

Dynamics of Religious Extremism and Terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin: An Exploration of the Ideological Variations between Boko Haram and ISWAP

Mustapha Salihu Ph.D.¹
Mustaphasalihu232@gmail.com

Abstract

In light of the growing influence of religious extremist organization in the Lake Chad Basin, the study examines the ideological variations between Boko Haram and ISWAP. Employing the qualitative textual analysis of secondary data, the study ascertains their capacities of coercion and symbolic violence, organizational modus operandi and social repression and intolerance. The ideological nuances of Boko Haram's main factions ISWAP shape their use of violence, organizational modus operandi and social repression. Key variations in their ideology emerged following the 2016 split, informed by the inability of Shekau's led Boko Haram and Barnawi's ISWAP to agree on the key issues of who should be targeted and what roles women can play. Review of several reports shows despite the split, Shekau's pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State in Levant remains intact. And that ISWAP is as equally as violent as Boko Haram if not more violent, the only difference been its deployment of people centric approach to galvanize local support and boost its membership. While Shekau exploit the fragility of government in the LCB to unleash terror on civilian populations, ISWAP have moved to fill these gaps in governance. The study concludes both groups are locked in a competition in a battle of the soul of the LCB, whether Nigeria and its neighbors will capitalize on the infighting to decapitate either of the faction remains to be seen.

Keywords: Religious Extremism, Terrorism, Ideology, Boko Haram, ISWAP and Islamic State

Introduction

Predictions of Samuel P. Huntington that conflicts in the post-Cold War period will be driven by the irreconcilable civilizational clash in the wake of heightened globalization, seems to be unfolding right before our very eyes. Huntington (1993) argues the new transnational conflicts will be outcomes of intensified interactions between competing and opposing belief systems, values, cultural and other ideological dogmas. The opposition of extremist religiosity to secularism and western values of democracy seems to support Huntington's theory (Copenhagen Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007; Schmid et al., 2011). According to Flood (1991) it is common for individuals who exclusively live by the codes of a particular ideology to possess unwavering inclination to dismiss, ignore, deny, or attack opposing codes and conduct incompatible with tenets of their belief system. For instance Stefano et al (2017) demonstrated the role ideology played which led to violence during the Peruvian civil war, while Thaler (2012) argues its effects on the choice between selective and indiscriminate violence by the insurgents in Mozambique and Angola. Ugarriza et al (2013) in their study show how ideology influenced the cohesion of armed groups in Colombia. While the causal effects of opposing ideologies as instruments for mass mobilization, indignation, indoctrination, radicalization, manipulation, and control has been examined in the context of ethnic conflicts, civil wars, and sectarian violence (Mroszczyk et al., 2021; Stefano et al., 2015; Rejai 1991; Terence et al., 1999; Flood, 1996 and Assaf, 2008 and 2018) inconsequential attention is accorded the plausible roles of ideological convictions of extremist religious groups to who resort to acts of terror.

The study ties the rising influence of extremist religious groups to in amongst other debated variables, to attempts at transplanting of western values on non-western societies, which prompted a sense of de-establishment amongst religious extremists.

¹ Candidate, Peace Conflict & Strategic Studies, Nile University of Nigeria

Evident in their opposition to western values, is the rhetoric that spreads of such values possess threats to the survival of their religious ideologies. In a bid to counter western influence, religious extremists are known to take up arms against democratic governments, civilians, and security forces (Hoffman, 2006; United Nations, 2020 and Cole, 2015).

According to Tori (2009) groups like Boko Haram who abide by extremist interpretation of religion are convinced that the status quo, i.e. democracy does not afford them substantial power to effect preferred changes. Hence, it is not entirely futile to examine the causal effects of ideology in transforming religious extremism to acts of terror.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are twofold; the first is to examine existence the potential interplay between extremist religious ideology and terrorism. The second objective is to explore the ideological variations between BH (Boko Haram) and ISWAP, and the effect of such on violent mobilization. In concise terms, their ideologies are explored within the context of differential capacities of coercion and symbolic violence, organizational modus operandi and social repression and intolerance in the LCB.

By capacity of coercion and symbolic violence, we mean the extent to which either organization is perceived to engage in indiscriminate acts of terror, while modus operandi focuses on the peculiarities of their acts of terror. Social repression on the other hand is used to describes their perceived level of tolerance to other intra and inter faith religious followers. This is done with a view to the addressing the perceived difficulties associated with telling apart BH from ISWAP, a situation exuberated by their mutual advancements of violence interpretation of Islam, a combination that many find difficult to comprehend (Cole, 2015). According to the Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) religious terrorists pose significant security challenges to security forces and civilians, in the LCB of Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and Nigeria (United Nations Security Council, 2020). The study argues, a better understanding of both groups is central to informing viable and group-specific counter terrorism frameworks against the backdrop of rising influence of both groups in the LCB

Methodology

To answer the research questions, the study examines the textual content of prior literature using the secondary data collection and analysis method. The use of secondary data is informed by the inability of the researchers to conduct a direct observation of the phenomenon under examination. The logic of using prior data has become increasingly acceptable due to its widespread usage and recognition by researchers. Albeit its shortcomings and limitations as it concerns generalization of findings and ethical issues in research, prior data in the form of qualitative data offer narratives that examine issues similar to those in prior studies. However, it has not been examined or analyzed in a detailed fashion (Long-Sutehall et al., 2010). Materials for analysis includes journal articles, reports from an international organization, expert opinions, and publications from international dailies amongst other secondary sources considered relevant to the research.

Religion, Extremism and Terrorism, a Conceptual Analysis

Despite receiving much attention from the academic and policy realms, the concepts of religious extremism defy attempts at establishing universal measure of what it means, which can be in part attributed to context-specific manifestations and interpretations. For Pratt (2010) extremism denotes intolerable fanaticism towards individuals or groups who abhor different religious, political, social, or cultural views. While for Davies (2008) extremism is a derivative of fundamentalism, and that extremist's worldview and morality compass derives from a standpoint of exclusive claim to an authentic truth, in addition to an unwavering dismissal of alternative opinions and beliefs. Renowned advocate for religious tolerance, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, describes extremism as a situation where an individual or group of individuals attempt to put an abrupt end through violence means to views other than those they believe. This definition describes a broader conception of religious intolerance that leads to violence and poses a security challenge (Al Raffie, 2013). For this analysis, the research adopts Tutu's definition which emphasizes the relations between religion intolerance and violence as the logic behind extremism. Despite the world's popular religions (Islam, Hindu, and Christianity) denouncing the use of violence in the name of religion (Hall, 2001), devotees from every religion have at different points displayed varying degrees of violence in the name of fulfilling their religious obligations (Juergenmeyer 2006 and Martin 2011).

For Liebman (2011), religious extremism derives from the yearnings to enlarge the reach and strictness of religious law; social isolation, and the rejection of the dominant social norms. Religious extremism can either be a procedure or an establishment that is a process of expanding religious laws to the extent that it is assimilated in both public and private realm.

Put differently, extremists struggle to implement their religious worldviews on societies, thereby leading to a political conflict or segregation from mainstream societal values and wait for a divine interpolation for their ideals to become reality. Moreover, their laws are elaborated and are strictly observed to the extent that leniency in the interpretation of sacred text is prohibited. Often than not, religious extremism is known for fostering a narrative that contradicts and antagonizes the ideals of other religious views and those of secular establishments like modern nation states.

Though studies on religion and violence emphasize the relations between extreme interpretation of Islam and violence against secularization, extremist interpretation of Hindu doctrine has led to attack Muslims and the destruction of mosques. Also in China, there are claims of state sponsored attacks against Uyghur Muslims who are kept in concentration camps as part of wider efforts to de-establish their religious beliefs (Mathew et al., 2021). Relatedly, the military and ruling party in Myanmar sometime 2018, launched a state sponsored discrimination and expulsion of Rohingya Muslims in their hundreds of thousands (BBC Asia, 2020). Institutionalized forms religious extremism and violence in the contemporary world best exemplifies in the domination of the Palestinians by the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, it also obtains in the 1979 Iranian revolution which informed the Islamization of Iran (Beit-Hallahmi, 2001). Despite the fore warning by Liebman (2011) that the most dominant religious across time and space recognize the destructive tendencies of extremism, extraordinarily little is been done to counter the influence of such destructive narrative. Resultantly, religious extremism has become synonymous with terrorism, a peculiar type of violence against society perpetuated in the name of religion, more so with followers of extremist Islamic doctrines.

Now, it is pertinent to observe that terrorism as a concept has been used to describe diverse groups and acts of violence over the course of human history. In the 1960s and 1980s the understanding of terrorism shifted from the revolutionary bearing to accommodate activities of nationalist, ethnic-separatist, amongst other radical organization such as those synonymous with colonial and neo-colonial political systems. In the 1980s terrorism was considered as a conspiracy advanced to rescind and de-establish the growing influence of western ideals in non-western societies (Hoffman, 2006). However, in the 90s, there was a change in basic assumptions in the conception of the term. It was used to refer to the activities of non- state actors or groups against the state (Chomsky 2002; Hoffman 2006 and Held 2008). Within the stated periods understanding of terrorism has moved from those of state, cleavage and arm-carrying non-state actors bonded their mutual religious or political worldviews. Invariably, the historiography of state involvement in terrorism was gradually eroding, considering multiple usages and interpretation of the concept by states, academics and policy makers, as essentially violent activities carried out by clandestine groups on civilians and un-armed combatants to influence the actions of states or undermine their legitimacy.

In lieu of their mutual adoption of violence as a religious obligation, the paper conceives BH and ISWAP as religious terrorists. The complexes evident in the relations between religious and terrorism have informed a body of scholarly works which ascertains the logic behind the perpetuation of acts of terror or violence in the name of religion. According to Rapoport (1984) the concept of religious terrorism which results from the perpetuation of acts of terror in the name of religious defies a simple label. It however entails intricate sets of expressive attributes and utilitarian prerogatives which sanction a peculiar type of violence. Hoffman (2006) maintains that religious terrorism obtains from radical and extreme groups, which adopt unconventional religious doctrine as their instrument of legalization. For the likes of Boko Haram and ISWAP, their protracted armed struggle is informed to a great extent by their radical religious interpretations, moral compass, and worldview on morality. The core of the religious violence model emphasizes the mobilization and instrumentalization of individual religiosity for negative ends (Onapajo et al, 2021). Unlike other armed struggles, perpetrators of religious-based violence are to known to adhere to strict doctrines, which are often non-negotiable (Gunning et al, 2011). Religious terrorists are not only contemptuous of negotiations, their reputation for annihilating opposing religious views precedes them (Mustapha et al., 2021; Morgan, 2004).

Scholarly efforts to rationalize the long-standing relations between religion and violence, has informed a body of literature which ascertains the precipitant and intermediate factors that drive religious extremist's like BH and ISWAP to violence. The core of the religious terrorist model emphasizes the mobilization and instrumentalization of individual religious beliefs for negative ends like terrorism (Rapoport, 1984; Hoffman, 2016 and Onapajo et al, 2012). Unlike other armed struggles, perpetrators of religious violence are conventionally steadfast and unwavering in their inflexible aspirations of abolishing constituted secular authority or blanket imposition of their beliefs on the society (Gunning et al, 2011). Religious terrorists are not only contemptuous of negotiations, their reputation for annihilating opposing religious views precedes them (Morgan, 2004).

In lieu, the study argues mobilization and instrumentalization which informs and justifies group behaviour are unlikely in the absence of mutual sense of belongingness. Contextually, we opine mutually adhered belief systems ideology inclusive, remains one of the potent instruments for advancing mutual feeling of belongingness.

Ideological Determinants of Religious Terrorism

For this analysis, we are interested in studying the mediating effects between ideology, religious extremism, and terrorism. In order to demystify question surrounding the role of ideology, it is imperative to examine the cognitive functions of ideologies.

By cognitive function we mean the brain function of processing perception and judgment (See, Stenford, 2013). Following the 911 attack, President George W. Bush in his condemnation speech asserts, the United States of America (USA) had been singled out for attack because; they remain the highest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. Toeing a similar path, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel while commiserating with her French counterpart after Charlie Hebdo a satirical French media outlet was attacked, stated the attack on Charlie Hebdo was an attack on freedom of speech, which represents a key constituent of liberal democracy (Bohlen, 2015). The most pronounced deductions from the above speeches suggest both countries were targeted because they are model example for liberal democracies and for their advancement of democratic ideals beyond the shores of the countries. Hence, it will suffice to argue the plausible effects of irreconcilable ideological differences played centrifugal roles in informing the choice of extremist groups and individuals credited with these attacks. What then is an ideology? Are intangible variables like ideology sufficient causal factors in the process leading to mobilization of religious terrorists like BH and ISWAP?

In his ground breaking paper, *The Elements of the Concept of Ideology*, Hamilton Malcolm conceives ideology as a set of mutually collectively held cognitive and factual values and beliefs and attitudes promoting and/or rationalizing a particular pattern of conduct be it political, economic, or structural (Hamilton, 1987). Renowned historian Michael Hunt defines ideology as an inter-dependent set of principles or suppositions that moderates the intricacies of a particular slice of reality to easily coherent terms and suggests appropriate ways of dealing with that reality. Satori (1969) on the other hand views it as a rigid and resistant, attitude to politics. It has also been defined as a set of ideas by which men posit, explain, and justify ends and means of organized social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot, or rebuild a given social order (Seliger, 1976). These are just a few prior scholarly efforts to conceptualize ideology. For this analysis, Stepanova (2008) definition of ideology as a set of ideas, doctrines and beliefs that typifies the thinking of an individual or group and may evolve into political and social plans, actions or systems is adopted. Hence, ideology could be utilized to defining enemies and allies, dangers, and opportunities, us, and them. Ideologies are formal, structured, and involve their own logic, often appearing in the guise of science or objective knowledge. Simply put, ideology is at once a philosophy, science, religion, and imagination.

In other times it is thought that, ideologies are vessels between thoughts, beliefs, and myths on the one hand, and action on the other. They can be mechanisms of conservancy in as far as they can help a given group to reserve its influence or power. Often than not, ideologies are used as instrumentalized as podiums for inter-group competition and conflict. For instance, a group can utilize ideology as a justification for their opposition or competition with other groups. Upon internalizing the dos and don'ts of a particularly belief system, that belief system influences cognitive maps that filters the perceptions of social realities, making it seamless for adherents to grasp, more coherent, and thus more meaningful. It is for that reason that ideologies offer some measure of security and relief in the face of ambiguity particularly in the presence of numerous or competing ideologies (Assaf, 2008).

According to Stepanova (2008) the degree of ideological devotion and brainwashing needed to warrant the threat or use of indiscriminate violence against civilians in the context of conflict with a more powerful protagonist usually a state is ideally higher than for most other forms of violence commonly practiced by non-state actors. This higher degree of proselytization and requisite justification are products of extremist ideology. However, the fact that the ideological basis for terrorism may be provided by extremist ideologies of all types and origins be it Maoism, anarchism, radical nationalism, or Islamism does not mean that any such ideology results in terrorism. For instance, the Salafi movements renowned for their extremist Islamic interpretation may come together to accuse the religious ritual of Sunni Muslims (followers of traditional Islamic views traced to Prophet Muhammad PBUH) as religious errors (Susilo et al., 2019).

However, the argument of terrorism having its own distinct ideology is increasingly becoming popular amongst political and behavioural sciences; those from other fields are contentious about the exclusiveness of a terrorist ideology. Alternatively, they dismiss the argument of terrorism having distinct and established ideological traits in the way socialism; fascism; liberalism and anarchism possess (Stepanova, 2008; Soares, 2007 and Herman, 1991). Keeping in mind the objective of ascertaining the potential existence of a correlation between extremist religious ideologies on religious terrorism; the study takes issues with the line of thought which argues acts of terror in the name of religion does not require specific type of ideologies that justifies the use of violence in the name of religion. While we agree that not all terrorists are likely to be ideologues, the use of deradicalization as a non-kinetic counter terrorism suggests otherwise. With emphasis on Islam, the study claims extremists could be notorious to for interpreting Jihad (religious war) in literal terms.

For instance, the concept of Jihad has been reinvigorated and reinvented by Islamic scholars such as Abul A'la Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb. There exist little to no objections amongst prior scholars that the subjective interpretation of Jihad by these ideologues spawned religious extremism and violence (Lacquer 1999, Mamdani, 2004). Further to which Mamdani (2004) argues the literal interpretation of Jihad to symbolize violent struggle against unbelievers, can be traced to the writings and teachings of these two intellectuals, Abu'-A'la-Mawdudi, and Sayyid Qutb. Central to the idea of Mawdudi is his position that Muslims must struggle through jihad to attain the Islamic *Umma*. Mamdani advances that Mawdudi argument was based on the precept that, the only true and pure state is one governed by divine laws in this case Sharia. Against which he advanced the cause for a theocratic ideological state, which he believed can be achieved through violence.

According to Mamdani, Qutb argued that the perception of jihad entails both the proselytization of friends and the use of force against enemies. Only physical force will remove the political, social, economic obstacles to the establishment of the Islamic community. The use of force to realize freedom is not a contradiction for Qutb (Mamdani 2004). Furthermore, Lavene (2011) contends Qutb reinvented the notion of Jahiliyya, which in traditional Islamic terms is used to describe the dark ages, the period before the Holy Quran was revealed. Qutb subverted this concept by associating it with the modern society. He advanced that the modern society has deviated from the rules and principles which Allah prescribes due to the influence of secularism and westernization and thus termed the modern secular political terrain as being in a state of Jahiliyya, having turned away from the principles of Allah. Qutb therefore advocated that, it is morally justified that true Muslims should fight and destroy the existing system which has been secularized and westernized (Lavene 2011). Accordingly, the research argues the advancement of extremist religious tendencies could be to a greater extent attributed to the growing influence of Islamic terrorism.

With in-group, ideology shapes identification with a particular cause, while emphasizing a sense of purpose. Mutually adhered sense of purpose can inform a common identity among the members; while at the same time heighten opposition and feelings of separation from individuals who do not share similar beliefs. Like most violent groups, BH and ISWAP are hardly mindless or indiscriminate in the conduct of their affairs, extremist religious ideology provides terrorists with the moral and political vision that inspires their violence, shapes the way in which terrorists see the world, and defines how they judge the actions of the perceived unbelievers or infidels. Extremist ideological networks supporting the use of violence against the status quo have a crucial role in causing armed mobilization because of the specific content of their doctrines. By contrast, we argue that other ideological doctrines are unlikely to produce similar outcomes. In what follows, the study explores the ideological variations between BH and ISWAP.

Exploration of Ideological Variation between Boko Haram and ISWAP

Fear of de-establishment by secularization which has its roots in western values, perceived by Islamic extremist as pro-Christianity remains the key driver of religious terrorism. McDoom (2012) studies ethnic conflict in the case of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and claims that fear causes group polarization, which may turn into group violence. Pearlman (2016) describes situations marked by intense fear of another group or fear of the regime in the first phase of the Syrian uprising. However, fear does not have a unidirectional effect on behaviour. Fear can push individuals to fight or flight. Contextually, we argue that fear of de-establishment remains a principal denominator for advancing extremist religious ideologies manifest in the combination of religion and violence. Even though the world's most practiced religions (Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism) preach inter-faith tolerance (Hall, 2011 and Hoffman, 2006). In the ancient world, Zoroastrianism transformed earlier combat myths into a theology of eternal apocalyptic struggle between good and evil (Cohn 1993), and ancient Judaism forged a confederacy under conditions of war (Schluchter 1989).

For Islam, the interdependence between governance, law and religion suggests it to mean much more than rituals of five daily prayers and fasting, it suggests it to mean a total way of life, anything outside of which is considered as attempts to pervert traditional doctrine as championed by extremist followers of Wahhabism (Hall, 2011).

Wahhabi a term with varied connotations, but it refers to a movement that seeks to purify the Islamic religion of any innovations or practices that deviate from the seventh-century teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (Febe, 2014). The word Wahhabi is derived from the name of a Muslim scholar, Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791). Frustrated by the moral decline of his society, the scholar denounced numerous conventional practices and norms as idolatrous. Eventually, he advanced for rejuvenation of what he considers pure and orthodox practice of the fundamentals of Islam, as embodied in the Quran and in the life of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (Daumato, 2013). Wahhabism's is an austere form of Islam that insists on a literal interpretation of the Koran.

Strict Wahhabis believe that all those who do not practice their form of Islam are heathens and enemies. Critics say that Wahhabism's rigidity has led it to misinterpret and distort Islam, pointing to extremists such as Osama bin Laden and the Taliban.

The study ascribes the rising influence of religious extremist groups like BH and ISWAP to the extremist Wahhabi doctrine, which seeks to recapture the glorious years in which Islamic ruled supreme over other ideologies, to do so it must counter the narratives of secularism through waging a holy war (Jihad). Like all ideologies, Wahhabi jihadists present a program of action, namely jihad, which is understood in military terms. They assert that jihad will reverse the tide of history and redeem adherents and potential adherents of Salafi-jihadist ideology from their misery. Martyrdom is extolled as the ultimate way in which jihad can be waged hence the proliferation of suicide attacks among Wahhabi jihadist groups (Moghadam, 2018). Like other ideologies, the Wahhabi jihad sharply distinguishes between its adherents and those who reject its doctrines. Westerners are commonly described as infidels, while moderate Muslims and Arabs are labelled apostates. To the most extreme Wahhabi jihadists, Muslims who reject the tenets of Wahhabi -jihad are tantamount to infidels, thus deserving of death (As-saf, 2008).

Given their similar ends of establishing an Islamic Caliphate through violent means, it is expected if both ISWAP and Boko Haram are perceived as mutually adhering to a same ideological doctrine. However, despite the seeming difficulty associated with telling apart BH from ISWAP, the study seeks to examine either group's capacity for coercion and symbolic violence, organizational modus operandi, social repression, and intolerance as basis for ideological comparing.

Coercion and Symbolic Violence

Thought to have emerged sometime in the early 90s, Boko Haram started off as a non-violent religious sect, made up of small sects of mostly young, middle-class Muslims from northern Nigeria under the stewardship of its founder late Muhammad Yusuf. The group forayed into violence sometime in December 2003, signalling the beginning of unrest in northern Nigeria that prompted the deployment of military forces to enforce peace and order. After which the sect went underground until its resurgence in 2009. The group was able to regroup after a botched uprising in 2009 against the Nigerian state that saw over one thousand people lost their lives, mostly members of the group including its founder, Mohammed Yusuf. Only, to re-emerge a year later armed, reiterating its commitment to Islamize Nigeria and neighbouring border countries of Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and border communities in the LCB (Alex, 2017). A decade after its resurgence, Boko Haram holds sway in north-eastern Nigeria and parts of adjoining states in the LCB.

The organization has claimed responsibility for numerous acts of terror targeted at civilians and military formations across northern Nigeria and neighbouring Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. Although territory held by Boko Haram has varied over time due to regional military operations, it has strongholds in the Sambisa Forest in Nigeria, and the Mandara mountains bordering Nigeria and Cameroon along the LCB (Australian National Security, 2018). Under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram went from detonating light weight explosive devices in public places, to use of female suicide bombers, and more recently kidnapping of school children for ransom, forceful conscription, and sexual exploitation. Boko Haram which means 'western education/values are forbidden' in Hausa language, do not only advance extreme Islamic views, they have also increased their military capabilities and severity of their attacks (Salihu et al., 2021).

Compared to most Wahhabi followers, Boko Haram is notorious for employing indiscriminate violence in a show of utmost disregard for established Wahhabi's doctrine of spiritual warfare (Jihad) as it pertains to the role of women.

For instance, Boko Haram's abduction of 276 girls from Chibok in 2014 most of who were Muslims drew condemnation from across the globe and within its ranks. In addition, Boko Haram's frequent deployment of female suicide bombers also goes against the principles of popular extremist groups like ISIS (Bryson et al., 2018 and Pearson, 2018). Boko Haram is known to have deployed its first female suicide bomber in 2013. Conservative estimates suggest about 468 women and girls have been involved in or arrested for 240 suicide related attacks, the most by any terrorist movement in the world (Campbell, 2020).

Haven earned its rock star reputation in the terror hall of fame, Boko Haram pledged allegiance to, and was acknowledged as an annex of, Islamic State (IS) sometime in March 2016, and renamed itself as Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). A dispute over the leadership of ISWAP in August 2016 ensued between Shekau and Mamman Nur, a top lieutenant of the Boko Haram's late founder, and a rival of Yusuf's successor, Abubakar Shekau. Mamman Nur claims Shekau has become power drunk and despotic, unguarded, religiously uncompromising, killing or maiming innocent Muslim civilians, and burning down of mosques over inconsequential issues relating to disloyalty to Shekau by civilians in areas once under their control.

There are also disagreements between the global Islamic State leadership under Barnawi, Nur, and Shekau over the killing of Muslims, practices like that of slavery, kidnapping for ransom, and execution of his lieutenants at the slightest provocation. In amongst others, Shekau was also accused of not providing combatants with requisite military supply and resources to sustain the war on constituted secular authorities (Campbell, 2016).

Following a change in the military hierarchy in 2015, military offensive against Boko Haram seemed to have dealt a consequential blow to its aspiration to enforce their interpretation of Sharia and Islam in regions under their control. Immense pressure from multi-national task force in the LCB fed its internal divisions, causing it to shrink in power (Crisis Group Africa, 2016). Later that year, Boko Haram also lost its self-proclaimed capital, Gwoza, to security forces, forcing the group back into safe havens on the periphery of Lake Chad, in the Sambisa Forest and in hills and mountains east of Gwoza (International Crisis Group, 2019). Against the backdrop of deepened divisions with its ranks in addition to heightened and consequential military campaigns, a new faction emerged. It is alleged that, the highhandedness, and autocratic tendencies of Shekau the embattled leader of Boko Haram, to a greater extent informed the emergence of two factions. One faction continued to operate as ISWAP and another faction returned to the use of Boko Haram's formal name Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad.

Although Shekau has not openly withdrawn his allegiance to the Islamic State, the groups are thought to operate independently. The conflicting ideological stances of the two factions emerged well before the split in 2016, as friction mounted between members under Shekau's leadership. Following the division, these stances shaped each side's tactics and operations. The fracture between the two factions is crucial for understanding their conflicting ideologies and modus operandi (Bryson et al., 2018). The splintering of Boko Haram is a tale not only of opposing personalities but that of irreconcilable ideology and political (International Crisis Group, 2019). While ISWAP kicks against the drafting of women for suicide bombings or to serve as human shields, Shekau until not too long ago relied heavily on female operatives. A finding from a study conducted by the Combating Terrorism Center ascertains that 56 per cent of the suicide bombings by the Shekau led Boko Haram between April 2011 and June 2017 were carried out by women and girls associated with Boko Haram. By growing number of female suicide bombers in that period, Boko Haram became the first religious terror or any other armed non-state actors that has used more female suicide bombers than any other (Jason et al., 2017).

ISWAP's opposition to tactics and leadership style of Shekau does not make it any less cruel, like its adopted parent organization the Islamic State, ISWAP also depend on violence and coercion. However, it has established an interdependent relationship with inhabitants of the Lake Chad area. Since it broke away ISWAP has engaged in massive propaganda which portrays the Shekau led Boko Haram as perverted and a lost cause citing his ill treatment of Muslim civilians, while advancing a rhetoric which paints ISWAP as a lesser evil. Despite the obvious tensions between the group's rhetoric and actions, which are not always consistent, ISWAP has succeeded in branding itself as forgiving and merciful organization which pardons those who repent and support their bid for an Islamic state (Pearson et al., 2021 and Economist, 2018).

Furthermore, the Islamic State has prohibited targeting Muslims, and asserts anyone who does this does it by himself, and not in the name of the Caliphate may God empower it and it does not accept responsibility for this sort of action (Islamic State, 2016). Unlike Boko Haram, ISWAP out rightly denounced the killing or attacks on unarmed and neutral Muslims, though exceptions are made for those who work with the government or humanitarian aid agencies (Bukarti, 2020).

During an attack on a make shift centre for displacement persons, ISWAP killed several soldiers and abducted two midwives working for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Hauwa Liman and Saifura Khorsa, who are both Muslim.

ISWAP further abducted one aid worker for UNICEF, Alice Ngaddah, who is a Christian (Onuah, 2018). It is notable that rather than enslave the Muslim women, ISWAP shot and killed Saifura Khorsa and Hauwa Liman, in September and October 2018, respectively.

They went on to argue not all the Muslim women ISWAP captures for suspected apostasies were given the avenue for redemption or repentance. It, therefore, could be concluded based on these cases that ISWAP may view any cooperation by Muslim women with the Nigerian military as irredeemable (Pearson et al., 20121; Sahara Reporters, 2018; The Cable, 2018). IS has a dreadful repute for being so ruthless the world over, and people can't envisage an IS inspired organization could be more restrained (than Boko Haram)," said Jacob Zenn, of The Jamestown Foundation in Washington D.C. The Lake Chad countries Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon have long neglected the region, allowing ISWA to create a stronghold from which to launch attacks. Its gains contrast with setbacks for Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (Carsten et al., 2018).

Organizational Modus Operandi, Social Repression and Tolerance

Shekau's disregard for IS injunctions on the role of women in Jihad means he had defied the ideologies of norms and practices of the Islamic State.

Further to which, the decision formally replace him with Barnawi; he and his followers had not withdrawn their allegiance to the late Khalifah of the ISIS Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi (Onuoha, 2016 and Bryson et al., 2018). Hence, while they were now formally outside the formal structure of ISWAP, they were still fighting in the name of the Islamic State and its leader. Thus while Abu Mus'ab Al-Barnawi and his group consider Shekau and those with him to be Khaawarij, an extreme sect that went out of the main body of Muslims in the 7th century, and killed any Muslim who did not agree with them, they were banned for carrying out any attacks on them given their pledge of allegiance to the leadership of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, nor had they renounced their allegiance to the organization. This singular act has favored the Shekau led Boko Haram, in spite of several requests for clearance to attack Shekau led faction. Rather, the adopted parent organization of ISWAP had directed it to maintain a relationship of peace, neutrality and even cooperation when necessary (Global Initiative for Civil Stabilization, 2019)

Although Boko Haram has increased its capacity for violence and has branched off into other forms of criminal activities like kidnapping, banditry and cattle rustling to increase its revenue base (Onapajo et al., 2020), the concern for states in the LCB remains the ease at which ISWAP refines its organizational modus operandi and policies toward civilians. By deploying community referent acts of terror and subtle approach, ISWAP has forged ties with local communities that its parent and parallel organizations never enjoyed. By curbing some of Boko Haram's most indiscriminate practices, providing basic services and security for civilians under their territory ISWAP is strengthening its hand for the future. The deeper it sinks its roots into the neglected communities of the LCB; the more difficult it may be to dislodge (Défense Post, 2019). It digs wells, polices cattle rustling, provides a modicum of health care, and sometimes disciplines its own personnel whom it judges to have unacceptably abused civilians. In the communities it controls, its taxation is accepted by civilians, who credit it for creating an environment where they can do business and compare its governance favourably to that of the Nigerian state. ISWAP's approach has paid dividends in terms of recruitment and support. With estimated 3,500-5,000 members according to Crisis Group's sources, it overshadows Boko Haram, which has 1,500-2,000, and appears to have gained the military upper hand over the latter (International Crisis Group, 2019).

The abduction in 2018 of girls from Dapchi town exemplified the organizational modus operandi between Boko Haram the ISWAP. Fighter loyal to ISWAP abducted about 110 girls from their school, in a manner that resembles the Chibok abductions for which Boko Haram claimed responsibility. In a highly publicized show of boldness, armed followers of Barnawi's ISWAP in a convoy pick-up trucks returned the abducted girls to Dapchi where they were abducted (Bukarti, 2018). ISWAP's head of communication (shura) council decried on the differences between Muslim civilians who disagree with Boko Haram, who neither fought them nor helped in fighting them, and those who did. When Barnawi's camp returned the Dapchi girls, Shekau's Boko Haram still had in their custody over a 100 Chibok girls it had abducted four years prior. Though both cases vary in terms of composition of the school girls abducted, in the sense that the Chibok girls were mainly Christian, those of Dapchi were all Muslims except Leah Sharibu who remains in captivity, both incidents amplify the contrasting organizational modus operandi, social repression and tolerance of the Shekau led Boko Haram and Barnawi's ISWAP (The Global Initiative for Civil Stabilization, 2019 and Bryson et al., 2019).

Despite abiding by the rulings of the Islamic State, ISWAP like other extremist groups is susceptible to internal leadership maneuverings. In 2019, another relative restrained devotee known as Ba Idrisa became ISWAP leader and al-Barnawi was demoted to shura (consultative council) member.

This all occurred after al-Barnawi's main backer, Mamman Nur was purged in late 2018. Nur was a deputy of al-Barnawi's father, Boko Haram co-founder Mohammed Yusuf (Zenn, 2020). Following the change of leadership, ISWAP introduced a form of "democracy" to its leadership through its communiqué (shura), which resulted in Mamman Nur's purging, Abu Musab al-Barnawi's demotion, Ba Idrisa's ejection, and other leaders being killed (Zenn, 2020). The moves cannot be unconnected with efforts to deepen the root of ISWAP is the largely under policed LCB where the organization hold sway.

Despite having a domestic outlook, with no monopoly of any territory as of May 2021, and no foreign backings compared to ISWAP, one advantage Shekau has over ISWAP's newest leaders Ba Idrisa albeit his numerous faults, is his global recognition. More so, against all odds his ideological stance has remained intact for over a decade, and he has consistently been putting out his propaganda videos since August 2016. In addition which his position on issues of slavery, negotiation with the Nigerian government, targeting Christians and Muslim apostates, as well as his physical appearance and jihadist credentials are matters of public knowledge. ISWAP's leadership on the other hand is known to keep a low profile, hardly claiming responsibility for attacks. A review of its organizational modus operandi is similar to the trajectory of its adopted parent organization the Islamic State in Levant. Prevailing political violence, weak governance structures and dire socio-economic conditions in the LCB all plays into the ploy of the Islamic State inclination to serve as alternative source of governance in areas under its control. The growing intensity of ISWAP attacks in Niger and Chad demonstrates that the group is expanding beyond its main and still very active area of operations in the Nigerian shoreline with Lake Chad. Therefore, ISWAP is entrenching itself farther than ever before. However, akin to Iraq and Syria, its expansion across Africa is facing significant resistance from various avenues to varying degrees. Based on the antics of the Shekau led Boko Haram and Barnawi led ISWAP, it is the position of the study that, the former is inclined to deploy indiscriminate violence in his bid to actualize an Islamic Caliphate, while the seems to pursue this goal by employing both discriminate violence and community centric strategies aimed at winning the population. Evidently, their goals are similar and they both pledge their allegiance to the Islamic State, their individual organization modus operandi, social repression and perceived tolerance levels vary significantly.

Implications of Boko Haram, ISWAP Competition on Violence in the LCB

Though both Boko Haram and ISWAP fit the criteria of the study's understanding of religious terrorists, it is evident that both groups are locked in a fierce battle for the soul of the Lake Chad Basin. Besides extant ideological variations examined in prior sections, the study argue that, the sour-sweet relations Boko Haram and ISWAP actualizes the submissions of the inter-organizational models of terrorism. The perceived negative influence of Boko Haram-ISWAP competition prompted Dowd (2019) to adopt the inter-organizational explanation to describe the rise in violence to illustrate how extremist violent Islamist groups strategically adapt according to the number and relative activity levels of other armed actors in Sub-Saharan Africa. Relatedly, Wood et al., (2015) find that the frequency and severity of violent attacks against civilian population increases when conflicting ideas or factions are engaged in the competition for territory or glorification. Inter-group competition encourages civilian targeting as a show of dominance, it also increase the likelihoods of defection among civilians, and thereby prioritized purge and predation against the population to boost group membership. Raleigh (2012) also attributes the increase in civilian attacks to organizational competition.

The application of inter-organizational theories of terrorism to Africa is apt given the rapid rise of competition among jihadist groups on the continent. With the imminent collapse of the Caliphate of the Islamic State in Syria and dwindling influence in Afghanistan (Abrahams, 2018), the Islamic State and its devotees are shifting their operations from the Middle East to Africa, which does not appear to be short-lived. In a recent BBC article, it was cited that according to Olivier Guitta, Africa is going to be the battleground of jihad for the next 20 years and it's going to replace the Middle East (Gardner 2020). Similarly, Colin Clarke and Jacob Zenn predict that the conflict between Islamic State affiliate and Shekau led Boko Haram will drive competition for prestige, recruits, and resources, as groups vie for organizational dominance (Clarke and Zenn 2021).

Competitive terrorism can help extremist groups by creating chaos for governments and signaling strength compared to rivals. The competition between Boko Haram and ISWAP has also exacerbated conflict in the horn of Africa, where Boko Haram has held on to its dominance in Nigeria's northeast, while ISWAP has a transnational outlook, with its stronghold in the LCB. However, intense level of competition amongst groups at per could be to the advantage of the states and their security forces.

In the case of Boko Haram-ISWAP, reports by leading media houses that ISWAP had mobilize over 300 hundred foreign trained fighters from affiliate groups in North-Africa, to hunt down and neutralize Shekau, who on recognizing his time was up allegedly detonated an improvised explosive device he had strapped on (Paquette, 2021; BBC, 2021 and Premium Times Newspaper, 2021).

Though the Nigerian security forces and intelligence agencies are said to be looking into the claims, death of Shekau who has resurfaced four times the Nigerian government claimed to have killed in military operations, amounts to a victory for both ISWAP and states in the LCB.

Conclusion

Against the backdrop of qualitative textual analysis of prior studies and reports, the paper contends, though both ISWAP and its parent organization Boko Haram share a mutual utopia of actualizing an Islamic Caliphate, their ideology, countenance for violence, organizational modus operandi and degree of social repression and tolerance vary significantly. ISWAP may seem the lesser evil given its opposition to the use of women as suicide bombers or even Shekau's indiscriminate use of violence against Muslims alike, their expansionist agenda abounds in its organizational modus operandi. Unlike the impatience Shekau led Boko Haram faction, ISWAP is adopting a more subtle community approach to galvanize support and deepen its root in the porous Lake Chad Basin. Like its adopted parent organization, the Islamic State in Levant, ISWAP exploits the gap in governance and societal fragility to forge ties with neglected communities by providing services, collecting taxes and enforcing its version of Islam on the population.

Despite not having the backing of the Islamic State's leadership, Shekau and his followers have not rescinded their pledge of allegiance, which have deterred ISWAP from carrying out attacks against

Boko Haram, even though they do not support their organizational modus operandi. This goes to show that, the Islamic State is seemingly more interested in the loyalty of inspired extremist organizations, regardless of whether they disobeyed laid down rules of engagement. Despite Shekau's insubordinations, the Islamic State encouraged ISWAP to maintain a neutral relations and even goes on to encourage cooperation when necessary.

However, ensuing propaganda war suggests both groups do not only disagree ideologically, they are engaged in some sort of competition for the soul of the Lake Chad Basin and beyond. While such competition has adverse effects on violence levels, it will be essential to see if Nigeria can capitalize on internal rancor and ideological variances to isolate either or both Boko Haram and ISWAP, and benefit from a possibly weakened insurgency due to infighting. Now more than ever, the Nigerian state and her neighbors must review their individual and collective counter-terrorism framework to counter the influence and threats posed by either group. If Shekau has been killed as widely reported and hundreds of foreign fighters were brought in from Islamic State affiliates in North Africa, then Nigeria and its partners in the war on terror have their jobs cut out for them. The death of Shekau will reduces the likelihood of infighting and his followers could be inclined to defect to ISWAP or share a similar fate as their leader. In sum, the study emphasize the need to review the emphasis on the military component of counter terrorism, given the multiplicity of strategies been deployed by ISWAP to galvanize local support and boost its membership. The implementing of a similar approach by the Nigerian state and its neighbors in the LCB is long over-due.

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