf, was also arrested (and was in fact, interviewed) but was later killed.

The Boko Haram situation raises several questions about Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria and what the future might hold for the country. It also shows the extent to which Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria can be compared with developments in other parts of the world. Some of the key issues raised by the occurrence are worth examining. First, is the alleged alliance between this group and key politicians in the country; it is believed that members of the Boko Haram group are

⁷² Specifically, Yusuf was against such Western principles that the World is a sphere or that rain comes from evaporated water.

closely connected to state governors and that the resources sustaining their activities actually come from the state. As Muhammed Umar noted:

The leaders of these groups are normally loyal to one or two powerful political figures that are rich. They are used as pawns in political power games. This group was well known to government officials since its formation in 2004. They are not secret societies and they preach openly in their mosques. However, successive governments chose to ignore them.⁷³

So, like the Maitatsine before it, the Boko Haram group had informal link with key politicians who assist their activities. Second, the way the leader of the group was killed raised key issue about extra-judicial killings in Nigeria. After he was arrested, he was later killed in police custody on the grounds that he was trying to escape. This has, however, been contradicted by other reports. What is widely believed in the country is that he was killed because his powerful friends in government would have ensured his release if he were to be spared and put in jail. According to this source, there had been previous cases of arrest and detention of the leader which ultimately resulted in his release because of his powerful connections with those in government.

Since the death of its leader, the group has vowed to continue with its war against the Nigerian states, threatening to carry out sustained attacks on southern Nigerian cities of Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu and Port Harcourt. They also promise to make the country ungovernable by killing and eliminating irresponsible political leaders of all leanings. It promised that its desire to build “a corruption free, Sodom free, where security will be guaranteed and there will be peace under Islam” would most certainly be fulfilled. The new leader declared in a message sent to the Press:

In fact, we are spread across all the 36 states in Nigeria, and Boko Haram is just a version of the Al Qaeda, which we align with and respect. We support Osama bin Laden, we shall carry out his command in Nigeria until the country is totally Islamised, which is according to the wish of Allah.

The Nigerian security force has since dismissed this statement to be of mere entertainment value.

Another sect known as the Kala Kato or Qur’aniyyun, came out in August 2009 in Zaria, Kaduna State, under the leadership of one Malam Isiyaka Salisu. Unlike other Muslims who based their injunctions on the Qur’an, Hadith and the Ijma (consensus of Islamic scholars), this group only believed in the Qur’an. This apart, members of this group perform only two raka’ats of prayer (salat) for all the compulsory five daily prayers stipulated for Muslims. On the Hadith, the group’s position is rooted to the conviction that “all prophets of Allah were given only one revelation or book and

⁷³ Mohammed Umar, “Relax, It is Not Al Qaeda”, Unpublished Paper. I thank the author for sharing this document with me.

that scripture is the only thing that guides their worship and that of their followers”.⁷⁴ The group also has dietary regulations. For example, its members do not eat fish unless it is slaughtered like ram or cow. This is because of their belief that the Qur’an says that all animals, including fish be slaughtered before they become pure for consumption. Finally the group members don’t observe funeral rites the way other Muslims do. This is because the group doesn’t believe in ritual bath, funeral prayer or putting shrouding the dead because “these rituals were not mentioned in the Holy Qur’an.”

In concluding this section, it can be observed that violence has come into the religious equation of Nigeria as a result of several considerations, including: the failure of the security network to prevent and end conflicts; frequent exploitation of the zeal of faithful by their leaders; dishonesty of religious leaders to tell their respective followers the whole truth about their faith; deliberate misinterpretation of the written scriptures in order to satisfy inordinate interest; rapid growth of one religious group, leading to and causing great reduction in the other; illiteracy; wrong approach to the basic methods of outreach; inappropriate use of mass media to propagate religious convictions; north-south dichotomy; hidden prejudice and disdain of some leaders in government about the religious conviction upon which they recline; socio-economic and ethno-political considerations; and government’s direct or indirect supporting of one religion against the other, especially in leadership posting and resource distribution. Below is a table of Islamic groups that have shown radical dispositions in Nigeria.

⁷⁴ Daily Trust on Line

Table of Radical Islamic Groups in Nigeria

Name of Organisation		Doctrine/belief Espoused	Recruitment Base	Activities Undertaken	Extent of Spread	Associated Violent Incidences
1.	Isawa Movement	Particular devotion and reverence for Jesus as the central figure in the revelation of Allah	Opened to all Interested members of the community	Very secluded in their belief about <u>Isa</u> (Jesus)	Kano, Kaduna, Katsina States	1980s
2.	Islam in Africa Organization (IAO)	Islamic Dawah (Spread of Islam) -Change can only come through Islam	Politician and Elite Muslims in Government	Production of Literature for Muslim in Africa	Nigeria, Gambia, Mauritania Senegal, Libya, Tanzania Sudan and Tunisia	1991
3.	Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) (Nigerian Muslims brothers) IMN/NMB Yakubu Yahaya and Zakzaky katsina Nuhu Yahaya a younger brother to their leader	Rejection of secular state National flag, National Anthem and Pledge	Young people from higher institution of learning	Interested in the setting-up of an Islamic Republic in Nigeria Involved in Kafanchan riot 1987 Involved with many clashes with police	Kaduna Katsina Kano Bauchi Kaduna Sokoto Jigawa Taraba Yobe and Niger State Well supported in the Northern States.	Anti-tax riot in Potishum State Aug. 1989 involved in clash with police in Okene Kogi State in Okene Jogi State in November 1989 Most Serious Clash was in 1991 in the city of Katsina
4.	Jamaatu Izalat Al-Bida Wa Iqamatus al-sunna Izala Dan Izala	Movement of Orthodoxy against heterodoxy They are against the Muslim Sufi brotherhood Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya - not partisan	Yan Izala Politicians Top government functionaries minor traditional rulers in the north Membership from educated youth, civil servants, and the poorer classes of society	Concerned with purification of Islam -eradication of every trace of <u>shirk</u> (association of anything with God) bida (innovation) and any Customs or traditions that are regarded un-Islamic interested in the implementation of Sharia to letter	HQ Plateau state Jos Branches-Plateau, Bauchi, Kaduna Benue, Kogi, Yobe and Borno State	1978 - Clashes with Muslim Sufi groups(Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya) in Northern Nigeria in the 1980s and 1990s.

5.	Jamatul Taqwiyyat-l islamiyyat	Love Brotherhood harmony	Elite group	Promote love brotherhood and religious harmony in Nigeria	Lagos 7 States in Southern Nigeria	1992
6.	NACOMYO National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations of Nigeria	Propagation of Islam among youth through preaching Defence of the course of Islam and Muslims with the government	Federation of about 100 youth organizations	Vocal in the issues in the country	All over the Federation	1987 - Defence of anti-masses policies of the government - Fighting of Muslim course with the government -Defence of the rights of Muslims - Attack on Bola Ige administration in 1979- 1983for anti-Islam actions and policies
7.	Hezbollah Movement Nigeria	Their Ideology is based on Shia tradition of Islam in the concept of “Willayat Al-Faqih” put up by Iranian Islamic Scholars	Muslims who have sympathy with Iranian revolution	Initiate the Iranian Culture in dressing and aggressive attitude	Presence noticed in the North and some areas in the South west	1985 -Islamic revolution -Total Islamic state -Condemnation of Western political system -Islamization of politics
8.	Tablib Group	Living a life dedicated to pious living. Belief in communal living and have taken oath of poverty. Also known for their peculiar ways of dressing	Youth and Middle age groups	Aggressive preaching and moving from one community to the other on foot	Kwara state and some parts of neighbouring states, especially Oyo	Violence in Kwara and encroachment into Ogbomosho around 2000
9.	Nigerian Taliban	Calls for the 12 states of Nigeria to declare Sharia and call for all attempts to stop what they call the “Christianisation” of Kano	Youths	Aggressive preaching	Kano and Kaduna States	Violence in Kano in 2003
10.	Al Sunna Wal Jamma (Followers of the Prophet	Have no respect for property right and are experienced in weapon-handling weapons	Youths and highly educated people	Aggressive Preaching	Yobe State	Violent disturbances in 2003 in parts of Yobe state.
11.	Kala Kato or Qur’aniyyun	Belief only in the Qur’an. Total repudiation of the Hadith and the Ijma. Members do not eat fish	Among Youths	Aggressive Preaching	Mainly in Kaduna State, especially Zaria	Small violence in Zaria in August 2009

		unless there was a prayer over it before it was killed				
12.	Boko Haram	Complete repudiation of Western education and civiliazation	Youths including women	Aggressive preaching and attack on those who do not share their doctrine	Bauchi, Yobe but there are claims that they are now spreading to other parts of northern Nigeria and some parts of the South	Major violent riots in Bauchi and some parts of the north. Up to a thousand people killed. The leader was arrested but later killed in Police custody.

Intra-Islamic Radicalisation and Violence

But it is not all the time that these conflicts are between Christians and Muslims or between Muslims and the adherents of indigenous religions. Indeed, a major dimension of radicalisation in Nigeria is rooted in differences between Muslim sects and many of these have been known to result in violence. Most of the conflicts have always been between the Shiites and the Sunnis and they are caused by doctrinal differences on a number of issues, one of which is the observation of the *Asbra* (martyrdom) day of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet. The Shiites are a minority sect among Nigeria's Muslims, with the sect gaining sway in the country during the 1970s in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution. On the other hand, Nigeria's Sunnis have a root dating back to the 19th century with the Usman Dan Fodio jihad. There is the need to understand the politics of the rivalry and tension between these two sects. Shiism's activism and martyrdom has provided an attraction to many of Nigeria's Muslims who see traditional Islamic religion in the country as being stagnant. While many other sects appear somewhat laid-back to challenge the Shiites, the Sunnis feel uncomfortable with the Shiite fervour and persistent conflicts have ensued.

On August 5, 1996, verbal opposition turned into violence in Katsina when Shiite groups clashed with other Muslims. This was followed a week later by another clash between the two groups which saw many houses burnt and several people wounded. It was alleged that some Shiite activists' confrontational methods provoked the violence. The groups broadcast their interpretation of Islam in Sunni neighbourhoods, organized city-wide processions, distributed pamphlets on city streets, and engaged in argument with Sunnis in mosques and religious centres. Confrontational as their methods may be, Shiite religious zeal is mirrored all over northern Nigeria. Quran readings and Sufi brotherhoods attract more and more participants as corruption and the northern economy worsen.

Another major clash between them was in 2005 in Sokoto and it resulted in the death of many people. Again in July 2007, soldiers and riot policemen were deployed to Sokoto following violent clashes between Shiites and Sunnis over the killing of Sheik Umaru Hamza Dan'Maishiyya at the Shehu Juma'at Mosque in Sokoto while preaching. The Sunni cleric was allegedly killed by members of the Shiite sect, especially over his hard stance against the sect. Immediately after the death, mobs torched at least 20 houses, with hundreds of people storming through four neighbourhoods of the city. The attempt by riot policemen to arrest Sokoto governor-general of Shiites, Mallam Kasimu Rimin Tawaye, culminated in the shooting of two policemen by members of the sect. As a result, soldiers were later drafted in and they eventually arrested the governor-general and about 90 of his followers at his residence in Kanwuri Area in Sokoto.⁷⁵ The city was later calmed down following intensified patrol by the military and police

⁷⁵ *Nigerian Tribune*, 20 June 2007

The Sokoto conflict between the Shiite and the Sunni is particularly important and worth further discussions, especially because of the wider political ramifications of this variance of Islamic radicalisation. The Shiites have always argued that the Sokoto government has persistently shown hatred towards them and that it was the government that was responsible for the fuelling of the Shiite/Sunni rivalry in the state. Specifically, El Zakzakey has targeted successive Sokoto governments for condemnation for what he has considered as anti-Shiite stance. The Shiites further argued that Dan'Maisiyya, the man killed, was a political thug who was so powerful that he determined those who held key appointments in the state and not, as the state government put it, a major Islamic cleric. Furthermore, the Shiites claimed that Dan'Maisiyya was killed by the state government in order to create an opportunity to clampdown on the Shiites in the state. Although this is a view that the state has always denied, it indeed shows the major link between the state and Islamic radicalism which will be discussed at a later stage in this study. There are also differences between the Shiites and the Izala-Salafiyya, with the former claiming that the latter is not practicing true Islamic religion and the latter thinking that former is not following the path of the holy prophet and his progeny.

The Shiites in Nigeria have now begun to see intra-Islamic conflicts as a mechanism used by "the enemies" of the Islamic religion in Nigeria to divide the religion. Zakzaky in fact argued that the killing of prominent Islamic scholars is just an attempt to reduce the number of radical Islamic scholars in Nigeria while, at the same time give the impression of intra-Islamic division. He said that the strategy used in the killing of Dan-Maishiya in Sokoto was again attempted in Katsina, but that this was uncovered and the Islamic scholars whose killing by the state security agents was to be blamed on Shiites was later taken to safety by the same Shiite group. In short, to him it is the state, and not the Islamic groups doing the killings with the sole intension of further dividing adherents of the religion. Another sect that has had its doctrine criticised by other Islamic groups in Nigeria is the Tablig group. As noted earlier, this is a group that has engaged in missionary enterprise under strict adherence to frugal and non-ostentatious living. A number of other sects believe that the approach of the group to spreading the Islamic doctrine is different from what the Holy Prophet preached and there have been major confrontations between members of this group and other Islamic sects, especially the areas around Kwara and Oyo States.

Kano has also recorded a number of clashes among different Islamic sects and some of these have brought members of some sects in collision with the police. In April 2007, Muslim radicals in the ancient city killed 13 policemen to avenge the assassination of a hard-line cleric, Saudi-educated cleric Sheikh Jafar Adam, who was shot while praying at the Dorayi Central Mosque in

Kano. The attackers, who were believed to have come from an extreme Islamic sect, burned down a police station in the Panshekara district, wounding two officers, and then ambushed and killed 13 police men who came to investigate. It was said that the attackers made it clear that they had nothing against civilians and that they were specifically looking for police officers to avenge the death of Sheikh Jafar. Bauchi also recorded clashes between different Islamic sects between Shiites and the Jamaatut Nasul Islam (JNI) and it took place largely at the Kofar Ran district of the Bauchi city. It was, however, not long before the riots were put under control.

Another variance of violence linked to the divergence in radical views held by Muslims comes in the form of individual Muslims – not aligned to any specific organisation – attacking other Muslims for allegedly doing things that bring the Islamic religion into disrepute, including allegedly desecrating the Qur'an. This had been going on even before the September 2001 attack on the United States. For example, in July 1997, six Muslims in Randalli Village, Kebbi State, killed another Muslim, Alhaji Abdullah Umaru, by slicing his throat for allegedly insulting Prophet Mohammed. In their Court Defence, the six men pleaded not guilty, even though they admitted killing the deceased. They argued that as adherents to the teaching of the Holy Quran they had the duty to kill Umaru as contained in the Holy Quran. Their argument that the killing was done as a result of provocation was dismissed, especially as they could not tell the court what exactly Umaru said to have provoked them. They were all condemned to death.⁷⁶

A less serious but equally important intra-Islamic tension is the *fatwa* that has been pronounced by the Jama'at Nasril Islam (JNI), the highest Muslim body in northern Nigeria, on Muhammadu Bello Masaba, of Bida, (Niger State) for having married 80 wives. This was said to be contrary to the Islamic religion. The body pointed out that unless Masaba repented within four days and selected only four wives from the horde, he remained condemned to death according to Sharia law. The Central Fatwa Committee of the JNI, in the statement signed by its chairman, Sheikh Usman Abubakar Babatunde, and Secretary-General Abdulkarim Mu'azu, said that any Muslim who married more than the approved number of wives at a time either by mistake or out of ignorance is instructed to choose but only four and ask for Allah's forgiveness. Bello-Masaba has refused to peg down the number of his wives and has accused those who pronounced *fatwa* on him as being ignorant of the Qur'an. He said that there was no place in the Qur'an where the number of wives has been restricted to four.⁷⁷ He seems to be getting support from civil society groups who consider the *fatwa* as absurd, arguing that there are emirs (traditional rulers) that marry more than four wives,

⁷⁶ *The Punch* Monday October 8 2007

⁷⁷ *Daily Champion*, August 23, 2008.

including uncountable concubines. This story is particularly important as it shows that there are still major disagreements on fundamental Islamic principles even between radicals groups.

Intra-Islamic radicalization now seems to be having ethno-geographical dimension, with Muslims, from the South openly and violently disagreeing with their northern colleagues on some key doctrinal issues. The centre of open disagreement here has to do with the timing of key Islamic events, like the beginning and ending of the Ramadan fast and that of the *Idel-fitri*. Since most Islamic celebrations are consequent on the “citing of the moon”, there have always been discrepancies on the time such celebrations are done in the North and the Southern parts of the country. Inevitably, disagreements often occur as to who was doing the correct thing. Although all Nigerian Muslims are under the spiritual control of the Sultan of Sokoto (in the North) Southern Muslims have always resisted the instruction of the Sultan on issues relating to when these festivities should be undertaken. Southern Muslims have always insisted on getting the ecclesiastical evidences than the instruction from an earthly spiritual leader. While this had gone on for years, the situation in November 2008 turned out to be somewhat difficult, when, again Muslims from the North and the South celebrated the *Eid el-Fitri* on different days. On this occasion, Muslims in the South were particularly disturbed, with some of them arguing that their spiritual leader in Sokoto is trying to make them disobey God.⁷⁸ The President of the Muslim Association of Nigeria, Alhaji Waheed Olajide (from the South West) expressed this sentiment in an interview:

The League of Iman and Alfas had fixed the date before the month came and in my point of view, it is not appropriate. What we are told in the Holy Quran is that if anybody sighted the moon, we should confirm if that person is a Muslim. The idea of determining what the day will be before the actual date, I found difficult to believe.⁷⁹

To address all the various doctrinal disagreements between Northern and the Southern Muslims, the Sultan of Sokoto set up a 29-member committee in 2008. Specifically, the Committee was to address the issues of Moon sighting during fasting, education, commerce and the declaration of Public holidays. The committee is yet to submit its report.

There are also Muslim radical groups that are critical of Muslim elites who they consider as “Religious Merchants” who hobnob with successive governments for selfish motives without doing anything to advance the cause of Islam. A radical Muslim student at the Bayero University expressed this view in an interview with me:

⁷⁸ I was in Nigeria during the time and there were several “phone-in programmes” on Radio-stations in the South-west, with some callers calling on Yoruba Muslims no longer to recognise the Sultan of Sokoto as the spiritual leader of Nigerian Muslims.

⁷⁹ See, Interview granted by Alhaji Waheed Olajode, *Nigeria Tribune*, 23 January 2009, p. 47.

These people are just Islam Merchants and I am sorry that these people are more in the South-West among the Yoruba. They hobnob with governments, acquire questionable titles (most of which they pay people to bestow on them) and then establish Islamic schools. They are hypocrites who may be speaking a language that categorizes them as Muslims but are pure hypocrites.⁸⁰

But despite disagreements, Muslims also believe that there is a limit to how far divergence of views can go. In a veiled reference to the Christians, the President of the Muslim Association of Nigeria, Alhaji Olajide noted:

There is a limit to what you can disagree on [in Islamic religion]. You cannot disagree on the time of prayer (*salat*), you cannot disagree on where to face where you are praying, you cannot disagree on the month of Ramadan ... it cannot get to a stage when Yoruba service will be slated for 9 am, Igbo service for 10: am and English service for 7 am, as we have in other religions. So Allah himself has put in place a kind of unity in Islam⁸¹

The unity was to be a factor in Islamic radicalization and global terrorism.

Nigeria, Islamic Radicalisation and Global Terrorism

There have always been alleged links between Nigerians and Islamic radicalisation. In December 2006, Mohammed Yusuf, a Maiduguri-based Imam and alleged 'Nigerian Taliban' leader was charged with five counts of illegally receiving foreign currency. His trial was still ongoing at the end of 2007. Also in December, 2006, Mohammed Ashafa of Kano was charged with receiving funds in 2004 from two Al-Qaeda operatives based in Lahore, Pakistan to 'identify and carry out terrorist attacks' on American residences in Nigeria. Deported from Pakistan for alleged ties to Al-Qaeda and said to have undergone terrorist training in Mauritania, Ashafa was charged in a Nigerian court with recruiting 21 fighters who went to camp Agwan in Niger for terrorist training with Al-Qaeda International Movement. Ashafa was also stood accused of being a courier for Al-Qaeda from 2003 to 2004 who passed coded messages from Pakistan to Nigerian Taliban members on how to carry out terrorist activities against American interests in Nigeria. In addition, Nigerian authorities alleged that Ashafa's home was used as an Al-Qaeda safe house and that he rendered logistical and intelligence support to Al-Qaeda operatives.

While for a long time the calculation had always been that Islamic radicalisation largely found expression in local issues, the Nigerian government had, by late 2007 began taking interest in the link between global terrorism, al-Qaeda and Islamic militancy in Nigeria. In December 2008, the

⁸⁰ Interview, 4 April 2008

⁸¹ *Nigeria Tribune*, 23 January 2009.

Nigeria Police Force announced, at the end of the monthly conference of the inspector general of police with top officers, the arrest of six foreign nationals in a particular mosque in Kuje, Abuja, believed to be on a terrorist mission in the country. The Commissioner, Federal Capital Territory Police Command, Mr. John Haruna, disclosed that the suspected terrorists were picked up alongside three Nigerian partners, who were to lead them to four major mosques in Abuja for massive recruitment and training. It was also confirmed by the officer that intelligence reports gathered after the arrest of the gang revealed that Nigeria was among three other countries listed by the Al-Qaeda for attack.

The arrest of the foreigners introduced several dimensions into the nature of their activities. Four of the arrested individuals had Zambian passports, while two carried Indian passports and the three Nigerian trainees. However, it was later uncovered that they were from Afghanistan. Why they would come into the country with fake documents was one of the reasons that gave the police concerns about the motives of their activities. The timing of their arrest also gave reasons for concern. They were arrested few days after a major ethno-religious riot in Jos. There were thus concerns as to the possible links between their entrance into the country and the riots. Third, the mode of their operation caused concern. These people, though considered to be very affluent, were not staying in hotels but in Mosques and according to the police they were already undergoing training in different parts of the country. The police also confirmed that the gang was already amassing arms and ammunition in some states of the federation with a view to striking at any given opportunity. Eventually, the Nigerian Army confirmed the arrest of 26 foreigners over Jos riots. What is particularly important about the arrested foreigners was the extent to which they were willing to conceal their activities and the amount of weapons found in their possessions. They went about in disguised vehicles to escape security checks and were found in possession of army uniforms, sophisticated weapons including double barrel guns army boots, tear gas canisters and fake identity cards for Force Headquarters. The arrested foreigners had a peculiar method of operation. Apart from not staying in hotels, they never stayed in any particular mosque for more than three days and also avoided staying in mosques considered to be popular.

Islamic Radical Groups and National Politics

Religion and politics in Africa have always been intertwined and there have been several cases where African leaders have, formally or informally, been deeply involved in religious activities to perpetrate themselves in power. There have been cases of leaders attending Christian crusades, employing

Muslim marabouts or even engaging traditional witchcrafts.⁸² However, the ways through which Islamic radical groups have become connected with politics in Nigeria has been far more complex.

Although Nigeria is in theory a secular state, religion has always played an important role in national politics and on issues relating to radicalization, the state has always found itself in a confused and sometimes difficult position. While in theory radicalization coming as a result of religion is something the state does not want to be openly associated with, some of the issues leading to this radicalization are sometimes encouraged and sponsored by the government, sometimes unwittingly, often times, intentionally. However, even before the September 11 2001 attack on the United States, radical religious views had become an important political force which the Nigerian state could not ignore. Indeed, at different times, the government has now realized that it has to tap into controversies surrounding radicalization and to exploit aspects of these controversies to advance selfish self-preservation agenda. Consequently, while in theory Nigeria remains a secular state successive governments have consistently worked closely with groups with radical views.

The link between the Nigerian state and radical Islam began attaining prominence during the second republic, when the controversy over the imposition of the Sharia became a national issue. It was also about this time that the late Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, the King Faysal 1987 International award Laurel for meritorious service to Islam, became the mouthpiece of the Muslims. The relationship between Gumi and the Nigeria state was complex. Although he was seen as a radical scholar, Gumi seemed to be selective in his radicalism. Indeed, as noted earlier, it was almost a cardinal policy of his group not to be openly against the Nigerian government and he was, in fact, an unofficial Islamic adviser to successive Presidents of the country.

Although there were few problems like the Maitatsine riots, it is important to note that violence over religion was not a common phenomenon during the Second Republic. As Akin Alao has noted, it is plausible that the nature, character and profligacy of the political class that wielded political authority during this period did not provoke any antagonistic religious claim. Access to

⁸² For example, while he was the Zambian President, Kenneth Kaunda engaged an Indian guru, Dr. Ranganathan, President Kerekou of Benin hired Mohamed Amadou Cisse a Malian marabou who was later appointed as a Minister, President Didier Ratsikara of Madagascar had a temple dedicated to Rosicrucianism, Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique was a follower of Transcendental Meditation, Sanni Abacha of Nigeria was known to have engaged Senegalese Marabouts, while former President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia was a devotee of the Synagogue Church. The new President of Ghana, John Atta Mills, also travelled to Nigeria shortly after his election victory to visit the Synagogue Church of All Nations. For more on the link between religion and politics in Sub-Saharan Africa, see, Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar, Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2 1998.

enormous wealth through the award of generous and pre-paid government contracts was through the machinery of the party – irrespective of religious affiliations or confessions.⁸³

With the coming of the new democratic dawn in 1999, the link between religious radicalism and national politics assumed another dimension. In the first instance, the political struggles that followed the 1993 presidential election in the country had meant that a Yoruba from the South-West would be president of Nigeria after the end of military dictatorship. Indeed, for the first time in the history of the country, the main political parties that participated in the election had Yoruba presidential candidates. Almost implicitly, it became the case that the power shift would also come with religious shift, as the main candidates were both Christians. When eventually Chief Olusegun Obasanjo became president, thus bringing a shift in both the ethnic and religious dimensions of governance at the centre, the link between radicalisation and politics assumed another dimension.

Ironically, the first link between radicalisation and politics during the Obasanjo administration came from fellow Christian Yoruba. This was when a radical Clergy, Tunde Bakare of the Latter Rain Christian Ministry, launched a major attack on Obasanjo. What has further increased the irony is that Bakare is not only a Christian Yoruba, he actually comes from Ogun State, the same state as the former President. Bakare continued with his criticism of Obasanjo throughout his administration, although his position was not shared by many of his fellow Christian radicals who gave Obasanjo a chance. Bakare has again commented on Yar'Adua, the new President. While he was willing to recognise Yar'Adua as his President, he attributed this more to the new President's humility, than to what he saw as the fraudulent election that Obasanjo organised to bring him in.

But perhaps the most significant link between Islamic radicalisation and politics during the Second Republic came with the imposition of Sharia. Many of those who have assessed the Sharia policy have argued that the whole policy has been inextricably linked with politics, as it connects the elected governors in many of the affected states to the deeply religious Muslim masses. Indeed, there are those who argue that the governor who first introduced the Sharia penal code, Ahmed Sani of Zamfara, did so to avert impeachment because his party's representatives in the state House of Assembly were in the minority. By introducing Sharia, he took refuge in Islam and became seen as the "defender of faith". On the whole, many Northern politicians have supported Sharia for one of four possible reasons: personal conviction; political realism; political opportunism; or a sense that they should represent the wishes of those who elected them. Which of these takes precedence in any given situation may be a matter of opinion, but the general belief in many of the places where the policy has been adopted is that it was more rooted to hidden expectation of political advantage than

⁸³ Akin Alao, "Constitutional Guarantee of the Secularity of the State and Judicial Attitude to Religious Freedom in Nigeria" Forthcoming Publication. I thank the author for giving me an advance copy of the paper and for allowing me to quote from it.

to the desire for pious living.⁸⁴ There are also many who believe that the governors of the states involved were reacting more to external influences than domestic religious needs.

There is a general impression in Nigeria that there is a wide gap between what government officials say in public about radicalisation and what they do in private. From discussions held with focus groups in the country, participants believe that many politicians that denounce radicalism do go back to many of these radical groups to “seek prayers” and gain support. It was revealed during these discussions that top politicians and even senior military officers have sought and received support from radical Islamic scholars, sometimes “imported” from Senegal to come and “pray” for government officials.⁸⁵

A number of important issues have to be taken into consideration when discussing the link between religious radicalisation and politics in Nigeria. Perhaps the first is that Muslims are divided between those who genuinely support key issues like the Sharia and those who are merely “political” in their support. Indeed, there are some who believe that even the head of the Jama’atul Nasril Islam (JNI) do not have total commitment in their support for the Sharia law, while the Emirs and other key office holders in Northern Nigeria are accused of being insincere in their support. One of those who hold this position is Abdulkadir Balarabe Musa, a radical politician,, who pointed out in his forward to a book written by Mallam Lawan Danbazau that:

Traditional rulers in Muslim Communities in this country are actually opposed to the Sharia because the Sharia does not allow political oppression, economic exploitation or hereditary succession to public office. And since the basis of their position is hereditary succession, they do not actually like Sharia. ⁸⁶

There are, however, many that have situated the whole issue of Islamic radicalisation under the broader ethno-religious differences that have historically permeated relationships between the Nigerian populations. Discussions in most focus groups brought out the variations of this problem. In the Sokoto focus group discussion, one of the participants brought out a variation of this when he pointed out that:

The trade blame is something that has not helped the discussion on the crucial issue of religious radicalization in Nigeria. There seems

⁸⁴ Many of the Governors who introduced Sharia are now under investigation for massive corruption while in Office. In fact, Governor Yerima who initiated it has been accused by the country’s Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) of looting his state treasury while in office.

⁸⁵ Focus Group Discussions

⁸⁶ Mallam Lawan Danbazau, *Politics and Religion in Nigeria*, Kano: Tofa Commercial Press, 1991, p. vii

to be a “we” versus “them” culture between the Christians and the Muslims, which has again been crudely interpreted as being between North and South. If the Muslim population in the North was happy because of the attack on America (and I am not saying that all of them necessary were) the Christians in the country have shown delight with the America attacks on Iraq. It is a case of “we” versus “them” that has been translated to even things that are of very remote relevance.⁸⁷

Another participant in Markurdi introduces another variance of the ways through which the occurrence of militancy comes into the equation of politics in Nigeria when he pointed during the discussion that:

The root cause of militancy (in Nigeria) can be traced to the “numerous gaps” that exist in the Nigerian society: “gaps between ideals and reality; between needs and expectation; between what the government says and what it does; between what the preacher preaches and what he practices; and between what the masses want and what the elites are willing to concede. When the population reads about the disbursement of millions in the newspaper and yet nothing in their pot of soup, what do you expect”?

The extent to which ignorance has been implicated has been a major issue in the politics of Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria. The very easy explanation that has often been given is that many of those taking part in militant radicalisation are illiterates who have been manipulated into doing so by the elites. While it is true that illiteracy could have been a factor, the very convenient explanation of heaping all the blame on illiteracy has to be approached with caution. In the course of the focus group discussion, one of the participants in Abuja introduced an interesting dimension to the debate when he noted:

I have witnessed a lot of religious crisis. In some cases, I participated and I want to debunk the idea that ignorance is the cause of the problem. For one, I am not ignorant. But apart from this, there was no major crisis over religion before independence. Does that mean that people were literate then or better informed? Of course the answer is “No”. So we should probe deep and look for other answers.

The link between Islamic radicalisation and national politics also come in under the general discussion on the imposition of Sharia. As noted earlier, there are many in Nigeria who read politics into the introduction of Sharia. One of the various interpretations given top the introduction was that it was an attempt by the Hausa-Fulani North to ensure that a Yoruba presidency (under Obasanjo) was frustrated, thus making it easy for Northerners to interpret such a failure as an “ethnic

⁸⁷ Focus Group Discussion in Sokoto

failure”. From comments made during focus group discussions and interviews conducted in the South-West, many people argue that there were “diabolical” motives behind the Sharia introduction and that those who introduced it had no pious intents. Those who hold this view have found “evidence” to back up their hypothesis. First, they argue that virtually all the governors who claimed to be pious through the introduction of the Sharia law were later indicted of massive corruption by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). With this, they argue that the governors who introduced Sharia could not have been morally upright, if many of them were later indicted for corruption. Second, many Southerners argue that Sharia controversies and agitations ended the moment Obasanjo left office and a northerner, Umaru Yar’Adua, was elected President. This, to them, was a confirmation that the “Sharia façade” had completed its destabilising assignment and could therefore be made to rest.

In November 2008, Nigeria witnessed yet another violent link between religious radicalisation and national politics when the city of Jos, in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria went up in flames and up to about 800 people killed. As noted earlier, Jos was not a stranger to religious controversy as there had been religious riots in the city a number of times since the return of democracy. The November 2008 incidence is worth recording because of the key issues it brought out on the pattern of religious radicalisation (both Christian and Muslim) and political violence. Jos, located in the Middle Belt region, occupies a very important place in the politics of ethno-religious affairs of Nigeria for a number of reasons. First, the population is largely mixed as it is situated in between the largely Muslim North and the essentially non-Muslim South. With this strategic location, people from neighbouring regions often “invade” Jos to assist their compatriots the moment there is ethno-religious riots in the town. Second, while most of the indigenous population in Jos are Christians, there are also Hausa Fulani settlers who had settled in the town for more than a century and who still hold on to their Islamic religion. The strong determination of the settlers to hold on to their ethnicity and religion, and if possible convert the indigenous because of the overall political power of the Hausa/Fulani in the wider national politics has always created tension and rivalry between the two sides.

The November 2008 riots started when the result of a local government election was allegedly rigged and before long, the country had gone up in flames. The most affected areas were densely populated areas like Ali Kazaure, Angwar Rogo, Gangare, Nasarawa, Katako and Dagon Dutse, where Christians and Muslims live together. The pattern of the conflict was that in the places where Muslims were in the majority, they attacked Christians while the latter did the same in places where they have numerical advantage.

Reactions to the November 2008 Jos crisis have also brought along with it the usual controversies that often underline the politics of religious violence in Nigeria. President Umaru Musa

Yar'Adua and his wife, Turai, sent two separate emissaries to Jos to sympathise with those affected by the crisis. However, neither of the delegations visited the state governor during their visits. This then gave many people the impression that the president and his family are in support of their fellow Muslim/Hausa-Fulani stock and are opposed to the Governor who, apart from being a Christian is from the indigenous group.⁸⁸

But just as the country was recovering from the Jos crisis, another religious problem emerged in Bauchi, also in northern Nigeria in February 2009. Although Bauchi was not a stranger to religious riots, the February 2009 riots caught the nation by surprise.⁸⁹ As with most religious crisis in Nigeria, there are controversies over what caused the problem, the extent of causalities and how the situation was managed. It was gathered that trouble started in Railway area the previous Friday when one of the two factions of an Islamic sect known as Izala broke an arrangement that was made between them. It was said that the two groups had agreed that one group would be holding its Jumat prayer at Fantami Mosque in Railway between 12.00 and 1.00 pm every Friday while the second group will have their prayer between 1.00 and 2.00 pm following the complaint by COCIN opposite the mosque that they used to block the entrance of the church. But, contrary to this arrangement, one of the groups allegedly decided to have its prayers from 12-2.00 pm, thereby depriving the other group the chance to observe their prayers. The other group then came to the premises of the mosque and because of the inadequacy of space they parked in front of the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN). A protest by the church members led to attack on innocent citizens on that Friday evening but the situation was put under control by security men. But by 2.00 am the Fantami mosque was set ablaze by unidentified persons, following which Muslims in the town claimed it was the Christians that burnt the mosque a development which led to killing, burning of churches, mosques and properties.

There are those who believe that the whole issue of Islamic radicalisation can also be seen along the lines of increased strength that Muslims now believe they have acquired in Nigeria's political, economic and social life. A pastor with one of the Radical Christian Churches in South West Nigeria pointed out in an interview:

Muslims in Nigeria now believe that they have sufficient population, wealth and clout that can enable them to redress whatever advantage early access to Western education could have given the Christians. The efforts adopted in this pursuit is multi-dimensional – from sponsorship of educational projects and award of scholarships, to bridge-making alliances by Muslim radicals and leaders from North

⁸⁸ See, Seriki Adinoyi, "Turai's delegation visits Jos, shuns Governor Jang", *This Day*, 18 December 2008.

⁸⁹ Between April 1991 and February 2009, Bauchi state recorded over 10 cases of religious riots that left over 10,000 dead, 3,900 residential homes burnt, 200 churches and 20 mosques razed.

and South to the building of social infrastructures that they believe to advance the cause of Islam. The activities are not always in the form of violent radicalisation, but they are engaged in aggressive pursuit of an agenda that may not be too critical of violent radicalisation. They may condemn violence when it manifests in the form of Christian-Muslim riots, but not when Muslims try to advance their doctrine forcefully.⁹⁰

An issue that is currently causing ripples in some parts of the country, especially in the South-West, was the decision by some governments to hand over schools to the missionaries who established and managed them before government take-over. This decision has a history that is worth recording. During the colonial era, many Christian missions established primary and secondary schools, which they managed without government interference. Expectedly, the schools were deeply rooted in Christian religious principles. Muslims too established their own schools, especially those of the Ahmardia, Ansar-ud-deen, Naiwru-deen denominations, but these came several decades afterwards, forcing many Muslim children to attend Christian schools where many of them got converted or had to change their names. However, in October 1979, when civilian rule was reintroduced the country and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) took over the administration of the states in the South West, the government took over all the schools under its Free Education Scheme. The decision now to revert to the old order and hand over schools back to their original owners was seen by Muslims as a way of bringing back the old structure that was skewed in favour of Christians. All over the parts of the South-West where this policy is being considered, radical Muslims have been coming out to speak forcefully against it.⁹¹ This calls for a discussion of another aspect of education that is fundamentally linked to Islamic radicalisation in the country – the role of education, especially in tertiary institutions.

Tertiary Institutions, Islamic Radicalisation and Violence

In Nigeria, university campuses have been known as breeding grounds for all forms of religious radicalisation and as mentioned earlier, El Zakzaky, the noted Islamic radical, had his roots at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Another major actor in Nigeria's radicalisation politics is Ahmed Yerima, who was to introduce Sharia when he became the governor of his state of Zamfara was also a major actor in campus Islamic radicalism at the Bayero University. Many other Universities have had similar cases of student radicals. Perhaps the reason behind this is the fact that, unlike in other

⁹⁰ Discussion with Mr. Tayo Badru (Christian Youth Leader and Youth Pastor of a Pentecostal Church)

⁹¹ The Secretary General of the Muslim Ummah of South West of Nigeria, (MUSWEN), Professor Daud Noibi, was among the latest of those who have spoken forcefully at what he saw as a way of forcefully converting Muslims, See, *This Day*, December 29, 2008, p. 6.

places, Islamic radicals in Universities are often able to find intellectual backings for radical tendencies. Specifically important here is the role of the Muslim Student Society (MSS) which has become very active in the propagation of radical Islamic views. Possibly to counter the extensive evangelisation activities of Christians in University campuses, the MSS too have embarked on massive crusades during which outsiders are often invited to come and share views with members of the societies. More often than not, most of those often invited are those with radical views that are often compatible with the youthful disposition of the members of the society. The association almost always made public their stands on key national and international issues and in many cases, views expressed, especially on international issues, are often radical.

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria have also been at the forefront of another aspect of Islamic radicalisation. This is the tendency to revisit the glorious past of Islamic religion and re-celebrate its contribution to human civilisation. What seems to be the main objective of this growing tendency is to prove that, whatever may be the basis of Western civilisation and its claim to superiority, Islamic civilisation also has issues to celebrate and that many of these far predate the Western civilisation which has also been considered to be “Christian”. This tendency came out distinctly during some of the focus group discussions and in interviews conducted in Nigeria. For example, an Islamic academic at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Dr. Musa Adeniyi, pointed out that “Islamic civilisation started when Western Europe was still grappling with feudal system of the Middle-Ages”.⁹² In another discussion with another Islamic scholar at the University of Ibadan, he reminded me that Sankore University, which was founded on Islamic doctrine, was eminent before Oxford, Cambridge and Harvard. Among other issues that are currently being celebrated by Islamic scholars in their efforts to revisit the glorious days of Islamic civilisation are Islamic welfare systems which they argue predated the social welfare systems that Western countries now celebrate.⁹³

In mid-1980s, the University of Ibadan became the centre of major controversy which almost became violent, when some Muslim radicals at the university, allegedly encouraged by Muslim politicians, argued that the Christian cross that was erected in the 1950s to denote the Christian place of worship was situated in front of the Qiblah (the direction of kabah) and a result violated the Islamic doctrine that forbids Muslims from seeing a cross, idols, or effigy during worship. The church was first to be built and the mosque came much later.⁹⁴ The Muslims insisted that the cross

⁹² See, Musa O. Adeniyi, “Evolution of Islamic Education in Nigeria”, Unpublished Paper.

⁹³ A former Commissioner (Minister at State level) in Nigeria, Alhaji Suleiman Baba Ali, noted this during an interview.

⁹⁴ Toyin Falola has provided a detailed story of what later became known as the University of Ibadan Cross Controversy. See Falola, *op-cit*, pp 175 – 177.

should be removed. The Christians maintained that the cross would stay and that Muslims should move their mosque to another location if they found the erection of the cross objectionable, especially as the erection of the cross predated the building of the mosque. At the end some form of compromise was reached when it was decided that the cross would be left but a crescent (the symbol of Islamic religion) would be erected beside it and that a large structure would be erected to block the mosque's view of the cross. Although the matter was resolved, the fact that the controversy took place at a university in the south, often considered as having more tolerant view of religion, was a wake-up for Nigerians as to the role university institutions can play in the expression of radical religious views.

There was also a major case at the Obafemi Awolowo University when a female Muslim Student in one of the faculties insisted on wearing *hijab* to class and to write exams. The university authority rejected this request and the student, with support from wealthy Muslims outside the university went to court on the grounds of human-rights violation. Although the university won the case, it set the pace for other tension that occurred between the university authorities and the Muslim population on the campus. Other issues that later came up include holding of lectures and exams during Friday prayers.

The period also witnessed the beginning of complaints that were to become predominant in the 1990s and beyond. This is the allegation of marginalisation of Muslims in many of the tertiary institutions in the southern parts of the country. Muslims radicals argued that Friday evenings should be left free, (just like Sundays) to enable Muslims to perform Friday prayers. Many argued that some lecturers, mainly Christians, continue to fix lectures and even tests during the period. Closely related to this were the complaints by Muslims that the use of academic areas for prayers and religious activities favoured the Christians. Indeed, this was to become a major issue at the Obafemi Awolowo University Ile Ife, resulting in the authority's decision to ban the use of lecture rooms and auditoriums for religious practices.

But there is another dimension of radicalisation in the South-West where the Obafemi Awolowo Muslims have played a very prominent role. This has to do with the politics of The Muslim Congress (TMC), the organisation that controls Muslims in the country. There were allegations that the TMC wanted to take control of the Muslims Students Society (MSS) across the country and that the Congress had already taken subtle control of the MSS at the Universities of Lagos, Ibadan and Ogun State University. The MSS at Ife thus saw itself as the body that must stand up to challenge the effort aimed at taken over the affairs of the MSS by the Muslim Congress. When the Muslim Congress later organised a holiday programme for Muslims Students to be held at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Ife students invaded the camp, arrested those who organised the

programme and tied them up. It took the intervention of the University authorities to get the arrested people released.⁹⁵

It seems to be the case that those who took over the affairs of the MSS at the Obafemi Awolowo University from around 1998 and 1999 had become confrontational even in their attitude to Muslim academics within the University. The annual “Jihad week”, which was usually an occasion for social gathering changed into a period of internal purification. The students argued that the Muslim lecturers and other elders are less pious. The lecturers and the elders on their part started pointing out openly what they saw as the hypocrisy of the Muslim students, claiming that some of the students had done things that run contrary to the Islamic doctrine, including getting married without the consent or even knowledge of their parents. Other doctrinal issue also emerged when the students also criticised the chief imam of the university. For example, the chief imam stipulated that there must be 8 *Rakab* during prayer, whereas the students insist that it must be 10. To dates, there still remain aspects of the differences that are yet to be resolve.

In the northern part of Nigeria, Islamic radicalisation was at its peak in the 1970s to early 1990s, where Christians and Muslims tried to promote their faith, with the Christians using the idea of crusades and the Muslims using the term Jihad. The rivalry and tension resulted in fights by radical Muslims against the appointment of Christians as vice chancellors of the university, regardless or not whether they were Hausas. This was one of the clear cases where religious sentiments took precedence over ethnicity. At the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, a Christian Hausa, Professor Ishaya Audu, was appointed vice chancellor but had to be replaced by an Hausa Muslim. Since then successive vice chancellors of the university have remained Hausa Muslims.

The University of Ilorin in Kwara State also presents a very complex situation on the issue of Islamic fundamentalism, the appointment of vice chancellors and ethno-religious politics. Established first as a campus of the University of Ibadan, the University of Ilorin was largely patterned along the structures of Nigeria’s Premier University at Ibadan, with the latter sending principals to the university. After the university attained an autonomous status, the first sets of vice chancellors were Christians, even if some of them were from Kwara state or other states that used to be part of it.⁹⁶ However, by the early 1990s, Ilorin indigenes in the state came up with a forceful struggle to appoint a Muslim who is also an indigene of the town as the vice chancellor. This was accomplished and the aggressive way the appointee allegedly went to “Islamise” the university was to become a key problem facing the university to date. From this period, ethnicity and religion seem to play the most important role in the politics of vice-chancellorship in the university.

⁹⁵ I thank Dr Olawale Ismail for drawing my attention to this.

⁹⁶ After the formation of new state a new state, Kogi, was formed from the old Kwara State.

Following 9/11, the extent of Islamic radicalisation in Nigerian tertiary institutions has increased significantly. Many Muslim radicals have found reasons to explain (if not justify) the attack on the United States and have also used the opportunity to bring to the fore the plight of the Palestinians and the role of Israel in the Middle East. Many universities organised public lectures and symposia along the line of the Muslim academics used the opportunity to express their sentiments.⁹⁷

It is also necessary to point out that there are also accusations that positions often taken by radical Muslim academics are also coloured by the expectation of personal interest, as many of them see the taking of radical positions as a way of getting recognised by the embassies of the key Islamic countries in the country, a recognition that can bring opportunity to travel and also to get research grants. It is not uncommon for ambassadors of many of these countries to be invited to university campuses as special guests during Muslim students conferences and many financial opportunities have come to Muslim students in many of the Universities as a result of this. This tendency also increased significantly during the Sharia debate in the country.

The rivalry between Christians and Islamic radicals also play out quite distinctly on university campuses, thus further fuelling the embers of the phenomenon on the national level. In a way, Islamic radicals in universities have seen Christian “crusades” as a phenomenon against which they should produce a response. Consequently, it is quite common for Muslim students to embark on the same practice of going from one hall of residence to the other preaching and propagating Islamic religion. It is also common in recent times to see Muslim students organising major campus programmes to which they would invite notable Muslim leaders from outside the campus. These sometime result in tensions between Muslim and Christian radicals, especially over minor issues like double-bookings for venues of programmes. It is probably against the background that some universities have stopped the allocation of academic rooms for religious activities. But although both sides have been known to have their differences, they can sometimes come together for a common good, as can be seen in the informal alliance between the two set of radicals against the activities of cultist groups that have introduced an unprecedented level of lawlessness and violence in Nigeria tertiary institutions.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ In one of my discussions with a Muslim scholar from one of the Universities, he persistently made reference to the lecture he “gave shortly after the attack”. When I made further inquiries, he confirmed to me that there were several debates and discussions during this period and that, positions taken by many of the academics invited to participate went along religious sentiments, with the Muslims supporting the attack and the Christians condemning it.

⁹⁸ Cultism is a phenomenon that became a major national problem in the early 1990s, although the phenomenon had been in existence from more than 40 years. The practice involves students coming together under an oath of secrecy and solidarity to advance group interest. Before long, the proliferation of such groups inevitably led to violent rivalries between them and most universities, especially in the southern part of the country has recorded very violent contacts, including gun

Muslim radicals in tertiary institutions have also tried to ensure what they consider as minimum moral standards within university campuses, and expectedly, the focus of this has been largely on issues relating to female dressing and expressions of other sexual freedom. This in fact resulted in a major riot at one of the universities, the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, when Muslims radicals prevented other students from watching a pornographic movie in one of the halls of residence. The riot occurred when Muslim fanatics stormed the venue of the film to seize the equipment being used for the movie on grounds that it was immoral to watch pornographic movies. The other students prevented the attempt and there was a violent confrontation. The radicals, who were greatly outnumbered, were physically assaulted and the university authority was forced to close down the university. The actions of the Muslim radicals was very controversial and in a focus group discussion held on the university campus, many of the Muslim participants condemned the attack on the venue of the films show as an unnecessary over-reaction, arguing that people should be free to watched whatever they liked.

In recent times, universities across the country are now encouraging younger children in Islamic religion. In 2008, the University of Ibadan Muslim Graduate Association launched what it called the “Adopt a School” programme which undertakes projects like the construction of school buildings, recruitment of more staff and the awarding of scholarship to both brilliant and indigent students. When it was launched, the Kano state government gave a donation of N1 million, while its 44 local governments gave N100,000 each. The overarching objective of the initiative was to “chart a new course for the advancement of Muslim education in Nigeria”.⁹⁹

In concluding discussions on the role of tertiary institutions in Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria, it may be necessary to have a brief discussion on the role of Islamic professional associations in the whole debate on radicalisation and violence on university campuses. Just like Christians, a number of Islamic professional associations have been formed and many of these have been known to be at the forefront of the expression of radical views. Indeed, there is hardly any profession that does not have Muslims associations. In many cases too, these associations have funded Muslim Students Society (MSS) in many university campuses in the propagation of Islamic religion. To a very large extent, this has been a reaction to Christian’s deep involvement in the support of youth Christian wings in universities and other institutions of higher learning. However, although there is

exchanges in broad daylight. In 1999, the nation woke to the stark reality of the problem when cultist groups, allegedly from the University of Benin came to the Obafemi Awolowo University and killed 7 student Union leaders in support of the Ife members of their cult. The problem now seems to be extending to other Universities in West Africa as the Forah Bay University in Freetown, Sierra Leone now has Cultist groups.

⁹⁹ UI Muslims Graduates Award Scholarship to 17 Students, *This Day* January 14 2009

unity in their determination to propagate Islam, there are also sometimes rivalries in the relationship between some of these organisations, although this has not been known to be violent.

Islamic Radicalisation, Violence and Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria

A key issue that has underlined the politics of Islamic radicalisation and violence in Nigeria is how it gets linked with ethnicity. Many interpretations have been given to this tendency with many in fact arguing that what is more important has really not been religion but ethnicity. In a focus group discussion held at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, one of the participants drew this point home succinctly when he said:

Although I am a Muslim, I am as unsafe as a Christian if I find myself in Kano during a religious riot. This is simply because I am a Yoruba. I would first be identified as a Yoruba before they ask for my faith. This is the reality of the situation. Ethnicity plays a very important role in untangling the issues involved in religious radicalisation and violence in Nigeria.¹⁰⁰

This raises the fundamental question as to whether it is religion or ethnicity that is behind the violence that often gives the image of religious intolerance in Nigeria.

In discussing this, some issues have to be placed in context. First, it has to be appreciated that ethnicity in Nigeria is as strong as religion and that the country is somewhat crudely divided along ethno-religious lines. The reasons for the attitude of Islamic North to Yoruba Muslims living in the North have varied. While many of the Yoruba have argued that the reason is related more to the primacy the Hausa North put on ethnicity rather than religion, others have also argued that the attitude has been determined by the refusal of the Yoruba Muslims living in the North to reciprocate the “kind gestures” often expressed by the Hausa Muslims. For example, a radical Yoruba Islamic Scholar and the Vice Chancellor of the Al Hikman Islamic University in Ilorin, Professor Deremi Abubakr, pointed out that the initial attitude of Hausa Muslims to Yoruba adherents of the religion resident in the North was friendly and more in the spirit of brotherhood. However, this was allegedly not reciprocated by the Yoruba Muslims who are often scornful of the Hausas and relate to them more with an air of superiority than fraternity. According to him, it was in realisation of this that the Hausa Muslims believe that the Yoruba Muslim may, after all, be another group against whom radical violence may be legitimate.¹⁰¹ There is yet a third explanation, which is similar to the last one but which seems to focus more on religious purity, rather than the politics of reciprocity (of cordial

¹⁰⁰ FGD Participant in Ile-Ife

¹⁰¹ Interview with Professor Abubakr

brotherhood). This explanation claims that Hausa Muslims have always believed that Yoruba Muslims are not pure and that targeting radical violence towards them may inject some form of purity into their thinking.

Putting ethnicity into religion has been going on for a long time and there is no doubt that between Northern and Southern Muslims there had been suspicions. There have also been known cases of where Northerners have refused to pray behind Muslims from the South-West. Another issue that has again caused tension among Muslims is the disagreements in the “sighting of the Moon” to end the Ramadan fasting period. As a result of this, for a very long time there have been differences in the times that Nigerian Muslims start or end Ramadan, with the South refusing to break their fast because they have not sighted the moon, whereas the sighting of the same moon would have resulted in the Northerners ending their own fast. Despite all these differences, there are now efforts to foster unity amongst Muslims in Nigeria and the appointment of a new Sultan of Sokoto has resulted in the further bridging of these gaps. Indeed, a conference to further foster this unity took place in Ede, Osun state, in October 2008.¹⁰² But the following month after the conference some Southern Muslims were calling for a breakaway from the dominance of the Sultan control for allegedly misleading them on key issues like when to end the Ramadan fast and when to kill the ram for the *Ileya* festival.

The link between Islamic radicalisation and inter group relation has also played out in Jos, where, as will be discussed later, there was a major conflict in November/December 2008. In the city, which, because of its temperate weather and wild life, is one of Nigeria’s most metropolitan cities with inhabitants coming from all over the region, a group of Hausa-Fulani settlers had settled for generations. These people had retained their Islamic religion and had begun to wield considerable political clout, largely because of the larger Hausa-Fulani influence on national politics. However, by the late 1990s, tensions had begun to emerge and increasingly religion became a key issue in inter-group relations. The indigenous population later called for the settlers to go back to their original home, arguing that they were having the better of two worlds: from their host community, Jos, and their original ancestral home. In an advertorial after the 2008 Jos riots, some indigenous people argued that:

“If Alex Haley of the popular TV series, “Roots” could trace his roots from America to Africa after 12 generations, then other people can do much within the context of Jos”.

An observation made during the focus group discussion held in Ibadan for Hausa Muslims resident in the town reveals that some of them have watered-down their radical tendencies in order

¹⁰² Interview with Dr. Abdul Fatah Makinde who participated in this conference.

not to offend the sensitivities of their host. Whether this is for real or a position taken to suit expediencies may never be known. But all those who took part in the discussion are critical of their fellow Northerners who are violent in the expression of their religious belief. They seem to be more interested in playing ethno-religious politics according to the pattern determined by their Yoruba host. Although there are occasionally problems along ethnic lines or over commercial relations, very rarely have there been any problem that is along religious lines between the Hausa community in the south-west and their hosts.

The External Linkages of Islamic Radical Groups

External linkages in religious radicalisation can be traced to the late 1970s, when there were strong allegations of external involvement of foreign countries, mainly Libya, in the Maitatsine riots that engulfed Northern Nigeria. This was the period Libya was brandishing its peculiar variant of radicalism and Nigeria was considered as one of Gadaffi's targets. In the post September 11 2001 period, discussions on external linkages with radicalisation came under two broad sections: the ways external events have influenced domestic radicalisation and the way external actors have funded activities to encourage or discourage radicalisation. In the ways external events have influenced radicalisation, reactions may be monitored from the September 11 attack on the United States. Immediately after the attacks, there were celebrations in some parts of Northern Nigeria, with many people hailing Osama Bin Ladin as a new hero that would demystify the United States. When the United States launched attacks on Afghanistan, this changed to attacks on Western interests in some parts of Northern Nigeria.

A lot has been said about Nigeria nationals arrested in Afghanistan fighting alongside Taliban and a brief discussion about them may be in order here. Discussions held in Kano during this research claimed that these people did not actually go from Nigeria to join the militants. An individual who claimed that he knows one of the people believed to have been arrested and taken to Guantanamo Bay claimed that he actually left Nigeria a long time ago to study in Pakistan and it was from there that he got sufficiently indoctrinated to join in the global jihad against American interest. Also, in identifying the ways external developments have influenced radicalisation, it has been noticed, in recent times, that both Christians and Muslims have started putting their ordeal into global and historical contexts. Christians are citing chronic violence of Muslims against non-Muslims in Sudan, Yugoslavia, Cyprus, Kashmir, Indonesia, Egypt and others, while Muslims have cited places like Iraq and Afghanistan as evidences of global Christian assault against Muslims. In a rather bizarre way, neighbourhoods in some of the key cities in Northern Nigeria are being renamed to suit global Christians/Muslim conflicts, with names like Kandahar, Jalalabad and New Jerusalem now being used to depict whether they are held by Muslim or Christian armed gangs.

Also worth pointing out here is the interest and commitments that have been shown by key Nigerian radicals, especially El Zakzakey, in wider global events that concern Muslims. On key occasions that unite radical Muslims, like the anniversary of the Iranian revolution, Zakzakey and key Nigerian radicals have always participated and expressed solidarity with Muslims all over the world. This has also been an opportunity to vent anti-Semitic and anti-western sentiments. On some of these occasions, Zakzakey travelled to some of the key countries, notably Iran, where he shared platform with other radicals from across the world denouncing Israel, and the West. This has increased since the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

External support also came in the form of foreign sponsorship of Islamic conferences, often held in oil-rich Islamic states. This is not always directed towards radicalisation; they are also sometimes directed towards peace. There was, in July 2008 for example, the Inter-faith Dialogue Conference in Makkah under the selection from Makkah Appeal which came up with broad values that can enhance religious peace. This meeting was attended by prominent Nigerian Muslims, including the former Attorney General/Minister of Justice and former High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Prince Bola Ajibola.¹⁰³

The assistance coming from outside to support radicalisation has been another issue of controversy. Significant assistance for Muslim radicalisation may be said to have begun in the 1980s, when Middle Eastern and North African countries like Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Libya began a massive Islamic propaganda mission in West Africa, Nigeria in particular. This came in the form of radical literature and the offering of scholarships to study abroad and it was targeted towards youths. Coming shortly after Iran had humiliated the United States during the hostage crisis; it was not difficult for Muslim youths to see these countries as the new leaders in the phase of demonstrative defiance against the United States. Since September 11, assistance from Islamic countries has continued to advance radicalisation. This have come in the form of financial assistance for the building of Islamic schools and in the sponsoring of Islamic literature. However, in an attempt to mitigate the possible excesses of these tendencies, Western countries have also offered assistance to encourage Western education in places where Islamic religion seems to be dominant. For example, the USAID and DFID have assisted in funding secular education in Kano and some other cities in Northern Nigeria, an effort that has been given considerable publicity.

The issue on the War on Terror and how this fits into discussions about the external dimension of Islamic radicalisation also needs to be discussed. Although Nigeria has been recognised as a country that is at a risk of Islamic radicalisation, the whole issue of the Global War on Terror has not been an issue in Nigeria, especially as the nature of the conflict in the country does not come

¹⁰³ See, *National Compass*, 14 August 2008, p. 49

squarely within the framework of global terrorism. Also important is the link between the Gulf of Guinea and the nature of international reactions to radicalisation in Nigeria. As is now widely known, the Gulf of Guinea has become of significant strategic significance because of its oil resources. Indeed, the United States has made an official declaration that 25% of its oil supply will be coming from the Gulf of Guinea by 2015. This has introduced another dimension to the nature of radicalisation in Nigeria and this is something that has to be factored into future consideration of the dimension Islamic radicalisation can have on western interests in Nigeria.

Another external dimension to Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria was alleged after the November 2008 Jos religious crisis (to be discussed later) when the State Governor, Jonah Jang, alleged that he had received an “intelligence report” that Sudanese assassins had been hired to kill him during a trip he was planning to the United States for allegedly supporting Christians during the riots.¹⁰⁴ This, according to him, made him to cancel his visit. It will not be known whether this was true or if it was an effort to elicit sympathy, especially as the claim was made just about the time when there were alleged efforts to impeach him.

The Importance of Colonial Past in understanding Islamic Radicalisation in Nigeria

In recent times, the impact of the colonial past is coming out very strongly in Islamic radicalism debates in Nigeria, as many Muslims have traced the antecedents of some radical views to the way British colonial control of the country manifested itself. Three issues have come out here. First, many Muslims in the country believe that one of the main motives behind British colonialism was to stop the spread of Islam. This, according to them, thus makes Britain to be hostile to Islam. This view, which is held by many Muslims, is quite controversial. There are scholars who believe that there is not much truth in this assertion. For example, Toyin Falola has argued that British rule was not hostile to Islam and that the colonial government was “ambivalent in their attitude to Islam, but consistent in a belief that irrational treatment of Muslims would stand in the way of colonial objectives”.¹⁰⁵ Not many Muslims in Nigeria however share this view and the tendency to be anti-British in their attitude has become a key issue in appreciating the complexities of radicalisation in Nigeria. Indeed, during a focus group discussion in Abuja, the Federal Capital, a participant who runs an Islamic school was emphatic that the main motive behind British imperialism was to stop the advancement of Islam, which he argued was spreading down to the coast where Britain had significant economic interests. What is important about views like this is not their validity or

¹⁰⁴ *National Mirror*, February 14 2009, p. 1 & 46

¹⁰⁵ See Toyin Falola, *op-cit*, p. 27

accuracy, but that there are many people, especially people in positions of influence, who believe it and are willing to spread such teaching among their followers.

Secondly, many Muslims believe that some of the policies advanced by the British impeded the development of Islamic religion and that the end of colonial rule should now be the time to reverse some of these policies and bring Islamic religion to parity with Christianity. One issue that has come up in most of the discussions is the way the British government handled the educational system of the country. Two issues have been identified here; the first is the way Muslims were allegedly frustrated from establishing schools for Muslim children, a tendency that ultimately forced Muslims to go to Christian schools. In some of the focus group discussions, many Muslims were bitter in the ways they claimed they were forced to attend Christian schools where many of them claimed that they were almost forcefully converted to Christianity. A top politician and former state commissioner who took part in one of the discussions said that he felt that there were conscious attempt by the educational systems of the period to subtly convert Muslims to Christianity. To date, there are those who are bitter against colonial Britain for this action. Still on education, there are also many Muslims who claim that British colonial rule deliberately pursued an educational policy that was anti-Islam, especially through its refusal to recognise the Islamic system of education that was in existence before colonialism. Some of those interviewed argued that before colonialism there had developed a coherent and progressive educational system in northern Nigeria. The destruction of this system, they argued, gave the Christians a take-off advantage that ultimately resulted in the disparity in the educational standards between the North and the south. As noted earlier, what is important is not whether these views are correct or not, but that they are believed by segments of the population, and that they form the basis of their behaviour.

Finally, there are those who argue that Britain used its period of colonising Nigeria to sow seeds of discord between different Islamic religious sects in the country. This, according to those who hold this view was to ensure a “divide and rule” policy that could help consolidate colonial rule. Historical evidence seems to support this view, but only to an extent. While Britain cannot be said to have sown the seeds of discord among different Islamic sects, a tendency that had always existed before British rule, there is also no doubt that Britain encouraged it, as shown in a recently declassified document by the Public Record Office. On the whole, while many Nigeria Muslims are against aspects of British rule, this has not been a factor and there has not been any evidence that this has made them to be violent against Britain or its interests in the country.

There are also those who have seen the whole picture through the prism of the wider “divide-and-rule” strategy of British colonial policy. To those who hold this view, the division along religious lines that was allegedly encouraged by Britain also come in under the wider attempt by the

British to divide the country along ethnic lines.¹⁰⁶ Britain allegedly pursued a policy of never allowing Nigerians to freely interrelate with one another and consequently, Nigerians failed to fully understand and appreciate their different cultural, religious and social backgrounds before the granting of independence. Those who hold this view also argued that the fact that the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates to form Nigeria was just a policy on paper and that many important political departments in the colonial office remained separated so much so that the administrative officers were hardly ever cross-transferred. Indeed, a colonial officer, Sir Theodore Adams, warned as late as 1941, almost 30 years after the amalgamation, the people in the North regarded themselves as belonging to a separate country and that enforced co-operation with the South could lead to demand for “a Pakistan”.¹⁰⁷

Nigerians in the UK also have views on the whole link of Colonial past in understanding Islamic radicalisation. A Nigerian medical doctor in a discussion with me came up with another view that links British policies to Islamic radicalisation:

There is a boomerang dimension to Britain’s fight against terrorism. If you look at it, you will see that many of the radical Muslims in the UK are either from Commonwealth countries (Like Pakistan and Malaysia) or from countries that have, in the past, produced asylums like Somalia. When, in the past these countries were asking Britain to return these individuals back home for trial, Britain denied on the grounds that these countries have capital punishment and that Britain would not send back anybody that could face death sentence. Now these individuals have lived in the Britain long enough to be British citizens after which they now bring out their radical tendencies and now they cannot be easily deported again.¹⁰⁸

The Role of the Media

There is the need to discuss the role of the media in the numerous cases of violent radicalisation of religion in Nigeria. Indeed, this role, which hitherto was often neglected, has now been recognised as a key factor in appreciating the diverse ramification of the problem in the country.¹⁰⁹ Media’s role in understanding the conflict seems to have stemmed from two sources: the access of people, especially those in the Northern parts of the country where conflicts over religion are most prevalent, to

¹⁰⁶ See, Abdul-Rahooof Adebayo Bello, “Jos Crisis and Ethnic Animosity in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective, Unpublished Manuscript,

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Discussion with a Nigeria Medical Doctor, Chislehurst, Kent, February 15 2009.

¹⁰⁹ Indeed, an international conference to appreciate the key importance of the media in understanding religious violence in Nigeria is took place in the capital, Abuja, in July 2008.

electronic media and the reliance of the people in the country on the print media for information about what is going on in other parts of the country. As for the former, it has been established that there are more radios per person in Northern Nigeria than any other part of the country and that the people have more access to foreign news than any other part of Nigeria. This is because of the plethora of Hausa programme services available on global radio networks.¹¹⁰ With this, the Hausa population in Northern Nigeria get to know about events in other parts of the world more than any other ethnic group in Nigeria. This thus makes them more likely to react more quickly to global developments that they perceive to be anti-Islam. But apart from radio, graphic images that come through the television have also served to underline violence in the country. While not many people have access to satellite televisions at home, the availability of these at public cafés in many parts of the country now affords people the opportunity to see graphic images of events in other parts of the world. There are now many public cafés that have their television permanently fixed to *Al-Jazeera* and it is not uncommon to see people surrounding these public television sets to watch news, especially those relating to the “War on Terror”.

Muslims have also accused the media of further encouraging intra-Islamic violence through the nature of their reporting. Indeed, the incessant Shiite/Sunni conflict recorded earlier has been alleged to have been encouraged by the media. For example, the Islamic Council of Nigeria specifically accused a national Newspaper, *The Daily Trust*, of “lack of all ethics and values of professionalism” with the paper’s alleged linking of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria with the murder of Umaru Dan Mai Shiyya, who they described as a “political thug” in Sokoto. The newspaper further expressed its disappointment with the newspaper for “preferring to be on the side of the irresponsible, morally degenerate Sokoto Governor, Alu Magatakardan Wammako ... in his battle against the Islamic Movement”.

But even before the recent developments, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were films in circulation on the debates conducted between the late Ahmad Deedat from South Africa. Deedat had debates with some Christians and he video-recorded them. The focus of one of the debates was “Which one is the word of God: Quran or Bible”? This was with an individual known as Shorosh. Another debate was between Deedat and Josh McDowell and John GillChrist. Deedat came out with books and video recording which had been greatly doctored and these were widely circulated. The Ahamed Deedat videos were shown freely on televisions in northern Nigeria but it was not allowed to be shown in the South West.

¹¹⁰ These services include the BBC Hausa Service and the Voice of America (VOA) Hausa Service programmes.

Virtually all national newspapers in the country have “religion” sections with Friday Newspaper having sections on Islamic religion on Friday and Christianity on Sundays. Although the contents of many of these columns are temperate, explaining to the readers how to live better under the tenets of the religion, sometimes some sections of Muslims column are sometimes strong, giving undertones of comparison with the Christian religion.

Another dimension of media involvement has to do with the ways religious disturbances are reported in the country by the new media. In reporting developments in the country, oftentimes journalists allow their own belief and experiences to influence what they put out as news stories and the ways facts are allegedly twisted often raise anger. The controversies surrounding the Miss World competition underline this. Most Nigerian newspapers are based in the South and are owned by southerners who are also Christians. Therefore, Northern journalists say most national newspapers are incapable of covering the Northern crises. They argue that Northern journalists’ coverage of the riots is more objective because the events took place there and a Southern paper just sends a Southerner who cannot penetrate the language or culture and is forced to “concoct” reports. This has always been denied by Southern journalists. But apart from these violent incidents, there are other innocent video cassettes in circulation that spread the gospel.

The media has also come under criticism for exaggerating the nature and extent of the problems surrounding radicalisation. During the November 2008 riots in Jos both sides criticised the press for giving what they saw as wrong information as to the extent of casualties in the conflicts. The Christians criticised some sections of the press for inflating the number of Muslim casualties while the Muslims did the same for Christians. While, of course, actual figures can never be obtained in situations like this, inevitably, the biases of media reports would creep in. Another region of the country where emotions and sentiments have been pronounced is in the Niger Delta, undoubtedly Nigeria’s most controversial subject on issues relating to ethnicity, politics and resource control.

The Niger Delta and Islamic Radicalisation in Nigeria

Another important linkage between Islamic radicalisation and national politics can be found in the on-going situation in the Niger Delta, where militant groups have held the Nigerian state to a stand-still over oil extraction. The story of the Niger Delta has been recorded in several studies such that it serves little or no useful purpose discussing it here. However, the dimension of Islamic militancy in the equation is often subsumed under the wider discussion of natural resource politics. In the last decade, some of the militants have converted to Islamic religion and have become radical adherents of the religion. A notable person here is the head of the main militant group, Asari Dokubo. Dokubo was born a Christian and was the son of a senior judge in the country. While it is not clear exactly

when he converted to Islam,¹¹¹ his reasons are very clear, as he confirmed that the conversion was as a result of his growing political and social activism.¹¹² He said he found a religion in Islam that accepts his role as somebody who should correct the ills of society and the fight against oppression even with his life. However, although he became converted to Islam, the extent of his commitment to the religion will never be known and neither can it be ascertained whether this was a publicity stunt or a genuine conversion. Regardless of the sincerity of the conversion, a number of issues now seem to be worth considering on the link between Islamic radicalism and the situation in the Niger Delta.

While many of the people actively involved in militant activities in the Niger Delta do not take adherence to any religion seriously, it seems to be the case that many of them see Islamic religion as being more compatible with “fairness” and as such feel more comfortable being associated with the religion. First, there is the prevalent assumption that many of the oil-multinational corporations operating in Nigeria and whose actions they find deplorable are Christian. Consequently, many people in the Niger Delta are increasingly finding radical Islam as being more compatible with the struggle for justice and fair play in their region. But there is another reason why militants in the Niger Delta feel more sympathy with the Islamic religion. From discussions held with some of these radicals, there are assertions that the Islamic religion has within it doctrines that suits the situation in the Niger Delta. For example, it is believed that the whole issue of armed opposition against the state which militants in the Niger Delta have been practising can find justification under the jihad which the Islamic religion recognises. Furthermore, it is said that the whole idea of kidnapping which militants in the Niger Delta claim that they have been forced to adopt, can be endorsed under the Islamic doctrines that legitimises vengeance against anybody designated as oppressor.¹¹³

In recent times, people in the Niger Delta are also going deeper into the study of Islamic jurisprudence to find out more about the laws governing natural resource management. Specifically, they have gone into the Sharia laws to investigate what the Islamic religion says about key issues like Resource Control, which is at the centre of Niger Delta struggle. The objective of this group is to argue that the clamour for Resource Control is an Islamic imperative, and anyone who stands in its way is going against the words of God. Specifically, they have argued that, under Sharia, land is owned by people and not the state. In short, the group argues:

¹¹¹ Most sources state that it occurred shortly before he left the University of Calabar, in 1990.

¹¹² Business Day Africa [Johannesburg], October 8, 2004).

¹¹³ Discussion with an Ogoni Youth leader who participated in the ECOWAS meeting on Conflict Management held in Banjul, Gambia, July 2008.

Even if Nigeria was an Islamic State, what we in the Niger Delta owe Nigeria would be a possible variation of three kinds of taxes that do not make up the total eighty seven percent of our oil revenue presently being expropriated by the Nigerian State. They are: Jizyah an annual tax levied on non Muslims citizens living in an Islamic State, Kharaj, which is a tax levied on the producer of the landed property owned by the non Muslim in an Islamic State, and Ushr which is ten percent of the yield from our land and waters. All these do not add up to eighty seven percent ...Therefore, what the Nigerian government is doing is Un Islamic, and any Muslim who benefits from this injustice is a *munafiqun*.¹¹⁴

This calls for a more detailed discussion on how the government is responding to radicalisation in the country.

A variance of religious radicalisation that is also making waves in the Niger Delta is that by some branches of Pentecostal Christians and the consequences of some of their practices are fast attracting international attention. Perhaps the manifestation that has been of the most concern is the tendency by some of these Pentecostal Churches to label young children in the Niger Delta, some as young as three months, as “witches” and to have them either killed or expelled from the society. The antecedents of this have been traced to the activities of a Pentecostal Pastor, Helen Ukpabio, of the Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries, whose controversial films resulted in many children being branded as witches. It is important to point out here the few Islamic groups in the Niger Delta region have stood up against this practice and have been known to support the futile government’s attempt to address this controversial brand of religious radicalization.

Government Policy Responses to Radicalisation

In Nigeria, policy responses towards curtailing religious radicalisation seem to have come in three forms. The first is the effort to address violent interactions between Christians and Muslims; second is the desire to ensure that radical religious views are suppressed before they have any security implications for the country; while the third is training armed units of the Nigerian Defence Force to handle insurgences emanating from radical groups. There is the need to discuss these three policies in detail. It would appear that as far as the Nigerian government is concerned, managing violent interactions between Christians and Muslims is a far more important security challenge than the possibility of an Al-Queda type of radicalisation. Suicide missions such as carried out by Islamic militant are considered a far-fetched phenomenon and one that should only concern the government peripherally. Indeed, the Nigerian government considers the fight against militancy only as part of a

114 Orok Edem, “An Appeal to the Ummah on Obasanjo’s and Abubakar’s Misbehaviours”, www.waado.org/NigerDelta/Obasanjo/OrokEdem.html

global fight against the phenomenon and not as an issue that can affect the country directly. The only internal consideration the government has is that there may be attack on Western interests in the country and they expect most of these to be externally sponsored.

In the effort to address harmonious relations between Christians and Muslims in the country, government policy initiatives can be divided into two: direct government efforts and the support given by government to individual initiatives. In terms of the former, the Obasanjo administration established in 2000, the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC). This council which comprises of 25 people from each side of the religious divide is charged with the responsibility of “promoting the ideal of peaceful co-existence, especially among the various religions in the country”. This was part of the government’s response to the Sharia controversy. In terms of government’s support for privately led initiatives, perhaps the best known is the effort by Nigeria’s former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, through his “Nigeria Prays Project”.

A special unit of the Nigerian Army that specialises in riot suppression was established and situated in some parts of Northern Nigeria to quell riots. Attempts at curtailing the impacts of radicalisation also has other military components, especially in recent times when the government claimed that it has uncovered attempts by al-Qaeda to bomb targets in Nigeria. Immediately after the alleged plan was uncovered, Inspector-General of Police Mike Okiro, ordered the assistant inspector-general of police in charge of surveillance, Israel Ajao, to intensify surveillance. He also warned that the Commissioner of Police (Airwings), Commissioner of Police (Border Patrol) and all Police Commissioners in all the 36 states to ensure that bombs do not pass through their end.¹¹⁵ The threat also made the government to ensure collaboration between the police and other security agencies. Indeed, it resulted in a policy reversal, with the inspector-general of police saying that the planned removal of the State Security Services (SSS) personnel from the police should be stopped and that there should be no “bickering among security agencies in this war against terrorist attacks”.¹¹⁶

After the arrest of Afghan nationals who came into the country with fake Zambian and Indian passports, the government further took the issue of externally sponsored Islamic radicalisation very seriously. The government immediately beefed up security in the Federal Capital, Abuja, particularly at the foreign embassies and all high commission offices in the city. Calls were also made to all other state police commissioners and security agencies in the country to wake up to the challenge to avoid reoccurrence of what happened in the Western world and beyond, disclosing that investigations revealed that Zambia, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, among others, were known as terrorists haven. The arrest of the foreigners coming so close to the Jos riots further drew home the

¹¹⁵ See “Al-Qaeda Plans to bomb Nigeria”, *Saturday Punch*, May 10 2008, p. 9

¹¹⁶ Ibid

possible implications of religious riots in the capital city, Abuja, especially as the police confirmed that they had received information that there would be retaliatory attacks in Nassarawa, Abuja, Niger, compelling those security forces in the area to embark on not only massive patrol, but to continue intelligence gathering.

Considerations for ethnicity and national politics have also affected the fight against Islamic radicalisation. In responding to the problems, governments have had to balance ethnic and religious sentiments in order to ensure that allegations of bias are not levelled against them. Even in the interpretation of government responses, old events of the past have often been used to assess the possible biases and hidden motivations of the government in taking certain responses. An example of a crisis that exposed many of these tendencies was the 2008 November-December Jos riots. After the riots, the state government under Christian Governor Jonah Jang, set up a judicial commission of inquiry, and appointed a Yoruba Muslim, Bola Ajibola, who is a former minister of justice, as its head. This was mainly to give the impression of sincerity. Simultaneously, President Umaru Yar'Adua, a Muslim, also set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the same crisis and appointed a Christian Yoruba, Emmanuel Abiosye, a former army general, as its head. The tasks given to the Abisoye Panel were to determine:

- (a) the remote and immediate causes of the unrest;
- (b) the extent of loss of lives and property;
- (c) the types and sources of weapons involved in the unrest;
- (d) identify person(s), groups or institutions responsible for the unrest; and
- (e) recommend measures to forestall future occurrence.

What seems to be worthy of note was the decision by both the president and the state governor to appoint Yoruba indigenes of different religious biases than theirs as the leaders of the panels. This was mainly to ward off allegations of biases and ensure acceptability of the findings of such commissions.

This has, however, not worked as people have looked for other political reasons to oppose the formations of these commissions. The Jama'atu Nasir Islam (JNI) claimed that the Ajibola Panel would not be able to get to the roots of the problem because it was set up by a Governor who had shown clearly his hatred for Muslims and that only a Federal Government-sponsored inquiry would work. On the other side, too, Christians have faulted the Abisoye Commission because the head of the Commission once presided over a military inquiry that sentenced many Christians from the

Middle Belt to death for planning and executing a coup.¹¹⁷ Consequently, governments have always found themselves in an unwinnable situation

Implications of Radicalization

The increasing manifestation of violent radicalisation in Nigeria has many implications. In this section, I discuss some of these for the country, for the West African sub-region and for the world, especially the United Kingdom. For Nigeria, perhaps the most significant of these is the continued tension in inter-group relations in the country, especially in the Northern parts. As noted earlier, Nigeria's religious division crudely falls in line with the country's ethnic division. Consequently, manifestations of religious violence in the country have always shown patterns of ethnic divisions. The situation has been far more profound in a place like Kano where the ethno-religious division also has some underlining commercial rivalry. The second national implication is the effect on the country's youths. As again noted in this study, most of those involved in violent radicalisation are youths who have been vulnerable and excluded. The continued neglect of this category of the Nigeria population is likely to increase the violent manifestation of radicalisation in the country. Third is economic development. A review of all the cases of violent manifestations of radicalisation in the country has shown that they have always resulted in the destruction of economic infrastructure. Religious riots in Kano for example have always targeted shops of Ibo traders while counter relations in Onitsha, eastern Nigeria have always been directed towards shops of Hausa traders resident in the town. In a nation where political instability resulting in the overthrow of government has been traced to inter-group riots and conflicts, the implications for the nation's fledgling democracy are enormous.¹¹⁸ Fourth, it is possible that violent radicalisation may further show the weakness in the country's constitution and further put pressure on the government on the need for a National Conference which many argue could lead to the dismemberment of the Nigerian state. The ambiguity of the constitution on the nature of Nigeria's secularity is one of the many contentious issues which many Nigerians believe would only be removed if there is a national conference to discuss the nature of the country's continued unity. Fifth is the implication of radicalisation and violence on Nigeria's international image. It is somewhat of an irony that religious riots have frustrated Nigeria's desire to host international events. Apart from the Miss World Competition, the February 2009 religious riots in Bauchi riots came just as the country is preparing to host the FIFA Under 17 World Cup in

¹¹⁷ This was the Abisoye Commission of Inquiry that investigated the Dimka military coup that killed the late President Murtala Mohammed in February 1975. Among those found guilty and subsequently condemned to death was former Governor of Benue Plateau State, Joseph Gomwark, a Christian.

¹¹⁸ There have been coups that have been rooted to ethnicity. For example, during his coup in February 1990, Gideon Orkar announced the expulsion of the Muslim northern parts of the country.

October /November 2009. Indeed, Bauchi is one of the centres for game and the country is not sure whether the riots would not affect the country's chances of hosting the games.

The implications of Nigeria's continued radicalisation on the West African sub-region rest largely on Nigeria's socio-economic and political importance for the region and because of the sub-regional policy that allow for free movements. Again, as noted in this study, Nigeria's radicalisation has benefited from sub-regional influences. If radicalisation in Nigeria continues to take violent turns, it is possible that this could spread to other parts of the region. Already, the spread of Nigeria Pentecostal Churches has been a key phenomenon in West Africa. Indeed, more than half of the Pentecostal Churches in Liberia are owned and managed by Nigerians. Although this has not in any way been linked to violence, it is nevertheless worth noting. However, what seems to have given people most causes of concern is the possible outcome that could come from the disintegration of Nigeria as a result of radicalised violence. Although this is most unlikely, such possibility should be considered in a study of the nature. With its massive population, enormous economic powers and military strength, there can be no doubt that a disintegrated Nigeria would have enormous implications for the entire West African Sub-region.

Nigeria's continued radicalisation, especially when it gets to its violent phase has implications for Britain and the entire world. The first is rooted to the country's enormous oil wealth. Already there is political instability in the oil-producing region of the country. To combine sustained violent radicalisation to the equation in the country may have serious implications for global oil supplies, with considerable consequences for the world. Already, instability in global oil supplies has resulted in the situation where oil price once reached the record high of US\$150 per barrel. As is already well-noted, the Gulf of Guinea, where Nigeria is the key actor, is already strategic in global oil politics, with the expectation that the region will be providing more than 25% of American oil supplies by 2015.¹¹⁹ Second, violent radicalisation, depending on what accounts for it in any given situation, may result in the targeting of Western interests in the country. Already, some cases of violent radicalisation have always targeted western interests in the country. Although the impact of this has been low largely because the places where the bulk of British and other western interests are located (Lagos and Abuja) are out of the areas of violent radicalisation, the increasing wave of the tendency and the unpredictability of the nature of its future manifestations make it necessary to factor this into consideration. The fact, too, that the new democratic dispensation in the country could attract more Western interest make it all the more imperative to factor this into the possible future trends. A third factor to consider is the possible implications of the wave of anti-Western feelings often generated

¹¹⁹ I have discussed this at some length in *Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa: The Tragedy of Endowment*, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007.

even when the radicalisation is not violent. Across the country but most especially in the Northern parts of the country, instability has been linked to the nature of British colonisation. While historically people in the country have limited this to the forceful unification of the country, it is important to point out now that there are many people in the country, especially Muslims, that argue that British colonial policy of tilting the balance in the country to the advantage of the Christians, is at the roots of many of the recent problems. It remains as yet to know whether this, in any way, can be a factor in possible future trend in anti-British sentiments.

Possible Future Trends

In looking at possible future trends, specific interests should be placed on three issues: causes, manifestations and responses. In terms of causes, what seems likely is that it is possible that Islamic radicalisation will continue to react more to local issues, than to external developments. Indeed, external developments will most likely come into the picture when there are major global developments perceived to be “anti-Islamic”, and even in this case, it will only elicit spontaneous response which will be sporadic and temporary. Domestic political and economic issues, especially when they bother on issues surrounding ethnicity, national politics, natural resource management and commercial interests, are likely to remain as the key determinants of future cases of radicalisation. Elite manipulation will also most likely continue and possibly increase.

In terms of manifestations, it is again likely that situations will continue to manifest along the lines of riots and clashes between adherents of the major religions. However, if the cause of any specific case happens to be externally rooted, there might be attacks on Western interests. It may be important to point out there is nothing, at least as yet, that gives the impression that violent manifestation of radicalisation, such as suicide missions, are of any possibility in Nigeria in the near future. This is because the practice of martyrdom is something that is somewhat foreign to Nigerian culture. Indeed, there is no recorded history of this tendency in the country. Even in the Niger Delta, where there seems to be the practice of intense patriotism and culture of group cohesion, there is still no culture of suicide mission. Many Nigerian Muslims whose views were sought in the cause of this study seem united in their opinion that suicide mission in the expression of their faith was not an option. Even though they did not condemn the practice in other places, they argue that the situation in Nigeria has not reached the stage and does not appear to be moving towards the direction of the stage where such a practice will be a possibility. Another possible future manifestation is the practice of attacks on individual Muslims believed to be doing things that are “un-Islamic”, like the practice of homosexuality, un-explainable polygamy, prostitution, etc. Already this has started happening. For example, on September 22 2008, a 33 years old man, Danladi Ali, was brutally murdered by some unknown people in the Ugwa Rimi quarters of Kaduna for his admission that he was homosexual.

Although not officially confirmed, the assumption in the city was that the killing was done by Islamic fanatics who see his action as being “un-Islamic”. Also, the *fatwa* pronounced on Alhaji Bello Masaba who refused to divorce 76 out of his 80 wives is another example of possible future of Islamic radicalisation.

Another issue that should now be added to possible future manifestation is likelihood of an externally-sponsored terrorist attacks on Nigeria. As noted earlier, the inspector general of police has alerted the nation of plans of Al Qaeda attacks on Nigeria. This will remain a distinct possibility and with the porous nature of the country’s borders, the almost non-existent facility for addressing emergencies, the weakness of its ability to manage domestic insurrection, the consequences of such an attack is most certainly going to be devastating.

In terms of responses, it is not likely that the government will come up with any effective mechanism to address the problem of religious radicalisation. Indeed, it seems the government has completely lost the initiative as to how best to address the problem. The November 2008 Jos riots caught the government unaware and showed that all mechanisms being put in place to curtail excesses have so far failed. However, what the government has found far more disturbing is the increasing external dimension to Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria. The arrest of Afghan citizens who came into the country with fake documents and were caught recruiting militants across mosques in Abuja has woken the nation to the stark realities of externally sponsored militancy, especially coming shortly after a major religious riot in the country. Immediately after the arrest of these people, the government instructed its embassies and High Commissions across the world to be far more careful in the ways they issue out Nigerian visas to individuals. With the possibility of extreme manifestations like suicide missions by Nigerian citizens considered most unlikely, the entrance into the country of citizens of countries where such actions have been known to exist is a worrying dimension to the equation and it is one that may alter the future of Islamic radicalisation in the West African nation. What the government is likely to find more disturbing are the implications of such external involvement on the safety of foreign investment and embassies in Nigeria and on the politics of the conflict in the Niger Delta region. It is also most likely that this is a dimension of Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria that foreigners are most likely going to watch with keen interest, especially because of the 1998 terrorist attacks on Kenya and Tanzania and the implications of the possibility of terrorist penetration of Nigeria on the entire West African sub-region.

It will, however, not be correct to see the future only in the prism of difficulties. There are also on-going individual initiatives that may indicate some form of possible harmony between different religious groups in the country. One extremely successful initiative is the one being organised by Pastor James Wuye and Imam Mohammed Ashafa, who were respectively leaders of the youth wings of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Islamic Society of Nigeria (ISN).

Both have been violent radicals in the propagation of their faith and both had personal tragedies of the roles they played in the forceful propagation of their faith. Apart from loosing members of their families in riots, Wuye, in fact lost one of his arms. Amidst trepidation the two of them came together to form the “Pastor and the Imam Project”, which has won several national and global awards. Pastor Wuye noted in a February 2001 interview:

We are now like husbands and wife that must not divorce: if we divorce, our children will suffer and our children in this context are the Nigerian youths whom we must not allowed to suffer. So we have vowed to stay together.¹²⁰

There are also people preaching international harmony. A popular Muslim columnist in one of Nigeria’s most important newspapers, *The Guardian*, Muhammad Enbeay pointed out:

During his last pilgrimage to Mekka, shortly before his death, the Holy Prophet Muhammad addressed a vast concourse of Muslims. His farewell address reads among other things: “O you men! Your God is one and your ancestor is one. An Arab possesses no superiority over a non-Arab. A white is in no way superior to a red, nor for that matter a red to white, but only to the extent to which he discharges his duty to god and man. The most honoured among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you”¹²¹

All this thus gives a glimmer of hope for harmonious inter-group and religious relations in Nigeria.

Conclusion

In concluding this Country Study, it can be said that the manifestation of Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria is different from that in many other countries, especially those countries outside Africa. In the country, Islamic radicalisation seems to have been induced by economic realities, aggravated by national politics, strengthened by the country’s ethno-religious division, encouraged by global developments and exploited by the country’s ruling elites. Indeed, this explains why external developments are far less determining some of the conflicts than internal realities and it also shows why the violent manifestations have taken a specific pattern that isslightly different from some other parts of the world where there are extreme manifestations like undertaking of suicide missions. While religion has come out as the key issue, fundamental considerations like ethnicity, past perception of injustices, (sometimes dating back to the colonial era) allocation of opportunities and privileges in

¹²⁰ Francis Falola, “27 years after, Handshake between Islam and Christianity”, *Sunday Punch*, February 1, 2009.

¹²¹ See, Muhammad Embeay, “Islamic Concept of Freedom”, *The Guardian*, October 31, 2008.

national politics, natural resource management and economic deprivation are all the key issues underlining radicalisation and violence in the country.

This Country Report has also shown some conclusions on the politics of Islamic radicalisation. Some of these conclusions are as follows: First, is that in a multi-ethnic society and also one where religious division takes some form of ethnic division, violent radicalisation over religion may manifest inevitably along ethnic lines. Second, in a situation of depressed economy and political instability, religious radicalisation is most likely to respond more to domestic issues rather than external development. Third is that the tendency for radicalisation to translate into violence becomes more likely in situations where youths are marginalised and vulnerable. Fourth is that vulnerable youths, depressed economy and weak political structure all combine to increase the extent to which political elites can exploit radicalisation and assist in translating it into violence. Fifth, is that where political elites benefit from radicalisation, the structures often in place to address consequences of radicalisation are often weak, superficial and uncoordinated. Finally is that the evolution of society and aspects of its historical past are major determinants as to the ways issues surrounding radicalisation and violence are determined.

On the whole, it can be seen that the nature of Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria, as indeed other parts of West Africa, is distinctly different from that of some other parts of the world where there have been cases of terrorist activities, including suicide missions. Indeed, as would have been seen from this country study, there has not been a single case of suicide mission in Nigeria, despite the extent of religious instability in the country. There seems to be a number of reasons for this. First, the external dimension of ethno-patriotism that underlined the affairs in many of these places is not present in West Africa. Consequently, the population in the region has not had any reason to embark on suicide mission to fight external forces they might have considered stronger to be fought conventionally. Second seems to be the people's socio-cultural perceptions to life and violence which makes issues like embarking on suicide mission an issue that is largely unthinkable. Indeed, the sacredness of one's life is something that many people in the country hold very important. While, of course, there are cases of armed violence which has led to loss of lives, these have been more of other people's lives and not cases of suicide. However, as noted in the last section, the coming into the country of foreigners brings in another dimension into the equation and unless this is checked, it may open a completely new dimension to the politics of Islamic radicalisation in Nigeria and, indeed, in the entire West African sub-region.