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**The *Halal* and *Haram* of Boko: Communicating Meaning in Contending with Statecraft or “Modern-Witchcraft” in Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

Despite its gains, western education is perceived as a tool for subjugation. Some citizens of the Middle East and their allies in Sub-Saharan African States like Nigeria perceive western education as inimical to Islam. Although Islamic scholars have countered this position, the Boko Haram sect in North-Eastern Nigeria upholds it in communicating their ideologies. Through a qualitative method of study, this paper investigates the communication of meaning by insurgents and discovered that apart from illiteracy and unemployment, extreme religious beliefs are also responsible for the menace. It suggested that building strong statecraft through education, employment, and reintegration of victims could curb the menace.

## **THE *HALAL* AND *HARAM* OF BOKO: COMMUNICATING MEANING IN CONTENDING WITH STATECRAFT OR “MODERN-WITCHCRAFT” IN NIGERIA**

### **Introduction**

There is an ongoing debate as to whether or not western civilization and education are forces for good or evil in the world. To this debate, there are two schools of thought: pro-western education and anti-western education. Those who argue for western education appeal to its gains like democracy, promotion of human rights, safeguarding egalitarian society, and freedom of speech, religion, and the press as upheld in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 2017). Conversely, those who belong to the anti-western education school of thought weigh it on the interference of the governance of smaller democracies by super powers, the devastation effects of globalization, the promotion of gay rights and other concerns such as secularism and

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modernism. They contend that these put a bad taste in the mouths of those who desire puritanical approaches to religion.

The rejection of what the West offers smaller nations stems from the proverbial Greek Gift: When a mechanism for empowerment becomes a tool for subjugation, people become circumspect of Western Education. The supposed battle between the West and the Middle-East or the Islamic world stems from a clash of civilizations. Islamic scholars have always defended the position that Western Education is not inimical to Islamic Education. It is yet to be seen whether this submission is theoretical or factual, given the rise of insurgents who use religious tenets as principle for jihad. How does the communicative implication of the ideology behind *Halal* and *Haram* plus the modus operandi of the Boko Haram sect, which has killed an estimated number of 100,000 people (Shettima cited in Tukur, 2017) in North-Eastern Nigeria, prove or disprove this point?

The 21<sup>st</sup> century presents many challenges. One of such is the clash of civilizations occasioned by the communication gaps between Western Education and religions like Christianity and Islam. For instance, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim scholars have all wrestled with the problem of religion and political authority (Fadel, 2013, p. 1258). It is common place to find people around the world aggrieved because their religious beliefs are supposedly polluted by the trappings of anything western. Western affiliations in addition to the twin ideologies of globalization and secularization have combined to make matters worse. These, in the thinking of radical Islamists and their sympathizers, are responsible for moral decadence and crass misconduct among the young in Nigeria. The idea of “Western values” standing in the way of the understanding of other cultures results in resistance by both developing and Islamic countries (Baderin, 2005). It should be noted that this reaction is because most of these countries have been under repressive colonial governments of the West (Cavico & Mujtaba, 2014).

Leader of the Boko Haram sect, Yusuf Mohammed “compared western education and modern statecraft [and maintained] that socialism, capitalism, military dictatorship, western education and modern statecraft have all failed because God was excluded from these systems” (Barkindo, 2013, p. 37). Perhaps this is why leaders of the sect used visual, auditory, and audiovisual media to circulate tracks, music, and amateur videos to condemn Western education in strong terms, while advocating for the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate with the full implementation of Sharia Law in Nigeria.

The abduction of over 200 Chibok schoolgirls on April 14, 2014, would draw the attention of the international community to what many describe as a humanitarian crisis. The Bring Back Our Girls campaign rose to prominence in its efforts to ensure the safe return of the girls. However, their propaganda and destruction lasted. In Borno State alone, almost 100,000 people were killed; 2,114,000 internally displaced; 52,311 orphaned; and 54,911 widowed as of December of 2016.

Based on the post-insurgency Recovery and Peace Building Assessment (RPBA) report on the northeast which was jointly validated by the World Bank, the European Union, the Presidency and the six states of the northeast, Boko Haram inflicted damages to the tune of \$9 billion on the region (Shettima cited in Tukur, 2017). There are about 58 thousand Nigerian refugees from

Borno State at the United Nations Camp, Minawao village in the state of Maroua de mokolo, Cameroon (Dyikuk, 2017). This is why the sect was described as Nigeria's number one public enemy (Gingim, 2011). Because of its genocidal tentacles, a commentator also noted that Boko Haram is a murderously dangerous phenomenon in Nigeria (Gbinjie, cited in 2011, p. 20).

The study aims to:

- a) Expose the various theories which either encourage or discourage Western Education especially in North-Eastern Nigeria,
- b) Clarify and examine the communicating of meaning in the concepts *Halal* and *Haram* vis-à-vis Western Education,
- c) Investigate what constitutes Western Education in Islam and the suspicion of western values by some people in the region,
- d) Probe the notion of a clash of civilization between Western Education and Islamic Education, and
- e) Propose further research on the topic under review because of the dearth of data on the issues of *Halal* and *Haram* of education in Northern Nigeria.

### **Method of the Study**

This study involves a qualitative method of study about extant data on the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. After investigating the matter to find communicative meaning as employed by the insurgents through review of relevant literature, the researcher shall highlight the major findings while proposing ways of curbing the menace.

### **Conceptual Analysis of *Halal* and *Haram***

*Halal* and *Haram* are Arabic words. According to the Holy Quran, *Halal* "is any object or an action which is permissible to use or engage in according to Islamic law. The term covers and designates not only food and drink as permissible according to Islamic law, but also all matters of daily life" (Quran 7.157). Conversely, *Haram* means what is unpermitted or unlawful. It also connotes what is sinful, forbidden or unlawful (Dyikuk, 2013).

In Islamic theology and jurisprudence, these words constitute what is permissible and impermissible; what is allowed and disallowed; what is practicable and impracticable. They touch on spirituality, morality, politics and other ways of life which Islamic law legislates on. Implicitly, the *Halal* and *Haram* of things carry divine blessings and sanctions. In Islam, it is believed that whatever is laid down as permitted or unpermitted is no human construct but divinely given.

This means that religious doctrines must be followed to the latter because they carry either benefits or sanctions here and in the hereafter. When the law for instance says it is *Haram* for a man to stand close to a woman in public, it is a divine injunction. In the estimation of what this researcher regards as "hardline left-wing" Islamic theologians, western education is seen in the same light. This shall be explored in the course of the paper.

### **Communicating Meaning**

The word communicating stems from communication. Communication has to do with the sending, receiving, and understanding of information and meaning. It deals with the creation or

exchange of thoughts, ideas, emotions and understanding between sender(s) and receiver(s) (Dyikuk, 2017, p. 19). In every act of communication, “receiving” and “understanding” are most important operations, since the response of the receiver defines whether the communication is successful or not (Scott & Marshall, 2005, p. 4). It is the process of sending and receiving messages through verbal or nonverbal means which includes speech or oral communication, writing or written communication, signs, signals, and behavior. Communication is often conceived as the creation and exchange of meaning (Nordquist, 2017).

McLuhan’s popular “the medium is the message” stimulated a paradigm shift of communication in contemporary society from print to a visual culture which centers on (1) the mass communication industries, the people who run them, and the effects they have upon their audiences; (2) persuasive communication and the use of technology to influence dispositions; (3) processes of interpersonal communication as mediators of information; (4) dynamics of verbal and nonverbal (and perhaps extrasensory) communication between individuals; (5) perception of different kinds of communications; (6) uses of communication technology for social and artistic purposes, including education in and out of school; and (7) development of relevant criticism for artistic endeavors employing modern communications technology (Gordon, 2017).

### **Literature Review and Discussion**

#### *Boko Haram: Early Beginnings, Ideologies and Exploits*

The interpretation of *Boko* as *Haram* and so unlawful is encapsulated in the idiosyncrasies of Boko Haram. The sect calls itself *Jama’atu ablis Sunnah lidda’ watiwal-jihad* (Higazi, 2013, p. 1) which means, “People committed to the propagation of the prophet’s teaching and jihad.” Earlier, it was simply known as “Al Sunna WalJamma,” meaning followers of the teachings of Prophet Mohammad (Ishaku, 2012, p. 21). They were also called *Yusufiya*, which means followers of Yusuf. Many media outfits describe the Boko Haram phenomenon as either Boko Haram republic or Boko Haram imbroglio (Dyikuk, 2012).

Literally, Boko Haram translates as “western education is forbidden.” This is due to its abhorrence of Western educational system especially science and technology. For the records, there is ideological similarity between the Boko Haram sect with the philosophy of Maitatsine of the 70s and 80s. This is why it is believed that the members of the sect are successors of the Maitatsine movement. This group led by the Cameroonian born Muhammadu Marwa was blamed for the bloody clashes in Northern Nigeria between 1980 and 1984. The resilience of the Maitatsines is akin to that of Boko Haram. The first leader of Boko Haram, Mallam Abubakar Lawal from Kano, may have been radicalized by Maitatsine ideologies.

There are various historical perspectives to the origin of the Boko Haram sect. Some scholars hold that the trouble started shortly after members of the *Yusufiyya* movement popularly called Boko Haram marked the one-year remembrance of their leader, Mohammad Yusuf who was killed in 2009 (Idris and Ibrahim, 2011, p. 2; Ngare, 2012). Brock (2012, p. 16) too concurs that the Boko Haram insurgency started in 2009. Those who differ from this opinion hold that its remote stage started in 2001. Another school of thought insists that the insurgency started in 2003 at Zagi-Birriri (Tarmuwa Local Council of Yobe State) about 70 kilometers north of Damaturu. It is believed that after the group clashed with the police, its members who were now

called Talibans after the Islamic fighters (Mujahidins) of Afghanistan relocated to Kanamma, about 3,000 east of Zagi-Biriri, in Yunusari Local Council of the State on December 21, 2003.

Some of their members were arrested to which they sent threats warning of an impending danger if they were not released. Consequently, on December 24, 2003 they set the Kanamma police station ablaze killing an Inspector of Police and injuring others (Ishaku, 2012, pp. 21-32). Its initial attacks in Bauchi and Borno plus those of its splinter factions like Kala Kato and Ansaru took many by surprise.

According to Ishaku (2012), “Boko Haram soon added to its doctrine the notion that working for any arm of the corrupt secular government of Nigeria was against the tenets of Islam. Yusuf, himself, had to quit his civil service job with the Yobe State Government” (p. 25). Unequivocally, Yusuf held that *Boko* represents the whole of Western civilization, which he equated with atheism and unbelief, secular education and Judeo-Christian traditions. He argued that European countries had colonized the Muslim world by establishing artificial borders to weaken Muslim countries in Africa and impose democracy to brainwash Muslims into eliminating Islam by adopting *Boko*. He concluded that anything related to Western civilization or Western institutions must be rejected as *haram* – this includes agriculture, biology, chemistry, physics, engineering, medicine, geography and English language. In Yusuf’s list of things considered as *haram* were employment in the legislature, judiciary and law-enforcement areas of government because Nigeria’s government was non-Islamic (Zenn et al, 2013, pp. 48-49).

In like manner, Kukah (2010) maintains that:

they were obviously contemptuous of the state and its agents and agencies and they openly said so in their sermons. They abused other Muslims whom they considered to have abandoned the paths of Islam. They rejected the corrupting influence of the secular world, they railed against the corruption within the so called Islamic community. They abused the political class openly. Like all millenarian groups, they spoke and looked forward to a future of living in an Islamic state. They believed that a truly Islamic state was possible even though they were ignorant of the real world beyond them. (pp. 3-4)

In summary, the sect gave their creed as follows:

1. We do not believe in the Nigeria Judicial System and we will fight anybody who assists the government in perpetrating illegalities;
2. We would not respect the Nigerian Government because it is illegal. We would continue to fight its military and police because they are not protecting Islam;
3. All the people that we are killing including ward heads, politicians, the police and the armies have erred because they are associating themselves with the government in its effort to arrest the Muslim brothers and sabotage Islam;
4. We want to make it clear that we are fighting not just because our Mosques and canters of learning were destroyed or because our wealth has been seized or because we are chased out of our houses. No, that is not the reason. The reason why we are fighting is because our freedom was curtailed. For a long time, we have been advocating for freedom of worship and assembly and the need for everybody to believe in Allah;

5. It was while we [were] propagating Islam that the federal government and state government connived with Imams and ward heads and attacked us in many states (Idris and Ibrahim, cited in *Weekly Trust*, 2011, p. 2).

To confirm the submission above, an erstwhile Boko Haram Spokesman Abu Dardam noted: “We are strongly against the Nigerian Constitution. We are also against the democracy being practiced in Nigeria. This is the reason why we are fighting. It is irrational for us to accept the proposal of the new governor who was not elected under the provisions of the Islamic Sharia which is the only vibrant option that will guarantee peace, justice and equality. We would continue fighting until we archive a virile society” (Idris and Ibrahim, cited in *Weekly Trust*, 2011, p. 2).

Due to their unprecedented destruction of lives and property including military apparatus, on May 14, 2013, the then President Goodluck Jonathan declared a partial state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States without tampering with the democratic structures (Olumide & Akinola, 2013). After the declaration of the emergency rule, the Joint Military Task Force (JTF) swung into action. Despite the state of emergency, the insurgency did not abate as suicide attacks often take citizens by surprise. Many believed that the inability of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) led-government of Jonathan to bring the situation under control was why he lost power to a former General, now President Muhammadu Buhari who was voted on the All Progressives Congress’ (APC) mantra of change.

Despite the present administration’s effort to nip the situation in the bud, it should be noted that from the first Boko Haram suicide attack on the headquarters of the Nigerian Police Force in June 2011, through a later attack on the UN building in August, both in Abuja (Shettima, cited in Tukur, 2017) to the recent attack of August 20, 2017 in which two people were killed following an ambush by suspected Boko Haram terrorists along Damaturu-Biu road in Yobe (Toromade, 2017), the guerilla tactics of the sect rages on.

Out of the summary of vulnerable places and the main causes of violence in Nigeria released by the Sixth Report on Violence in Nigeria, Borno State was highlighted as still the most dangerous location in the country, with 56.2 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants. The group also noted that despite little progress, the Boko Haram conflict remains a deadly issue, with 3,147 fatalities in 2016. In ten years, from 1 June 2006 to 31 May 2016, it has led to a total of 32,842 fatalities. Roughly the same number of people that were killed directly by the insurgents are (16,666) and by security forces (16,182) (Nigeria Watch Project: Sixth Report on Violence, 2016). (For a detailed breakdown, see Appendix 1.)

The Islamic religion has received a negative public image leading to Islamophobia, radicalization of the religion and a reinforced, deliberate or inadvertent interest in the debate on the symbiosis between religion and politics as well as global insecurity because young Muslims are involved in the actual and attempted attacks (Igboin, 2012, p. 76) perpetrated on unsuspecting members of the society. That is not to say that there are no adherents of other religions in the sect.

#### *Western Education in the Eyes of Islam: Between Statecraft or Witchcraft?*

To put this discussion into perspective, it is crucial to distinguish between “right-wing” and “left-wing” schools of thought in Islam. The “right-wing” school of thought constitutes Islamic

scholars who not only embrace Western Education but always seek the romance between Western education and Islamic civilization. These theologians cherish the basics of religious tolerance as well as living in a pluralistic society.

In the light of the “right-wing” school of thought, a ninth century rationalist Islamic/religious school of thought known as the Mu’talizes argued for a created Qu’ran inspired by the eternal word of Allah. For the scholar, the word of Allah is accessible to human reason. Though this view was marginalized by the “orthodox” mentality (traditionalists/literal interpreters), the Mu’talizes’ school of thought remain influential down to the present (Aina, 2012, p. 129). Perhaps this remote position set the stage for the interface between faith and reason in Islamic theology since it indicates that the knowledge of God in and through the Qur’an demands the use of human faculties (Aina, 2012, p. 129).

It is no doubt that the Egyptian-born Abu Zayd carved a niche for himself in finding a nexus between Islamic faith and Western Education. Born as a devout traditional Muslim, Zayd got radicalized in no time. As a youth, he joined pan-Islamism perhaps to curb the excesses of foreign hegemony. The Muslim brotherhood became a handy tool. But this seeming revolutionary center led to his incarceration for some time.

Zayd’s world view soon changed at the Cairo University where he was exposed to the rudiments of academic life with its attendant values of scientific research and rational persuasion. One would not be surprised that he may have come across the contribution of Islam to mathematics, geometry and medicine. This, sooner than later, shaped his religious views in the perspective of a lively faith engaged by reason. The result was obvious – the best way to bring Islam in productive confrontation with modernity (Aina, 2012, p. 129).

As such, between the early seventies and 1981, Abu Zayd specialized in Islamic studies (Abu Zayd, 2004, pp. 27 & 29). This blended his first-hand experience of traditional Islamic knowledge and piety with rigorous scholarship that embraced antiquated Arabic and European literary and methodological approaches (Aina, 2012, p. 129).

Consequently, according to Aina, (2012, p. 129) Abu Zayd made the following thesis worth appraising by Islamic scholars in Northern-Nigeria:

1. Islam is not inherently incompatible with modernity and some of its projects, based on some facts of Islamic history, especially Renaissance of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries spearheaded by Ibn Rushd (aka. “Averros,” pp. 1126-1198).
2. Islamic literalism (exemplified by “dogmatic Islam” of the Middle Ages that codified the “Islamic right” i.e. the Shari’a) may not be compatible with modernity.
3. Islam, with symbolism and hermeneutical/contextual reading of the Qur’an, can be compatible with modernity.
4. The compatibility of Islam with modernity is possible if there is a rediscovery of the importance of hermeneutics through *ijtihad* i.e. the reapplication of faith via rigorous human reasoning. As such, there may not be fixed interpretations of the Qu’ran, the Sunna and Islam (Alalwani, 2007, pp. 120-121).

It is significant to note that this submission is not exclusive to Abu Zayd. Abdullahi Ahmed an-Naim is another moderate Islamic Scholar who has written volumes on the relationship between Islam and secular government. He interprets the Qur'an as instructing Muslims to observe Sharia as their life's work, their responsibility, their struggle - not their government's. The scholar notes: "My motivation is in fact about being an honest, true-to-myself Muslim, rather than someone complying with state dictates." He even goes ahead to question the concept of an Islamic state, seeing it as a post-colonial construct based on a mid-20th Century European-style state believing that the right answer for Muslims is a secular state which promotes human rights and provides access for Muslims and others to practice their faith freely (Johnston, 2012).

Their (Zayd and an-Naim) thoughts fall within "Basic Islam" as distinguished from "Cultural Islam." On the one hand, "Basic Islam" argues for an Islam with values that are in congruence with the needs of universal humanity. To this end, Islamic doctrine married to legal prescriptions needs ongoing reorientation. This Islamic world-view opens up the frontier of "a jurisprudence of reasoned argument and practical wisdom that takes the sacred text only as its starting point" (Souaiaia, 123). In the light of this submission, it is also argued that Muslim nations do want to align with the international community and international human rights (Gilani, Wali, Rehman & Mujtaba, 2014, p. 99).

On the other hand, "cultural Islam" which many Muslims regard as "sacred Islam" refers to a specific format that evolved at a specific time and within a socio-cultural context. In time, it took the twist of historical, monolithic and essentialist form which makes Westerners label it as "Fundamentalist Islam" (Aina, 2012, p. 131). This may not be far from the "gospel" of those who declared *Boko as Haram*.

In contradistinction to "right-wing" theology, Islamic theologians who perceive Western education as an intruding foreign system which denigrates the teachings of Allah are "left-wing" theologians. "Left-wing" teaching often described as radical Islam push for a puritanical ideology which breeds violence.

Some scholars have defended the "left-wing" thesis thus:

it is argued that most Islamic theologians, including reformers, revivalists and Islamists (extremists) either from the Sufi or Sunni tradition, from the Wahhabis to Sayyid Qutb and to Osama Bin Laden have in one way or the other attacked the validity of secular political authority. They have also questioned the authority of Muslim but secular political leaders who have failed both in their personal and political lives to uphold correct Islamic ideals. (Barkindo, 2013, p. 30)

The ideological framework and modus operandi of faraway extremist sects like the Muslim brotherhood, Taliban, Al Qaeda, Iranian theocracy, Wahhabism and Nigeria's erstwhile home-grown Maitatsine, plus recent sects like Kala Kato, Ansaru and now Boko Haram are indicative of "Left-wing" Islamic theology.

While a host of "Left-wing" ideologies abound within Islam, one that readily comes to mind is that of 14<sup>th</sup> century Ibn Taymiyya – The professor of Islamic law who comes from the Harran (an old city within the Arabian Peninsula between Sham and Iraq) is said to have picked up some

religious elements in Islam and turned them into ideological precepts (Mehdi, 2007, pp. 17-33). In his attempt to defend radical Islamism, Taymiyya argued that:

1. The legitimacy of political authority must be based on God's revelation in the Quran as taught and handed over by his Prophet. As such, all creatures must submit to Allah the ultimate mystery of things and also surrender voluntarily and unconditionally to his word and prophet (Cheneb, 1961, p. 952).
2. The unity and sovereignty of Allah is the foundation of political, social and moral systems propounded by the prophets. All human beings, individually or collectively, must surrender all their rights of lordship, legislation to Allah in such a way that no one is allowed to pass orders or make commands in his own right – such commands must not be obeyed. The application of the law of Allah, therefore, is the only prerequisite for legitimate political authority and valid means of developing and reforming all societies. This strong view may have come from the influence of Islamic jihad on his belief system hence his legitimizing it as enshrined in the Quran which needs no further discussion (Barkindo, 2013, p. 33).

From the speeches of the leaders of Boko Haram, audio/video tapes and leaflets around North-Eastern States of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, it is easy to conclude that the sect is contemptuous of anything western. Yusuf's personal charisma, oratory and resilience endeared him to the army of jobless youths and Almajiri in the northern parts of the country who were ready for any kind of job. The sect had, in the light of radical Islam, raised the following concerns against the state and western civilization:

1. Western education is a form of “modern-witchcraft” which enslaves the passions.
2. Education is the white man's way of cheapening religion, showing contempt for it and a tool for its elimination.
3. Western education brings about moral decadence and laxity and indecent dressing especially by women.
4. Education encourages consumption of alcohol, the operation of hospitality industry especially pubs and bars.
5. Education, being the way of the white man, makes people to question the teachings of Islam or seek informed clarification.
6. Education has empowered Islamic aristocrats within the region who have in turn sold out with powers that be (infidels) to manipulate their kith and kin.
7. Western education stands in the way of theocracy and the full implementation of Sharia law.
8. Democracy with its scorecards of freedom encourages contempt for religion and the Law of Allah.
9. Democratic representation oiled on the wheels of choice of leaders enslaves Muslims under the rule of infidels.

*A Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*, (cited in Kukah, 2014) contends that the aims and objectives of the sect include:

- a) Limit the ability of the government and enhance their capability to provide public services. They often do this by sabotage of public utilities such as destruction of oil installations, sources of power and transportation, poisoning water supply, and so on.
- b) Obtaining the support of neutral but critical segments of the population (media, academia, security agencies, other leaders).
- c) Increase its own visibility and publicity at the expense of government.
- d) Destruction of the confidence of government in its legitimacy.
- e) Neutralize the coercive power of the government (attacking or sacking police or military formations).

It is safe to conclude that “left-wing” Islamism does not approve of political leadership of whatever sort, but the full implementation of Sharia law. It may be reason why an erstwhile spokesman of Boko Haram, one Abu Dardam said, “we are against the Nigerian Constitution. We are also against the democracy being practiced in Nigeria. This is the reason why we are fighting...we would continue fighting until we achieve a virile society” (Idris & Ibrahim, 2012, p. 2).

The irony is, what others conceive as statecraft, “they” perceive as “modern-witchcraft.” Boko, education, is seen as making people blind from the realities of true faith and worship of Allah. This supposition sees science and technology as artilleries for western superiority and subjugation. Its attendant goods of civilization, liberalization and freedom are viewed as mere tricks of wooing the Islamic world to their whims and caprices. In their judgment, immorality, nudity, drunkenness and contempt for God are bye products of a corrupt West bent on dominating the world. The conclusion is, this is unacceptable and should be fought at all cost. They see Islamaphobia as a western propaganda which is baseless and must be confronted through jihad.

Zenn makes a succinct description of what Boko is and the distinction between *ilimin boko* and *ilimin Islamiyya*. He stresses that the word crept into the lexicon of northern Nigeria in the nineteenth century with the coming of colonial rule and Western education. *Boko*, derived from the English word “book,” was often used in relation to a second noun, *ilimi*, meaning “education.” As such, the full expression, *ilimin boko*, was derogatorily used to refer to Western education. It was often used to distinguish it (*ilimin boko*) from what the Muslim community at the time understood to be the only form of education - that is, *Ilimin Islamiyya*, or “Islamic education.”

Accordingly, *Ilimin Islamiyya* focused on the teachings and recitation of the Qur’an in Arabic. This became the entry point for children into Islam. *Ilimin boko* on the other hand, taught Western education. Since it did not teach about the Qur’an, Islam or use Arabic, it was considered suspect. As such, the “white man,” with his incomprehensible ways, was also often associated with witchcraft – *Boka* in Hausa. This understanding is supported by Islamic theology because every act is either *halal*, meaning “permissible,” or *haram*, meaning “impermissible.” It is within this context that *ilimin Islamiyya* was considered *halal* while *ilimin boko* was *haram* - and anyone undertaking Western Education was considered to be a sinner, carrying out an impermissible act (Zenn et al, 2013, p. 48). This summation lives one in no doubt that one day, a sect would rise up to defend and propagate a theology and jurisprudence such as that of Boko Haram.

*Taymiyya's Overt Communicating of Meaning in the Light of the Insurgency*

The phrase, communicating meaning, as frequently used throughout this study is defined as the denotative or literal meaning of the words *Halal* and *Haram* used in evaluating the ideology of Boko Haram. The paper intends to investigate the communicative implication of these words by examining their exact meaning in the light of the insurgency. It also seeks to analyze how individual actors framed their circumstances in communication with one another and how this affected their subsequent interpretations and actions as events unfolded (Cornelissen, Mantere & Basra, 2014).

Since this paper seeks to unravel communicating meaning in contending with statecraft or “modern-witchcraft” in Nigeria in the light of the Boko Haram insurgency, it shall underscore the denotative rather than the connotative meaning of *Halal* and *Haram*. This means that the study would evaluate the literal primary meaning of *Halal* and *Haram* as ideological basis used by members of the sect. This is drawn from Ibn Taymiyya’s school of thought.

The application of Ibn Taymiyya’s views on the existential insurrection in Nigeria is central to this study. Taymiyya’s thesis falls within “cultural Islam” which we saw earlier. Barkindo (2012) outlines the implication of his position as it relates to the context of this paper:

1. Taymiyya makes a case of theocracy with the full implementation of Sharia law which can only be possible in an Islamic State. Nigeria is a secular State.
2. The Islamic scholar’s position implies that government becomes a political agency meant to enforce the law of God. How can this be possible in a cosmopolitan and diverse society like ours?
3. He forbade the separation between State and religion but this forced-marriage constantly causes friction. In Islam, religion and politics are one and the same. What becomes of others who may not hold contrary views and creeds? What is the dividing line between religion and politics?
4. Deducing from his submission, both ruler and ruled are not only subjects of God but are transformed by it. As such, what is civil right in democracy becomes religious duty in theocracy. When democracy clashes with theocracy what becomes of this elephant-fight?

The above interpretation prepares the ground for an investigation into how far Abu Zayd’s theory can turn “modern-witchcraft” to statecraft. Perhaps members of the sect and their sympathizers who are cold in embracing Western Education because of their religious beliefs can borrow a leaf from Zayd’s teachings namely:

1. Islam is not incompatible with modernity and education: North-Eastern Muslims and scholars must realize the great contributions of Islam to fields of human endeavor such as medicine, mathematics, geometry to mention just a few.
2. Cohesion between faith and reason: Zayd saw the invaluable place of human reasoning in reading, understanding and interpretation of the Holy Quran. This is enough sermon pertaining the romance of faith and reason concerning those who use religion as a tool for justifying violence.

3. Learning from the past: The pedigree of Islamic faith which propelled Zayd to seek greater knowledge behooves all to learn from the past to fortify the present for a robust future.
4. Education liberates: Education which the Islamic scholar enjoyed liberates from the shackles of extremism (little wonder he distanced himself from the Muslim brotherhood upon going to the University of Cairo).
5. Education provides checks and balances: As far as the world is concerned, one cannot dispense with the by products of *Boko*, education which the Islamic scholar praises, since through jurisprudence and enforcement of human rights, it provides for check and balances.

### *Failures in Countering the Literal Approach of the Insurgents*

- a) **Government failure:** The lack of a potent counter insurgency military architecture provided the insurgents with ample time to retreat and re-group. Government may have initially treated the fight against terror with kid-gloves. The lack of professionalism displayed by some members of the armed forces especially the police in the public torturing and execution of some suspected members of the sect would in the long run trigger the insurgency into a full guerilla warfare in which members of the sect target military installations as well as government and financial institutions. Furthermore, poor policy articulation and response made people in the region, victims of the resultant inaction or paralysis of statecraft to which residents paid with their lives and property (Shettima, cited in Tukur, 2017).
- b) **Role of Religious and traditional leaders:** The recruitment and radicalization of the youth in the region into militia groups is fingered on religious elements who pose as clerics to perpetuate their crude religious ideologies. The *Almajiri* system in the North which makes children from various parts of the country to engage in *Karatun Allo*, Islamic Studies and street begging, under the supposed supervision of an Imam (usually untrained) or scholar has provided a breeding ground for radicalization of kids who are often used as female-suicide bombers. The complicity of traditional leaders in the region in the Boko Haram imbroglio is not in question as some were purportedly financed to let the group access their communities.
- c) **Media-Involvement:** The initial bad publicity the media gave the insurrection through broadcasting and televising of the brutish manner in which some leaders of the sect were publicly executed further emboldened the group to avenge the death of their commanders. The gory account of these tragic events by Mike Hanna of Al Jazeera is really blood chilling and may have set the tone for the viciousness of post Yusuf Boko Haram (Kukah, 2014). For fear and lack of professionalism, many local media firms in Nigeria have had to engage in the unethical practice of relying on foreign media sources as basis for reporting the insurgency.
- d) **Complicity of Citizens:** For every conspiracy theory, there is a group that stands to gain politically (Shettima, cited in Tukur, 2017). The Boko Haram narrative is not different. This is indicative of the concept of Problem Reaction Solution (PRS) – a situation where the elite in a society would ignite crisis and stand aloof. When the people are almost tired of looking for a solution, they pose indicating they could help – the masses would then beg them to

come to their rescue and when the elite provide the solution, the people celebrate them as heroes.

Until recently, citizens were cooperating with members of the sect by providing safe havens for them in their homes. This further frustrated government's efforts at curbing the menace. In some cases, the insurgents used civilians as shields while attacking soldiers. The failure of parents to fend for their children who are often pushed into street begging has made innocent children vulnerable to various abuses one of which is radicalization into groups like Boko Haram. Apparently, its genocidal tentacles cannot be checkmated because of leadership inertia, cowardice of Christians, fear of Muslims and sacred cow syndrome in Nigeria (Gbinjie, cited in 2011, p. 20).

### *Findings*

1. **Socio-political Indices:** This study has uncovered several social indices which may have prompted the insurgents into taking arms against the government: poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, insensitivity and media-failure.

- a) **Poverty:** With the high rate of people who are living below the poverty line in the region, crime becomes an easy alternative. The believe that some people were created rich and others poor so that those who are well-off can offer little stipends to the needy has contributed in putting the region in its present condition.

Uwais (2013) agrees with the above submission: "today the North of Nigeria continues to throw up Nigeria's poorest indices on matters relating to healthcare, nutrition, education, empowerment and productivity. Consequently - insecurity, violence and poverty remain rife in that region. Statics have it that 2/3 of the 102 million poor people in Nigeria live in the North. Extreme poverty in the North translates into extreme vulnerability to the effects of climate change, food security and so much more."

Recently, the Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II while delivering a key note address during the opening ceremony of Kaduna States Investment and Economic Summit (KADINVEST), titled "Promoting Investment Amidst Economic Challenges" said, the northern part of the country especially the North East and West are the poorest in the country and even in the world (Sanusi, 2017). In fact, poverty and ignorance are considered as fertilizers for insurgency anywhere and in any age (Chukwuma & Iortyer, 2014).

- b) **Illiteracy:** As the most backward region compared to other parts of Nigeria, this paper has discovered that low literacy level makes the youth population in the North-East easy target for politicians to use them as thugs or criminals to target perceived enemies. The scenario in the north-east (north-west) zone(s) of Nigeria nosedived such that Daily Trust of 17 May 2011 reported that this region had the highest percentage of children who have never attended school; the lowest literacy rates and the highest percentage of children not able to read. This was the finding of the Nigeria Education Data Survey 2010 presented by the National Population Commission (NPC) in Abuja.

- c) **Unemployment:** Because of the high rate of unemployment (Uwais, 2013) in the area under consideration, those who are not gainfully employed resort to violence as a way of meeting personal and family needs. This social index indicates a high rate of vulnerability for idlers and people who are less engaged in either menial or white-collar jobs, falling prey to criminal elements who use others for their selfish aims. The governments of the region have failed in harnessing the rich potentials of arable land, rich livestock, variety of wild-life and numerous mineral resources for optimum employment opportunities for their citizens. Youth employment, social inequality, social and economic exclusion are fingered as factors responsible for the insurgency (Chukwuma & Iortyer, 2014).
- d) **Insensitivity:** The insensitivity and negligence of the federal government towards the plight of people in the region as well as its failure to nip the crisis in the bud at its earliest stage emboldened the operations of the insurgents. Except for the Almajiri Boarding School System (which has since been neglected) that was initiated by the Goodluck Jonathan Administration, there has been no clear vision for the region as regards its jobless teeming youths and the education of the girl-child in the region.
- e) **Media-Compromise:** It has been ascertained that the media is a major culprit in the rise and proliferation of the Boko Haram operations. As soon as the public execution of leaders of the sect was broadcast by the media, the insurgency became deadlier. Sometimes, the media under or over-reports causality figures; at other times, their reportage belittles the armed forces in the eye of the insurgents which further boosts the morale of the group. The study has discovered that there are occasions where local media houses rely on foreign sources for what is happening in Nigeria.
2. **Religious and Cultural Indices:** This paper has revealed that religious and cultural matrices are possible causes for youth radicalization in the region. Hate-preaching, youth radicalization and extremism as well as the *Almajiri* system have also been factored in as responsible for the insurrection.
- a) **Hate-preaching:** In Northern Nigeria, hate preaching is common place. Since the Boko Haram sect began their campaign against the Federal Government and Western Education through itinerant preaching and distribution of flyers, it suggests that the impact of such brand of evangelization is destructive. The paper revealed that the practice of preachers on Juma'at prayer sessions, in motor backs or evangelism-vehicles, preaching hate-sermons with the aid of hi-tech microphones has also contributed to the rise of Boko Haram.
- b) **Islam/the Almajiri system:** There is a thin line between culture and religion in the north. Perhaps that is why Sanusi (2017) queried why love books cannot be written in northern Nigerian stressing that it is wrong to burn books of science based on religion because the books have not committed any crime. The practice of itinerant Islamic catechism known in Arabic as the Almajiri system (Chukwuma & Iortyer, 2014) is another factor responsible for the insurgency.

- c) The paper notes that the Almajiri system which erroneously suggests that Islam is incompatible with education is a breeding ground for miscreants. The Almajiri children who are usually under a Mallam who is himself unlettered fall prey to a lot of abuses. These children who grow without parental love and under inhuman conditions are easily transformed into instruments in the hands of political bigwigs who use them as thugs during elections. Other Muslim countries have pushed on, but Northerners are fighting for the entrenchment of their culture and Islamic civilization (Sanusi, 2017).
- d) **Youth radicalization and extremism:** This paper has discovered that youth radicalization and extremism flow from hate-preaching and illiteracy occasioned by the Almajiri system, poor-parental upbringing and brainwashing of kids. A situation where the youth are brainwashed to hate foreigners, are made to believe that their religion is the only acceptable religion in the world and that Western Education is evil, rising up against the government or anyone becomes an effortless venture.

By way of analysis, the following tables provide evidence for the above claims. Table 1 indicates the possible causes and remedies of Boko Haram insurgency; Table 2 is a comparative analysis of “Boko” (Western Education) as *Halal* (Lawful) or *Haram* (Unlawful); Table 3 compares previous and current positions of counter insurgency strategies; and Table 4 presents the socio-political, religious and cultural indices of the insurgency as findings of the study.

Table 1. Possible Causes and Remedies of Boko Haram Insurgency

| Possible Causes of Boko Haram |  | Possible Remedies of Boko Haram  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| 1.                            | Failure of government (Shettima, cited in Tukur, 2017).  | Counter-insurgency initiatives   |
| 2.                            | Failure of religious and traditional leaders             | Balancing faith and reason, separation between state and religion and training and licensing preachers |
| 3.                            | Media-involvement (Kukah, 2014)                          | Investing in investigative reporting   |
| 4.                            | Complicity of citizens (Shettima, cited in Tukur, 2017). | Reconstruction of the North-East and reconciliation as well as rehabilitation of victims               |

Table 2. “Boko” (Western Education) as *Halal* (Lawful) or *Haram* (Unlawful): A Comparative Analysis

| <i>Halal</i> (Lawful)  | <i>Haram</i> (Unlawful)  |
|--|--|
| 1. Islam is not inherently incompatible with modernity and some of its projects. | The legitimacy of political authority must be based on God’s revelation in the Quran as taught and handed over by his Prophet - The ideals of western education are in contradistinction to this call. |

|    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 2. | Islamic literalism (exemplified by “dogmatic Islam” of the Middle Ages that codified the “Islamic right” i.e. the Shari’a) may not be compatible with modernity. | The application of the law of Allah is the only perquisite for legitimate political authority and valid means of developing and reforming all societies – This makes it incompatible with the demands of western education. |
| 3. | Islam, with symbolism and hermeneutical/contextual reading of the Qur’an, can be compatible with modernity.  | Muslim and secular political leaders must not fail in upholding the correct ideals of Islam in their personal and political lives (Barkindo, 2013, p. 30) – Western Education constitutes a hindrance to this.              |
| 4. | Islam allows for the rediscovery of the importance of hermeneutics through the reapplication of faith via rigorous human reasoning.                              | Western education stands in the way of the unity and sovereignty of Allah which is the foundation of political, social and moral systems propounded by the prophets.  |

Table 3. Counter Insurgency Strategies

| Previous Studies |   | Current Studies   |
|------------------|---|---|
| 1.               | Effective network for intelligence gathering and analysis (Nchi, 2013).   | Effective counter-insurgency must be predicated on strategic intelligence and reconnaissance (Chukwuma & Iortyer, 2014).  |
| 2.               | Strategic surveillance aimed at dictating membership, motivation, and operational modalities of the sect (Nchi, 2013).  | Preventive and mitigative measures through strategic intelligence, pragmatic policies and proactive strategies to counter the terrorists’ designs in an attempt to forestall and/or mitigate terror (Chukwuma & Iortyer, 2014). |
| 3.               | Clinical investigation and prognostication of the socio-psychological and socio-economic currents that underlie the emergence, growth and sustenance of the sect and its activities (Nchi, 2013). | Systematic surveillance and reconnoitering in an attempt to stop them [the insurgents] before they strike (Chukwuma & Iortyer, 2014).   |
| 4.               | Proactive engagement of civil society stakeholders in the fight against the sect (Nchi, 2013).  | Adoption of counter-terrorism strategy by the Nigerian government through its relevant agencies to contain the insurgency in the interest of national security (Chukwuma & Iortyer, 2014).                                      |
| 5.               | Identifying and foreclosing sources of inspiration, funding and recruitment to the sect (Nchi, 2013).   | A necessary paradigm shift from anti-terrorism to strategic counterterrorism as a way forward (Chukwuma & Iortyer, 2014).   |
| 6.               | Tactical exploration of the diplomatic option in an attempt to come to terms with legitimate grievances of the sect   | Deferring from the traditional anti-terrorism campaign in which terror is confronted  |

|  |               |   |
|--|---------------|---|
|  | (Nchi, 2013). | by way of reactive and hyper-defensive combatancy (Chukwuma & Iortyer, 2014). |
|--|---------------|---|

Table 4. Findings: Socio-political, religious and cultural indices of the insurgency

| <b>Socio-Political Indices</b> |  | <b>Religious and Cultural Indices</b> |
|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1.                             | Poverty (Uwais, 2013 & Sanusi, 2017)   | Islam                                 |
| 2.                             | Illiteracy (Daily Trust, 17 May, 2011) | Almajiri system                       |
| 3.                             | Unemployment (Uwais, 2013)             | Youth radicalization                  |
| 4.                             | Insensitivity                          | Hate-preaching                        |
| 5.                             | Media-compromise                       | Extremism                             |

As such, by way of properly communicating the meaning of *haram* and *halal*, this study makes the following submissions:

- a) Islam is not incompatible with modernity and education;
- b) There is cohesion between faith and reason;
- c) It is crucial to learn from the past - especially from renowned moderate Islamic scholars;
- d) Education liberates from the shackles of ignorance and extremism;
- e) Education provides the architecture of modern statecraft as well as checks and balances.

Far from idolizing western education, it must be acknowledged that education has its excesses like modernism and secularism which often leads to exaggeration of freedom and irresponsibility.

**Recommendations and Conclusion**

*Recommendations*

Apart from the social indices of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, religious ideologies are responsible for the menace. To counter the literal communication of the meaning of *Halal* and *Haram*, the paper suggested that building strong statecraft through developing a robust Marshall plan which includes education, employment and reintegration of victims could help in curbing the menace. This can be accessed through:

- a. **Counter-insurgency initiatives:** Counter-insurgency narratives include setting a panel of inquiry by the Federal Government into the remote and immediate causes of the insurgency and involving traditional and religious leaders at combating further attacks. This also involves developing feedback mechanisms which makes both the people and repentant Boko Haram members to bear their mind about the sad events that have taken place. These initiatives must factor in the reconstruction, reconciliation and rehabilitation factors earlier mentioned.
- b. **Balancing faith and reason:** In order to balance faith and religion, government must ensure (through legislation) that religious institutions have curricular for Western Education. This law must be supervised to ensure compliance. Only then can faith and reason be balanced in the secular space. It is important for Muslims to adopt Western

Education and stop using religion and culture to set the region backward (Sanusi, 2017). Religious organizations also need to promote inter-faith dialogue and advance moderate ideas towards facilitating understanding and cooperation on a broader scale (Johnston, 2012). This is key to making sure that western education is not seen as witchcraft.

- c. Separation between state and religion:** The proposition that Islam is synonymous with politics can be resolved if there is clear separation between state and religion. In that way, religion will enjoy its freedom while government functions without undue interference. However, since religion is practiced within the state, the state has the right to check the excesses of religious leaders. Nevertheless, religion should not be limited in its capacity to address issues, but neither should it be privileged with specific immunities from the law that do not apply to nonreligious institutions or citizens (Fadel, 2013, p. 1260). It is observed that “[w]e must confront this menace head-on, by wiping away all their traces and that of their sponsors. Nigeria cannot take her place in the comity of nations when we allow parochial religious extremism to becloud our young democracy and our march to nationhood. Enough is enough for religious tyrants and demagogues” (Gbinjie, 2011, p. 20).

The state has the responsibility of reminding its citizens of their allegiance to the Federal Republic of Nigeria which is a secular state governed under the constitution. To achieve this, Rane suggests a system of governance based on the universal principles of social justice, as envisaged by the masses, rather than “crude appeals to the punitive aspects of Sharia Law or creating an Islamic state in the conventional modern sense” (2010, p. 1). Rane favors a representative government otherwise called democracy which is still a product of westernization. This means that all must work at making Nigeria’s democracy work.

- d. Training and licensing preachers:** One of the lessons the state can learn from the havoc Boko Haram has caused is to license preachers. Since anyone can pose as a preacher, the government should put a law in place which will license not only Islamic preachers but all clerics in the country. This will go a long way in checkmating their excesses. Also criminal elements who pose to tarnish the image of genuine clerics should be prosecuted. This will help genuine clerics to communicate the real meaning of *halal* and *haram* to their adherents. This will go a long way in reducing radicalization and literal interpretation of the Quran.
- e. Investigative reporting:** The absence of real investigative reporting in Nigeria due to its risk factor, poor training, lack of good remuneration and insurance cover for journalists can be reversed if these are provided. Investigative journalists have a role in countering the narrative through interpreting either the connotative or denotative meaning of the videos and messages of members of the sect. Only investigative journalists who dare time and circumstance would be able to survive the fire-line to provide the general public with exclusive scoop and coverage on the activities of Boko Haram, the role of citizens, the complicity of security agencies and government’s action or action in the insurgency.

## Conclusion

The metaphor of the Platonic allegory of the cave is essential to this study - Only one who has come out of the cave and sees light is able to tell the story. Those who remain in the cave are not only bereft of that experience but may not believe even if someone who has seen the light tries to convince them. The puzzle which remains is the communication gap between “left-wing” Islamic Theologians like Ibn Taymiyya and “right-wing” Abu Zayd. Apparently, only the true communication of meaning can bridge this communication gap in both academic and religious circles. Rather than widespread Islamophobia, Igboin suggests a more positive construction of the image of Islam as a good beginning (2012, p. 83) for distinction between radical Islam as employed by Boko Haram and moderate Islam which is a pious way of life.

This paper leaves us with the challenge of academic discipline namely, the voracious desire for further research in finding objective intellectualism while living in a pluralistic society. It has, however, succeeded in bringing to the fore the cognitive rendering of communication as an important tool for rendering meaning. The task of elite and Islamic scholars of North-Eastern Nigerian origin is to guarantee that Western education is not seen as “Modern-witchcraft” but factored in as a major player for the overall development of the human person – Since *Boko* (education) was not *Haram* (forbidden) from time immemorial, it is yet to be seen how it will be in contemporary times where it is indispensable in building statecraft.

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#### Appendix 1: Timeline of the Boko Haram attacks from January–August, 2017

| Date |           | Attack   |
|------|-----------|--|
| 1.   | January 7 | At least five soldiers were killed during an attack by Boko Haram fighters on an army base in Buni Yadi, Yobe state.   |
| 2.   | January 8 | Two people in Borno were killed in a residential area in the Kaleri area of Gwange after an attack by two female suicide bombers. Hours prior, three all male suicide bombers attacked a military checkpoint in the area, killing themselves |

|    |            |  |
|----|------------|--|
|    |            | and a civilian self-defense fighter after one of the vests detonated.  |
| 3. | January 13 | Militants attacked the 119 Battalion and 133 Special Forces Battalion of 7 Brigade deployed to Kangarwa, Kukawa Local Government Area, Borno state. Three soldiers were killed in the encounter that also resulted in 10 Boko Haram casualties. On the same day, four suicide bombers staged an attack in Madagali that killed at least five civilians.  |
| 4. | January 16 | In what was the first attack of many on the premises of the University of Maiduguri (UNIMAID) in 2017, a twin suicide bombing by two teenagers on the school campus resulted in the death of three people, including Professor Aliyu Mani, the director of the university's Veterinary Teaching Hospital.  |
| 5. | January 23 | After invading the Dzaku village of Askira-Uba Local Government Area of Borno state, Boko Haram fighters killed eight people and kidnapped an undetermined number of women and children.   |
| 6. | January 25 | A civilian member of the Joint Task Force (JTF) in the Kaleri district of Maiduguri, Borno, died after two suicide bombers detonated their vests in a confrontation while trying to enter a mosque.  |
| 7. | January 28 | A recently secured Maiduguri-Biu highway was attacked by Boko Haram terrorists, leading to the death of seven people. Reports claimed that the number of casualties was actually more than 20 civilians in a convoy that had been travelling under military escort. The Theatre Commander of Operation Lafiya Dole, Major General Lucky Irabor, refuted the figure, claiming only one person had died. |
| 8. | January 31 | One person died after a suicide bomber attacked a mosque in Dalori quarters, close to UNIMAID, during morning prayers. Another attack was reported in  |

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|     |             | the Cameroonian border town of Kontcha, killing five United Nations contractors: a Kenyan, a Cameroonian, and three Nigerians.  |
| 9.  | February 5  | Boko Haram terrorists launched an attack on a military base and burned down Sasawa, a town near Damaturu, Yobe state. No official death toll was released.  |
| 10. | February 10 | Seven soldiers lost their lives after troops of Operation Lafiya Dole walked into a Boko Haram ambush in Ajiri village of Dikwa Local Government Area, Borno state.   |
| 11. | February 11 | Terrorists invaded Mussa Village of Askira-Uba LGA, Borno state, burning dozens of residential houses with a man suspected to have been trapped in the attack.  |
| 12. | February 13 | About 30 armed Boko Haram terrorists gained access to Mifa community in Chibok LGA, Borno, killing an Islamic scholar and breaking a boy's hand.  |
| 13. | February 16 | An attack by three suicide bombers near Muna Garage, a bus station in Maiduguri, left two civilians dead.   |
| 14. | March 14    | Boko Haram released a video that showed the execution of three people accused of being spies for the Nigerian army.   |
| 15. | March 15    | Boko Haram terrorists attacked Magumeri in Borno state, killing seven people.   |
| 16. | March 16    | Four soldiers died in another attack on Magumeri after an estimated 300 Boko Haram fighters targeted the military and a local police station.   |
| 17. | March 25    | Militants kidnapped 18 girls and four women from Pulka village in Gwoza.  |
| 18. | March 30    | In two separate attacks, Boko Haram abducted 22 girls and women from the village of Pulka and outside the village of Dumba. The abducted victims in Dumba were four women from the family of a herdsman who had refused to pay protection money to the terrorist group. |
| 19. | March 31    | At least three people were killed by Boko   |

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|     |          | Haram in an attack on Kaye near Gumisiri village in Damboa Local Government Area of Borno, where terrorists burned down the village and kidnapped dozens of people, including three women.   |
| 20. | April 5  | Boko Haram fighters killed seven men in a farming community outside Maiduguri and stole an estimated 360 head of livestock.  |
| 21. | April 12 | A soldier was killed during a suicide and gun attack on a military checkpoint on the outskirts of Maiduguri.   |
| 22. | May 4    | An attack by two female suicide bombers on Mandarari ward in Konduga LGA in Borno resulted in the death of five people.  |
| 23. | May 13   | In another attack on UNIMAID, two suicide bombers detonated their vests when they were confronted, killing themselves and one security guard. Nine Boko Haram terrorists also killed 11 farmers in Amarwa, a village in Konduga LGA, 16 kilometers away from Maiduguri.  |
| 24. | May 15   | A suicide bomb attack by three female bombers resulted in the death of two people in Shuwari Buri village, close to Maiduguri. Burned livestock and litter was left behind after an attack by Boko Haram on the mainly Shuwa Arab village of Mairi in northeast Borno state, the epicenter of its bloody eight-year insurgency (AFP) |
| 25. | May 18   | In two separate attacks, three suicide bombers were killed when they attacked UNIMAID again, reportedly killing one soldier.   |
| 26. | May 20   | Seven people died when Boko Haram fighters stormed remote villages in Mussa and shot at villagers in Askira-Uba LGA, Borno state. An unspecified number of people were also reportedly kidnapped.  |
| 27. | June 7   | In multiple attacks that rocked the eastern axis of Maiduguri, at least 10 people were killed.   |

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| 28. | June 8  | After the arrest of a Boko Haram commander in a failed attack in the village of Hambagba, near Gwoza, on the Cameroon border, almost a dozen terrorists invaded the community, killing four people and kidnapping six.                                |
| 29. | June 9  | Two teenage boys were killed in Fadama Rake village in Hong Council, Adamawa state, after unknown people handed them explosives contained in a polythene bag.   |
| 30. | June 11 | After simultaneous raids by Boko Haram terrorists on Komdi and Tuyan villages in Borno, at least five people were reportedly killed.  |
| 31. | June 18 | 12 people were killed by three suicide bombers who detonated explosives in separate attacks on Kofa, a village that's only 8 kilometers from Maiduguri.   |
| 32. | June 20 | After an ambush attack by militants on a police convoy on the Maiduguri-Biu highway, three people were killed while 16 women were reportedly kidnapped. Boko Haram later released a video, claiming some of the kidnapped women were police officers. |
| 33. | June 25 | A UNIMAID security guard was killed by a suicide bomber, while eight others died in another attack by four suicide bombers in Zannari community in Maiduguri.   |
| 34. | July 11 | 12 JTF members and seven civilians were killed in separate attacks on Moloi, Judumeri and Polo-Sabongari areas of Maiduguri.  |
| 35. | July 15 | A 12-year-old boy was killed at Muna Delti area of Jere Local Government Council, Borno state after he was strapped with an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) by suspected Boko Haram terrorists.   |
| 36. | July 17 | Eight people were killed when a female suicide bomber detonated explosives at a mosque in Maiduguri.  |
| 37. | July 23 | Seven people died when suicide bombers attacked two Internally Displaced Persons  |

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|     |           | (IDPs) camps in Maiduguri.  |
| 38. | July 25   | In what was Boko Haram's bloodiest attack in 2017, at least 69 people, including soldiers and civilians, died after an ambush of an oil exploration team in the Magumeri area of Borno. |
| 39. | July 28   | At least eight people were killed and 14 others injured in a suicide bomb attack on an IDP camp in Dikwa LGA, Borno.  |
| 40. | August 1  | After an attack on Mildu village in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa state, Boko Haram terrorists killed 7 people and injured 10 others.                                       |
| 41. | August 4  | A suicide bomb attack at the Molai General Hospital, Maiduguri led to the death of three people including a hospital assistant.   |
| 42. | August 5  | At least 31 fishermen were killed by Boko Haram jihadists in two separate attacks on the islands of Duguri and Dabar Wanzam in Lake Chad.   |
| 43. | August 9  | At least one person was confirmed dead from an attack by Boko Haram Islamists in Ghumbili community in the Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa.                                   |
| 44. | August 11 | Two tractor operators were killed by Boko Haram terrorists in Jere LGA of Borno while they were working on a farm.  |
| 45. | August 12 | At least four people were killed in an attack at Wanori-Amarwa community of Konduga LGA of Borno.   |
| 46. | August 15 | A suicide bomb attack on a market in Konduga resulted in the death of 16 people, with more than 80 others sustaining injuries.  |
| 47. | August 20 | Two people were killed following an ambush by suspected Boko Haram terrorists along Damaturu-Biu road in Yobe.  |

(Toromade, 2017)