

Boko-Haram: Ideology and Leadership

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Abstract: Scholars or idealists are technicians in social movements and jihadist tendencies. From the 19th century till date, there have been revolutionary shifts in Islam. With religious pundits like Dan Fodio of the Sokoto Caliphate, advocating for education through scholarships and respect of religious norms, but to extremists like Abubakar Shekau condemning education, issuing radical commands (fatwa) against Nigeria and countries of the Lake Chad Basin. This paper deconstructs traditional ideology of jihadist in the 19 century and explores the emergence of extremism through radical religious command (fatwa) with different ideology (abolition of western education and the implementation of Sharia law).

Keywords: Ideology, Jihad, Fatwa, Boko-Haram

Introduction

Ideology arose in a revolutionary era from politics and the study of politics (Pamela E. Oliver & Hank Johnston, 2000). Inspired by John Locke in 1796, French writer A. L. C. Destutt de Tracy in his "science of ideas", articulated that ideology is verification of knowledge for democratic, rational, and scientific society (Cranston 1994, Rude 1980). Napoleon Bonaparte's reign in 1803 marked with suppression, as ideologues like Marx and Engels, consider the pejorative meaning of ideology for class-motivated deceptions of the bourgeoisie, which they contrasted with the scientific understandings of a class-conscious proletariat. Ideology is

considered as any belief system, regardless of its internal consistency (Nelson, 1977). Science of power is drawn from ideology, with religious enticement (fatwa) and hate for democracy due to the social cleavage between those who associate ideology with the defense of privilege and those who associate ideology with challenges to the system (Weberman 1997).

According to Asma Barlas, jihad appears in the holy Quran 36 times. The term 'jihad' considered as an extremist ideology in modern times, though it was use by Islamic scholars in the 19th century to prone for Islamic education and religious revival with state creation. The major aspects that led to a successful jihad were ideology and support (educational scholarship). Contemporary 'jihad' is linked to extremist beliefs and religious disparity. It is worth noting that ideologies can be abstracted from the thought processes of any particular individual.

Scholars attest to the fact that ideology is a major factor for the development of transnational networks like Boko-Haram, radical doctrine and order (fatwa) for creation of a state. Dan fodio's crusade is a complete contrast to that of Abubakar Shekau's extremism, will quick tell there are different time of jihad, and ideology is a prerequisite to modern terrorism. The concept of ideology leads to questions about consistency with each other narrative and how is adapts to society, and to the processes whereby people adhere to certain ideas and orders (see Rude 1980, derived ideologies).

The socio-political trend of jihad

In order to understand the contemporary international security trends (terrorism, extremism and jihadist tendencies) in Sub Saharan Africa is necessary to explore pioneer jihadi leaders or crusaders like Usman Dan Fodio (Nigeria) and Modibo Adama (Cameroon) in their 'spiritual' conquest (19th century jihad). Nonetheless, this paper focuses on Boko-Haram's ideology and leadership, but first draws a social cleavage amongst Dan Fodio's jihad in the 19th century and contemporary jihadists like Abubakar Shekau. The later Shekau, is an epitome of religious extremist and terrorist like Osama Bin Laden and Imam Samudra the brain behind the 2002 Bali bombings just to name a few. Below we examine the socio-political cleavage between Usman Dan Fodio and Abubakar Shekau.

Usman Dan fodio v. Abubakar Shekau

In 1951, Heberle's in his work *Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology* defines the ideology of a movement in "a broad, nontechnical sense" as "the entire complex of ideas, theories, doctrines, values and strategic and tactical principles that is characteristic of the movement." John Wilson's *Introduction to Social Movements* (1973) defines ideology as "a set of beliefs about the social world and how it operates, containing statements about the rightness of certain social arrangements and what action would be undertaken in the light of those statements." He continues, "An ideology is both a cognitive map of sets of expectations and a scale of values in which standards and imperatives are proclaimed. Ideology thus serves both as a clue to understanding and as a guide to action, developing in the mind of its adherents an image of the process by which desired changes can best be achieved" (Wilson, 1973: 91-2). Wilson's trichotomy of ideology was adapted by Snow and Benford to diagnosis (how things got to be how they are), prognosis (which should be done and what the consequences will be), and rationale (who should do it and why).

Ideology and leadership equate education, which is a fundamental human right. The 19-century jihad focus was education and respect of religious values, precisely the Sokoto Caliphate in Nigeria (Smith, 2016). From the 20 century the dynamics changed, western education being perceived by some extremism using the banner of Islam and initiators of violent religious commands (fatwa). Islam is a religion of peace, unity and considers extremism as a crime. It is worth noting that radicalization begins from childhood, via ideology and the leadership. Contemporary phenomena of terrorism can be deduced from ideology and leadership, exploiting the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio and Abubakar Shekau.

Usman Dan Fodio's 'holy war'¹ in West Africa, led to the creation of Sokoto caliphate in Nigeria, and influential trajectory Masina, Tukolor and today Northern Cameroon². The Dan Fodio's crusade offered scholarship to over 250,000 pupils in 25,000 Quranic schools in 1903 (Abdullahi, Y., 2016). Mohamed Yusuf cited Dan Fodio legacy (Islamic Kanem-Bornu Empire as

¹ John Esposito, *Jihad: Holy or Unholy War?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

² *Jihad and Just War: A Religious Game* by Saron Messembe Obia

example) in the initial process of Boko-Haram jihad, to induce followers³. Imam Abubakar Shekau⁴ is a classical example of those religious leaders, who issue radical fatwa⁵, employing weapons of mass destruction and rejecting Islamic laws for political aspiration. Jihadists perceive hegemonial dominance by pro-Western Muslim governments, a dilution of traditional Islamic law (Sharia) and consider as violations of the Quranic scriptures.

The organizational structure and leadership of Boko-Haram remain opaque and the few studies that exist offer partly contradictory narratives. The sect maintains her stance in internal affairs, including the alliances, though a mutation in modus operandi and leading operations. Organizational complexity and the group's tactics have ensured a high degree of operational security. Contact surfaces between individual cells are kept to a minimum and sightings of the leadership are rare, which has contributed to the image of the Boko-Haram leadership (Shekau in particular, as being elusive).

Even so, the central role played by Shekau and the growing internal strife his leadership has engendered is plainly visible. With a handful of examples of senior members of Boko-Haram been murdered due to power mongering, Shekau grip on power is strategic. This, together with the increasingly fratricidal targeting of Muslim civilians, arguably caused the splintering of the group. The totalitarian leadership of Shekau implies that his death would likely cause major upheaval inside his fraction. The al-Barnawi faction, by contrast, is less dependent on any single individual and has a more elaborate long-term strategy.

Boko-Haram change leadership in July 2010, with the rise of Abubakar Shekau as second leader of the sect, founded by Mohammed Yusuf. Shekau had previously served deputy of Yusuf's, and member of Shura council. The council constitute of an estimates 6-8 members

³ Atta Barkindo (2014). "Boko Haram: Ideology, Ethnicity and Identity". The Centre on Religion and Geopolitics. Retrieved from: <http://www.religionandgeopolitics.org/bokoharam/boko-haram-ideology-ethnicity-and-identity>. accessed on 14 May 2017.

⁴ Read; George W. Gawrych's JIHAD, WAR, AND TERRORISM.

⁵ Mah-Rukh Ali (2015) Fatwa is an Islamic term, which express a legal opinion by a Mufti or Imam in issues which Islamic prerogatives are not clear. fatwa can only be issued by Imam or charismatic leaders, with no requirement or formal education contrary to Alim (scholar) who requires formal education Islamic fiqh and jurisprudence extensively in order to issue a fatwa.

prior to the fragmentation of the group (sect) in August 2016⁶, but other scholars point an increase in the number of members. The pattern of communication amongst constituent members is mainly through couriers (Stratfor, 2014) due to its decentralized system, as regional and sub-regional commanders run day-to-day operations in their respective zones. However, decentralization of power is a threat to leadership as operational command and loyalty in contemporary warfare⁷. Boko-Haram has chosen survival over effectiveness and coherence, for the fear of been eradicated if any as possibilities of coordination and communication are captured by regional and international counter terrorism cooperation agency.

Analysis of Boko-Haram ideology

Boko-Haram was created by Mohammed Yusuf a self-proclaimed religious leader, Salafist, mentored by Sheikh Jafar Adam, a religious mind based in Kano⁸. Yusuf was a follower of Ibn Taymiyya a 14th century theological scholar who prone extremism and jihad against rulers who do not adhere to Islamic judicial system (Sharia law). Yusuf advocated for jihadi militancy and opposition to Western education following the Hausa connotation of the group ‘Western Education is Forbidden’⁹. Boko-Haram was the most active terrorist group in Africa in 2009 following series of attacks in Nigeria¹⁰.

Despite the fragmentation of the sect (Boko-Haram) the agenda remains the same, the myth of reviving the Islamic state in northern Nigeria, but they seemingly differ in one key ideological component leadership. Abubakar Shekau believes that he has the authority to order apostates, thereby making legitimate targets. Shekau views everyone who does not

⁶ Barkindo, Atta (2016). “Understanding Boko Haram’s factional Structure”. IHS Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Monitor 16:6; Bodansky, Yossef (2014). “Boko Haram – A Serious Threat”. Institut für Strategie- Politik- und Wirtschaftsberatung (ISPSW). ISPSW Strategy Series no. 275. P.4.

⁷ Daniel Torbjörnsson and Michael Jonsson (2017) Boko Haram On the verge of defeat or a long term threat? FOI-R-4488—SE, November 2017.P,26

⁸ Amy Pate (2014). Boko Haram: An Assessment of Strengths, Vulnerabilities, and Policy Options. Department of Defense and the Office of University Programs, Department of Homeland Security. College Park MD: Start, January 2015

⁹ Mike Smith (2016). Boko Haram. Inside Nigeria’s Unholy War. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. p. 8081.

¹⁰ Adriana Lins de Albuquerque (2017). “Terrorism in Africa. A Quantitative Analysis”. FOI-R-4398--SE, Stockholm: FOI, January 2017, p. 25, figure 9, 19. Also read; Kevin Uhrmacher and Mary Beth Sheridan (2016). “The Brutal Toll of Boko Haram’s attacks on civilians” The Washington Post, April 3 2016.

follow his particular interpretation of Islam as non-Muslim, and therefore enemies. In practice, this belief has allowed Shekau effortless attacks and killing of civilians, appealing to his status as an Islamic Imam. This narrative and implications have made Boko-Haram to be labeled an extremist group or sect.

Contrary to Abubakar Shekau narrative for Boko-Haram, Al-Barnawi¹¹ consolidate the fact that he has no power to issue a fatwa, nor decide who is a Muslim and who is not, and has vowed to leave civilian Muslims on the sidelines of his insurgency. Al-Barnawi faction-oriented violence on security forces and Christian. The difference between the two factions is terms of resilience, long-term and short-term. Shekau's ideology is short term, which will record more impact (casualties and destruction) and will sustain his group through predation. Suicide bombers are used for mass casualty and the quest to conquer new territories, as well as destruction of military camps. It will be difficult to sustain his insurgency when the level of support has decreased to near zero. At this point, it is difficult to see a clear strategic line in the actions of Shekau's faction, other than urgently trying to illustrate relevance and ensuring survival after the loss of territory and the exclusion from Daesh.

Al-Barnawi, on the other hand, may have potential aspirants for the insurgency, due to his less brutal modus operandi. Civilians are entangled between Shekau's warriors and vigilantes, with violation of human rights, and al-Barnawi, preventing attacks on Muslim civilians, providing a different ideology to jihad. Most foreign jihadists adhere to al-Barnawi faction, due to its strategy alliance with groups like Daesh, which is a possible source of financial and logistical support. Civilians casualties is strategic in the 'game', in tactical examination of operations and a reliable supply of trained recruits, weaponry and presumably financing, in order perpetrate attacks on hard targets. The ideologies of the two Boko-Haram factions therefore entail both strengths and weaknesses, depending on the time frame.

¹¹ In August 2016, Abubakar Shekau refuted Daesh appointment Abu Musab al-Barnawi as leader of the group. Al-Barnawi is a former spokesperson for Boko Haram and supported Muhammed Yusuf's son narrative of religious fundamentalism, which raise criticism Shekau's leadership capacity.

Conclusion

Ideology and leadership are two aspects necessary in understanding contemporary jihadist tendencies. Using Boko-Haram as example is evident that the two factions differ significantly in terms of leadership and strategy (ideology). The al-Barnawi faction is resilient while the Shekau-faction, on the other hand, has leadership defiant, indicating that the group is dependent. One of the most important aspects to note in relation to the revival of jihadist tendencies in Northern Nigeria and northern region of Cameroon is that citizens believed that ideology was the same with that of the 19th century. As such, most of the natives pledge allegiance to the ideology without being brief.

Leadership is a strategic issue in African countries, where certain zones of states are neglected; natives easily welcome ideologies, if concretely exposed to them. For example, most of the areas been attacked by Boko-Haram are socio-economically neglected. No schools no respect of fundamental human rights, yet the quest for resources. Education is a formidable weapon in the fight against terrorism. Counter terrorism in sub Saharan African is drawn from civil-military relationship, though cyber-attacks (use of drones) recorded success, education is the only tool that can help stop crusade (ideology) of Boko-Haram and other sovereignty free actors in Africa.

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