

Mirroring the Past in the Present: A Comparative Analysis between *Early Khawārij* and Boko-Haram

Dr. Abdulwahab Danladi Shittu *

Abstract

The deadliest religious sect ever experienced by Nigerians is the *Jamā'atu Ahlu Sunnah li-Da'wah wa-I-Jihād* popularly known as Boko Haram. The group was founded by Muhammad Yusuf in 2002 and was initially known to be a Jihadist organisation based in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State in the north-eastern Nigeria. With the killing of the founder on 30th July 2009 in a Boko Haram uprising and the subsequent takeover of leadership by Abubakar Shekau, the group turned to an insurgent that has indiscriminately killed tens of thousands of Nigerians and have displaced millions of citizens from their homes. The militant group attracted the attention of the entire world between 2014 and 2016 when it abducted some schoolgirls in Chibok village of Borno State and claimed control over some other villages in the state. The massive killings of both the militaries and civilians up till the end of 2017 by the fundamentalists under the pretext of fighting for the cause of Allah is likened to the militant attack launched by the Khawārij against other Muslims during and after the life of the Prophet (saw). This study made a comparison between the two groups using a combination of descriptive and comparative research methods with a view to identifying the ideological relationship between them. Findings of the work revealed that the founder of the Boko Haram group shared some ideologies of the Khawārij and therefore, to overcome the insurgence of this group, it is necessary to review the way and manner the Khawārij were silenced in Islamic history.

Keywords: *Terrorism, Boko Haram; Chibok Jamā'at Ahl u-Sunnah lid Da'wah wa-I-Jihād.*

*Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin.

Introduction

Islam is a religion that preaches peace and harmony and practises it even in the face of adversity. History maintains that even when the religion was in its embryonic stage and attacked from within and outside, lenience and simplicity were the adopted methods of its *Da'wah* (Islamic propagation). The prophet was instructed to invite into the religion of Islam with wisdom and good admonition (Q16:125) because religion should be seen as a matter of choice and not of compulsion Q2:256). The experience of Nigerians is a change in the history because if Nigeria and even the entire world would ever mention the most dangerous terrorist group, Boko Haram will be mentioned on the top list. Many people have been killed, many maimed, and many displaced. The global terrorism index 2015 report shows that Nigeria has the highest increase in terrorist death from 1595 in 2013 to 6118 in 2014 and in 2018, Nigeria was ranked third in the list of countries with a remarkably high impact of terrorism. Agreed that terrorism has no family, the symbol carried about by this terrorist group is that of Islam and even though Muslims disowned them, the fact that they go about with symbols of Islam, and they affiliate themselves with Muslims may make it difficult for Muslims to dissociate from them in totality. It must however be recalled that a group with a similar ideology existed during the time of the Prophet and survived long after the Prophet. This group is called *Khawārij* (anglicised as *Kharijites*). It is pertinent to discuss the growth of this group, compare the group with the Nigerian Boko-Haram and examine the influence of the mother sect on it because the two sects draw their members from among the Muslims and preach the practice of *Shari'a* in its proper manner. The approach adopted by the two sects in the preaching of Islam is, however, radical in nature and considering the fact that peace and security are strongly attached to the development of individuals and society, this paper is interested in finding out how relevant is the approach adopted in the conquer of the *Khawārij* to the subduing of the Boko Haram group.

Terrorism and its Causes

The word terrorism refers to a pre-meditated use or a threat to use violence by individuals or a group of people for the purpose of achieving a political or social gain. It is an “asymmetrical deployment of threat and violence against enemies using means that fall outside the forms of political struggle”¹ the enemies mentioned in the definition could be assumed and

not real but considered so by the terrorists. Terrorism is more than ordinary violence but a unilateral violence that has a high degree of organisation with politics as its major objective. Killings in terrorism are done indiscriminately to induce fear in the mind of people and to force a government or a constituted authority to comply with the demand of the nongovernmental organisation even if such demand is illegal.

Research conducted on the root cause of terrorism shows that poverty and unemployment stand out, among others.² This is because people who are economically deprived are mostly vulnerable to discontent, which could lead to an act of terrorism. Studying the situation in Nigeria, Daniel identifies the effect of poverty on health and education in northern Nigeria³ and established that only 2% of children in northern Nigeria under twenty-five months old have been vaccinated, others are deprived. 83% of youths are illiterates while 48.5% don't go to school at all, and such people could easily react to deprivation.⁴ This is probably the more reason why James made a sharp submission that between 2002 and 2009, Yusuf, the founder of the Boko Haram group successfully gained a huge followership which comprised youths mostly from poor families who were economically deprived, aged between 17 and 30 years.⁵ In a report by the council of foreign relations, analysts confirmed that Nigeria, despite being the giant of Africa, has one of the continent's poorest populations with half of its two hundred million people living on less than \$1.90 per day.⁶ By implication, while poverty could make some people be aggressive and hostile to any system of government, it would make others to be cheapened for evil practices.

Notwithstanding the position of Adesoji that religion is another cause of terrorism in the society,⁷ it is arguable that religion is only used as a cover-up in the execution of terrorist activities because none of the world's popular religion preaches terrorism. In fact, Islam stresses that there should be no compulsion in religion (Q2:256) and on no condition should a Muslim initiate aggression (Q2:190). It further establishes that even when aggression is initiated and propagated by enemies, the teaching of Islam is that the moment the enemies incline towards peace, Muslims must also submit to the peace (Q8:61). It is on this background that religion can only be considered as a weapon used and not a cause. This is not to say that there are no records of religious crisis in the country; the Maitasine uprising of the 1980, the Jumeta Maitasine crisis of 1984, the Christian/Muslim crisis of 1991 and the Taraba State religious crisis of 1992 are all

instances of religious crisis in Nigeria⁸ but causes of the violence are more of a political than ideologies. Activities of the Nigerian Boko-Haram and the targets of its various attacks show that the objective is less of religious. Boko Haram was considered having emerged as a result of the struggle for leadership between the northern and the southern elites with the intention of gaining control over the state political power.⁹ The argument was premised by the struggle for leadership that occupied the space of the country immediately after the death of President Musa Yar'adua. A circumstance that produced Good Luck Jonathan as a President of the nation.

The Origin of the Khawārij

Khawārij is from the Arabic word *kharaja*, which means he secedes, he breaks away, or he goes out. The name 'Khawārij' was presumed to be given to a set of people by the Prophet himself where he was reported to have said that "the Khawārij are the dogs of Allah"¹⁰ Historians, however, differ over the actual founder of the sect. Some refer in the origin of the group to *Dhul Khuwāṣirah*, a man who condemned the Prophet of his action after the battle of Ḥunayn. Imam Muslim gave an account of the event in a lengthy hadith that when 'Ali bn Abi Ṭālib was in Yemen, he sent gold to the Prophet which the Prophet distributed to some people whose heart he needed to be reconciled. A man with a thick beard, prominent cheek bones, deep-sunken eyes, protruding forehead and shaven head who was suspected to come around and exclaimed: Fear Allah, O Muhammad! The Prophet responded: 'Who will obey Allah if I were to disobey him? Will he (Allah) trust me on all those on earth and you doubt me? The man then turned back and somebody (who was presumed to be Khalid bin Walid) ask for permission to kill him but the Prophet disapproved of it and said:

إِنَّ مِنْ ضَيْضِي هَذَا قَوْمًا يَفْرَعُونَ الْقُرْآنَ لَا يُجَاوِزُ حَنَاجِرَهُمْ، يَفْتُلُونَ أَهْلَ الْإِسْلَامِ، وَيَدْعُونَ أَهْلَ الْأَوْثَانِ،
يَمْزُقُونَ مِنَ الْإِسْلَامِ كَمَا يَمْزُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ، ...

... Verily, from the progeny of this [man] shall come a people who will recite the Qur'an, but it will not pass beyond their throats. They will slay the followers of Islam and would spare the people of idolatry. They will pierce through the religion just like an arrow which goes clean through a prey...¹¹

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In the opinion of many Qur'an exegetes, it was in respect of this event that Allah revealed the following verse:

﴿وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَلْمِزُكَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ فَإِنْ أُعْطُوا مِنْهَا رَضُوا وَإِنْ لَمْ يُعْطَوْا مِنْهَا إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَخْطُونَ﴾

“And among them are men who slander thee in the matter of (the distribution of) the alms: if they are given part thereof, they are pleased, but if not, behold! They are indignant! (Q9:58)”¹²

The attitude of turning against a leader is condemned in Islam because Allah enjoins all believers not to challenge the Prophet over his decision (Q33:36). This is a general rule that gives God and His Messenger all authority over the Muslims' lives. Once God and His Messenger decide a matter or take an action, a believer has no choice but to submit to that order and accept it in good faith. This rule demonstrates how difficult it is to take an action that is contrary to tradition. This position does not in any way present Islam as a religion of dogma but rather; strengthen the infallibility of the Prophet. Allah says regarding the utterance made by the Prophet “Nor does He say (ought) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him” (Q53:3-4)

Even though, the name ‘Khawārij’ is in existence since the time of the Prophet, it may be difficult to consider this as the origin of the sect in Islam because as at the time of the Prophet (saw), these people were not reported of having any ideology that is different from the known Islamic doctrine. The name ‘Khawārij’ given to these people was of literal value and only in consideration of their rebellious attitude towards the constituted and recognised authority. But nevertheless, the sect that later emerged could be considered a development of radicalism influenced by the early rebellious group.

The Khawārij were said to have resurfaced as a militant group during the time of ‘Uthman bin ‘Affān, the third caliph, when a man by the name ‘Abdullah bn Saba’ attempted to destroy Islam from within. The said man finally succeeded in launching a revolutionary attack against Uthman bin ‘Affān and masterminded his assassination.¹³ The assassination was believed to have created a lot of confusion in the Muslim Ummah and was followed by the killing of many other Muslims on the ground that they committed sin and so, they are infidels. The group uphold the extreme position that a person who commits a grave sin is an infidel and is liable to

murder and pillage. In addition, such a murdered sinner shall dwell in the hell fire despite the punishment meted on him here on earth.¹⁴

After the assassination of Uthman, the group officially launched itself with the secession from 'Ali bin Abi Ṭālib at Nahrawān¹⁵ It was presumed that the group operated in privacy and concealed its political and ideological doctrines until after the event of Ṣiffīn when Zar'a and Ḥarqūṣ came out to challenge 'Ali bin Abi Ṭālib regarding his position on arbitration.¹⁶ This people along with their followers initially supported Ali on the issue of arbitration to end the war of Ṣiffīn but later turned around to condemn Ali for accepting arbitration between him and the warring enemies.¹⁷ This same group gathered against Ali bn Abi Talib on his way from Shām after the battle of Ṣiffīn and withdrew their support for him.¹⁸ Thereafter, they made a total decamp from Ali, rebelled against him and supported the killing of Ali after upholding political and ideological views that contravened the belief of Ali and the majority of Muslim Ummah. Prominent among their view is that a man who commits an offence is a disbeliever (*Kāfir*).¹⁹

This group uphold their position without any recourse to the explicit meaning of the verse of the Qur'an that says that anybody who offers a word of salutation should not be condemned to infidel²⁰. The verse was revealed in respect of Usāmah, a Companion of the Prophet, who was condemned for killing a man after pronouncing the *kalimah* of *Lā Ilāha Illa Allahu* and when Usāmah gave the excuse that he pronounced it only to defend himself, the Prophet asked if he dissected his chest to know his intention.²¹ It becomes clear that the evil of the Kharijites is witnessed in their presuming any Muslim who commits a sin as an infidel.

The Origin of Boko Haram

Boko Haram is a radical Islamic organisation rejecting western system and calling for a return to Islamic system to purify the society of the social menace. Boko Haram which means western education is forbidden, was initially operating under *Shabaab* Muslim Youth Organisation, which was led by Mallam Lawal, but when Mallam Lawal travelled to Madinah in Saudi Arabia for further studies, the leadership of the group was transferred to Yusuf Muhammad who transformed the group to what is now known as Boko Haram.²² Yusuf Muhammad who hailed from Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, took up the mantle before the year 2002 as a jihadist

movement but developed special ideologies in 2002.²³ The group which was known and called by its followers as *Jamā'atu Ahlu Sunnah li-Da'wah wa-l-Jihād* (The Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Struggle) was initially considered the Nigerian Taliban that originated from the Muhammadu Ndimmi Mosque in Maiduguri. The group preaches zero tolerance to the corrupt practices in Nigerian governance which, according to them, is a product of the faulty education and legal system in the country and for them, there is the need for a return to Islamic system. Other beliefs of the sect are anybody who votes in a democratic election is an unbeliever, and anybody who consumes products such as Maggi, Peak milk, and toothpaste such as Maclean which are presumed to be produced by non-Muslims are unbelievers. Muhammad Yusuf sojourned through many sects such as the Al-Zakzaky Muslim brothers and *Jamā'atu Izālati l-Bid'ah wa Iqāmatu l-Sunnah* before finally taking the opportunity of various splits in these sects to establish his own group and gain followers.²⁴ The founder had followers majorly in Yobe, his state of birth and in Borno, his state of residence. Between 2002 and 2009, there were different clashes between the group and the government and after the Yobe and Borno attacks of 2009 which claimed the lives of not less than seven hundred people and leaving not less than three thousand five hundred people displaced on the demand of the group for the implementation of Sharī'a at national level, the leader was captured by the Nigerian military and killed while in police custody.²⁵ Abubakar Shekau who was second in command took over the leadership of the group and under him, the group launched several attacks on both military and civilians with suicide bombers, killing many people between 2010 and now.²⁶ The sect is considered the world bloodiest terrorist movement spreading its campaign to regions such as Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger as it claims that the objective of its war against the country is to abolish western culture and education and to install its own 'original sharia'.²⁷ Membership of the group are drawn from university lecturers, drug addicts, *almajiris*,²⁸ bankers, political elites, unemployed graduates and immigrants from neighbouring countries. Tactics used by the Boko Haram in waging war against those they consider being their enemies include suicide bombing, roadside shooting, car hijacking, kidnapping, a bomb explosion, assassination, and similar others.

This position has corrected the stand of some scholars that attempted likening the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio with the jihad being propagated by the Boko Haram group. Roman Loimeier among others, likened the approach of Boko Haram in the propagation of Islam to that of Uthman

dan Fodio when he said; “Boko Haram is not the first Muslim movement in the region which has advocated jihad (in the sense of an armed struggle) as a strategy to implement its programme of reform: the movement of jihad as started by Uthman dan Fodio (d. 1817) in the early nineteenth century, led to the removal of the Habe rulers in Hausaland and to the establishment of the rule of religious scholars...”²⁹ the jihad launched by Uthman dan Fodio was mainly on evangelism. The approach adopted was not a radical one like that of the Boko Haram rather, Uthman dan Fodio resorted to combat in an attempt to resist the attack launched by the rulers who worked to defend their royal seat against the spread of Islam. It was Yunfa, the ruler of Gobir, who ordered an attack on any follower of Uthman dan Fodio that sets out to join him in Gudu because of the fear that the shaykh may gain strength in numeracy of his followers. Amoloye rightly captured the event when he mentioned that “it was these attacks” from all parts” against the shaykh’s followers that provoked reprisals from the *jamā’ah*.³⁰

The Ideology of the Khawārij and the Boko Haram

Ibn Taimiyya identifies the major ideologies of the Khawārij thus:

وَالخَوَارِجُ هُمْ أَوَّلُ مَنْ كَفَرَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ يُكْفِرُونَ بِالذُّنُوبِ، وَيُكْفِرُونَ مَنْ خَالَفَهُمْ فِي بَدْعِيهِمْ وَتَسْتَجِلُونَ دَمَهُ وَمَالَهُ. وَهَذِهِ حَالُ أَهْلِ الْبِدْعِ يَتَدَعُونَ بِدْعَةَ وَيُكْفِرُونَ مَنْ خَالَفَهُمْ فِيهَا. وَأَهْلُ السُّنَّةِ وَالْجَمَاعَةِ يَتَّبِعُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَالسُّنَّةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ الْحَقَّ وَيَرْحَمُونَ الْخَلْقَ.

The Khawārij was the first to declare Muslims to be unbelievers because of their sins. They charged as a disbeliever. whoever disagreed with their innovations. They made lawful the spilling of blood and the taking of the wealth of such person. This is the condition of the people of innovation, that they invent some religious innovation and then they excommunicate whoever disagrees with them concerning it. Rather, the people of the Sunnah and the community follow the Book and the Sunnah, and they obey Allah and His Messenger and follow the truth. They have mercy upon the creation.³¹

It is clear from the submission of Ibn Taimiyya that the Khawārij’s ideology is based upon three major tenets:

1. Declaring Muslims as disbelievers. The Khawārij declared anybody who commits a major sin in Islam such as the offence of adultery, theft and murder as an unbeliever who should not be entrusted with

any responsibility in Islam. In fact, this position made the group opposed to the teaching of Islam. The Boko Haram group condemn any western civilization and considers anybody who embraces western education to be an infidel. The Boko Haram equates western civilization with atheism and unbelief even if admirers of the system are practicing Muslims.³² Shekau, the disciple of Yusuf Muhammad said in a video tract where he challenged President Good luck Jonathan for calling the Boko Haram a cancer that the constitution of the country is unbelief, and the singing of the national pledge is a worship of the nation³³

2. Rejecting loyalty to a ruler especially if he is suspected to be applying reason in his judgment. Whenever the Khawārij in their own measurement, suspect a leader to be oppressive in his judgment or statement, they immediately go against him. It should be recalled that *Dhul Khuwaisirah* condemned the Prophet and challenged him to his face saying that he should fear Allah. The Boko Haram group reject the Nigerian secular system of education and turned against the Sultan of Sokoto as the nominal head of all Nigerian Muslims. It rejected the supremacy of the Nigerian head of state and criticized the arbitrariness of the Nigerian institutions.³⁴ A ruler who commits a sin should neither be spared but rather, he should be dethroned and killed. All these were upheld by the group to justify their violent acts. the Boko Haram affirms *Hakimiyyah* (leadership) for Allah alone. They view democracy as totally conflicting with Islam and that anybody who assumes office of governance through democracy is a *Kāfir* (disbeliever), because he involved in a system which conflicts with the teachings of Islam.³⁵ The founder of the group had this to say:

“We see a state in which Muslims are living, but they refuse the Islamic Shari‘a in its totality and put in its place the system of democracy. And we see people with the name ‘*ulama*’ [scholars] calling for democracy, defending it, and making ugly refutations against the people who call others to follow the law of Allah.”³⁶

“Regarding lawful obedience to the rulers, the Qur’an enjoins obedience to rulers when rulers are found conforming to the wish of Allah and His messenger. The Qur’an orders obedience to the Prophet and rulers.”³⁷

3. Justifying violence against Muslims and innocent people. The Khawārij belief that any Muslim who holds a contrary doctrine to their own should be killed. Scholars agree that the Khawārij are the first group in the history of Islam to declare Muslims as disbelievers; the first group in the history of Islam to break away from the ummah through rebellion and violence and the first group in the history of Islam who have no regard for sanctity of life.³⁸ Holding to their doctrine, repentance is insufficient for a Muslim who commits a sin. For him to be admitted back into the fold of Islam, he must be publicly humiliated and re-embrace Islam a new by confessing *Kalimat ush-Shahadah*.³⁹

Features of Khawārij as Shared by the Boko Haram in Nigeria

Features of the Khawārij are explicitly mentioned in a tradition narrated by Ali bn Abi Talib where he said that he heard the Prophet (SAW) saying that at the end of time, some people of youthful age who are immature and senseless will appear. These people will utter the best of the speech of the people to establish their claim and they will eventually leave Islam just as the arrow pierces the body of the game and then abandons it. Their faith will not go past their throats. The prophet ordered that these people should be killed wherever they are seen, and their killing will be recompensed and rewarded on the Day of Judgment.⁴⁰

Given their perspectives and approaches to the application of strict Islam, both the Khawārij and the Boko haram are defined as fundamentalist groups who express peculiarity, exclusivity, literality, and moral rigor. These groups express opposition to religious and cultural liberalism in defense of orthodoxy and religious tradition. The two sects are fundamentalists because they represent organizational and ideological uniqueness.⁴¹ Their violent approach to the achievement of their goal further qualifies them as terrorist. On the description of the Prophet (SAW). The following are the major characteristics of the Khawārij and the Boko Haram:

- 1- Youthful age: the Khawārij were mostly people of immature age who consider themselves having the strength to ignite the fire of *fitnah* in the society. They were people of middle age who are still being controlled by egocentrism in the fight for leadership under the banner of religion. History reports that members of the Khawārij are people,

capable of carrying arms against their opponents because their weapon is majorly of violence. In Nigeria, many of the Boko Haram members are youths who still have the strength of engaging the army in a violent attack. Majority of them are bachelors who feel they could abduct female students to quench their sexual urge. The reason some Chibok abducted students were rescued with baby children in their hands.

2- Immaturity: members of the Khawarij are immature in their judgment and thinking. Their reasons for waging war against Ali was baseless. Even though history applauds their argumentative power, most of them are not rational in thinking. Those who left the sect comment on their irrationality in thinking. The Boko Haram members are majorly those who only obey whatever is said by the leader without applying their own reasoning. Most of them blindly follow the view of the few most radicals among them. The group leader among them make himself a semi-god whose authority could not be challenged.

3- Defaming the religious leaders. The Khawarij resists and go out against the legitimate rulers without cause. This was evident in the inaugural sermon delivered by 'Abdullah bin Wahb when he was made to lead the group. He said after enjoining them to be upright and forbidding them of indecency

فَأَشْهَدُوا عَلَى أَهْلِ دَعْوَتِنَا مِنْ أَهْلِ قِبَلَتِنَا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ اتَّبَعُوا الْهَوَى، وَتَبَدُّوا حُكْمَ الْكِتَابِ، وَجَارُوا فِي
الْقَوْلِ وَالْأَعْمَالِ، وَأَنَّ جِهَادَهُمْ حَقٌّ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And bear me witness that people of our call and mission now follow their desires and eschew the law of the book (of Allah). They oppress in words and deeds and therefore waging war against them becomes the duty of believers.⁴²

Evident from this sermon, members of the group are made to believe that no ruler is ever just or fair especially in the contemporary period and waging war against them is a religious act that is not only justifiable but also rewarding. In the wake of February 2014, the killing of Sheikh al-Albānī, a Muslim leader who was known for criticizing the Boko-Haram was traced to the deadly sect.⁴³

4- Killing the believers and sparing the idolators. The Khawārij are ready to slay Muslims because of their beliefs, yet they are not willing to fight Jews and Christians that are totally of a different faith. This is

evident from the reaction of Abdullah bin Shajara al-Sulamī on hearing the sermon of bn Wahb. He said:

اضْرِبُوا وُجُوهُهُمْ وَجِبَاهَهُمْ بِالسُّيُوفِ حَتَّى يُطَاعَ الرَّمَمُنُ الرَّحِيمُ، فَإِنْ أَنْتُمْ ظَفَرْتُمْ وَأَطِيعَ اللَّهُ كَمَا أَرَدْتُمْ، آتَاكُمْ اللَّهُ ثَوَابَ الْمُطِيعِينَ لَهُ الْعَامِلِينَ بِأَمْرِهِ، وَإِنْ قُتِلْتُمْ فَأَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَفْضَلُ مِنَ الصَّبْرِ وَالْمَصْبِرِ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانِهِ وَجَنَّتِهِ؟

Behad them with the sword until they obey the Beneficent the Merciful. If you succeed and Allah is obeyed in the way you want, Allah will give you the reward of those who obey Him and act by His command. But if you are exterminated (in the process), what other thing is better than patience, a return to Allah, to His pleasure and to His *Jannah*⁴⁴

This leader was bold enough to announce the position of the group as coercing people to adopt their ideology even though it is against the pristine Islamic ideology. Their concern is not the propagation of Islam but of their political cum religious ideology. The group is so much deadly that the confession of *kalimatu sh-shahada* cannot rescue a non Khawārij from the piercing of their sword. Tabari reported in a more pathetic way, the mischief of the Khawārij thus:

فَأَتَتِ الْخَوَارِجَ فَرِيْتَهُ فَأَخَذُوهُ وَأَخَذُوا ابْنَتَهُ، فَقَدَمُوا ابْنَتَهُ فَقَتَلُوهَا، وَزَعَمَ لِي أَبُو الرَّبِيعِ السَّلُولِيُّ أَنَّ اسْمَ ابْنَتِهِ أُمُّ يَزِيدَ، وَأَنَّهَا كَانَتْ تَقُولُ لَهُمْ: يَا أَهْلَ الْإِسْلَامِ، إِنْ أَبِي مِصَابٍ فَلَا تَقْتُلُوهُ، وَأَمَا أَنَا فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا جَارِيَةٌ، وَاللَّهِ مَا أَتَيْتُ فَاحِشَةً قَطُّ، وَلَا أَذَيْتُ جَارَةً لِي قَطُّ، وَلَا تَطَلَعْتُ وَلَا تَشْرَفْتُ قَطُّ فَقَدَمُوهَا لِيَقْتُلُوهَا، فَأَخَذَتْ تِنَادِي: مَا ذَنْبِي مَا ذَنْبِي! ثُمَّ سَقَطَتْ مَغْشِيَا عَلَيْهَا أَوْ مَيْتَةً، ثُمَّ قَطَعُوهَا، بِأَسْيَافِهِمْ

The Khawarij came to a village, and they seized a man and his daughter. She said to them, “O people of Islam! Indeed, my father is an old man so do not kill him, and I am only a girl. By Allah, I have never been immoral, and I have never harmed anyone.” They brought her to kill her, and she kept saying, “What is my sin? What is my sin?” Then she fainted or died, and they cut her into pieces with their swords.⁴⁵

In the like of the Khawārij is the Boko Haram group which is ready to slay Muslims with the argument that they are unbelievers. Their hatred for Muslims is more pronounced than for any other person as evident in the number of Muslim victims of their evil deeds⁴⁶ and this could be accurately established because their operations are centered in the northeastern part of Nigeria which is dominantly occupied by Muslims.

The attack of Boko Haram on Muslims' places of worship outnumbered those of the Christians' places of worship. The like of their attack on the Kano central mosque is not recorded for any of the churches in Nigeria and no record whatsoever, of their attack on shrines owned by idol worshipers.

5- Killing of anybody that opposes their opinion. The Khawārij fight Muslims who differ with them. They confiscate their belongings, ambush them, and kill them if they flee the battlefield and take their women and children as captives if they are able. Abdullah bin Khabbāb, a companion of the Prophet, was captured by the Khawārij together with his pregnant wife and because the companion showed he doesn't belong to their group, they slaughtered him, slaughtered his pregnant wife, evacuated the baby in her and slaughtered the baby.⁴⁷ Even when Islam preaches sympathy for women, Boko Haram's abduction of the 276 Chibok girls in April 2014 is a replicate of the barbaric attitude of the Khawārij. In a release by the leader of the group regarding the abducted girls and other women, he said:

“They're holding our brothers in prison. They've arrested them, tortured them, and subjected them to various forms of abuse. I'm not just talking about our religious leaders—now, they've started to detain our women... Since you are seizing our women, and you wait and see what will happen to your women.”⁴⁸

On the 7th of November 2017, the Boko Haram group was reported to have launched another attack on innocent souls indiscriminately, killing six and injuring many others.⁴⁹ The leader was equally reported to have released a video clip stating that ‘I... Abubakar Ash-Shakawy (Shekau), the leader of *Jamā'atu Ahlu Sunnah li-Da'wah wa-l-Jihād*, made it a duty upon myself to fight Nigeria and the entire world,’⁵⁰

6- Disagreeing among them and dividing into several sects. The Khawarij gave their groups different names to distinguish themselves from other Muslims of their time. Evidences for this are the Khawārij groups such as *Ahlu al-Tawhīd* (the Unitarian), *al Muḥakkima* (the people of arbitration) and Ash-Shurāt (The vendor)⁵¹ Other sub divisions of the Khawarij based on ideology are ; Al-Azāriqah, An Najadāt and Al 'Ajāridah, The essence of the name they give to themselves is not only to make them unique but equally to present them in a colour different from how people would be seeing them. In a

similar vein, the Boko Haram group initially called themselves the Yusufiyya following the name of the founder, Yusuf, but the group preferred to be called *Jamā'atu Ahlu Sunnah li-Da'wah wa-l-Jihād*. At the time Yusuf was killed, the sect disagreed among themselves and killed one another. In January 2012, a new group named Ansari under the leadership of Abu Usāma Al Ansari was formed. Muhammad Marwan who was ready to accept a ceasefire with the federal government in 2013 was repudiated by Abubakar Shekau, Abubakar Shehu who was popularly called Abu Sumayya was equally injured in the attempt to assassinate him for the acclaimed offence of betraying the mother sect.

7- Insulting Muslim leaders and regarding them to be misguided. The Khawārij believe that whoever believes in Uthman, Ali, Mu'āwiya and all supporters of arbitration is a disbeliever.⁵² This stand is not new because in the inception, the founder of the sect criticized the Prophet openly and denounced his loyalty to the Prophet. This attitude is found among the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria. Since its formation in 2002, Boko Haram has targeted the Nigerian government and had at all stages, being insulting Nigerian leaders, and criticizing them as infidels who are not entitled to the leadership of a country with Muslim majority. Boko Haram has targeted government security forces since its inception.

Ali's Approach towards the Khawārij; Lesson for Nigerian Government

The khawārij are a group of Muslims who fought with Ali bn Abi Talib against 'Ā'isha the wife of the Prophet at the battle of Jamal and against Mu'āwiya bn Abi Sufyan at the battle of Şiffīn because at that time, they believed Ali was a caliph to whom loyalty was obligatory and both A'isha and Mu'āwiya were hypocrites that must be fought. This group were known as the *Qurra'*, indicating their devotedness to the recitation of the Qur'an. This group had a problem with Ali because of his choice in nominating Abu Musa al Ash'ari to represent him in arbitration with Mu'āwiya's counsel, 'Amr bin al - 'Āṣ against the suggestion of Mu'āwiya that solution to the conflict should be sought in the Qur'an. With this position of Ali, they considered him as having broken off from Islam for allowing men to decide on matters that should be left with Allah. Consequent upon this, they broke off from Ali and argued that Ali had

fought Mu'āwiya and A'isha for an offence lesser than what he committed. They started gathering enough troop to overthrow both Ali and Mu'āwiya. A plan which they started by frustrating Ali in his office. Ali tried to avoid fighting them at all costs and took the following steps to call them to order. At the inception, Imam Ali related with them with a high degree of liberality and democracy. Although he was the leader and they were his subjects, he refused to either imprison them or flog them. Even when they insulted him in the public and refused to pray behind him, he never felt aggressive. Despite their criticism of Ali's government, he never cut down their wages from the treasury. During this period, they were granted freedom of expression of their concern because it was the thought of Ali that if they were made to understand the error in their thinking and position, they would make a U-turn of action.

Ali sent the uncle of the Prophet, Ibn Abbas, who was a person of honor to them by virtue of his relationship with the Prophet. Ibn Abbas had the first dialogue with them to return them back to the followership of Ali. They engaged him in different arguments among which were the reason Ali does not allow them to take the war booty at the battle of camel and why has Ali agreed to resort to arbitration while judgment belongs to Allah. Ali, together with Ibn Abbas was able to give them convincing answers which made some of them to return to the side of Ali

Ali sent a letter to the remaining among them inviting them to support him in fighting Mu'āwiya and other rebels, but they responded by saying both Ali and Mu'āwiya are unbelievers, and that Ali should admit being an unbeliever before they can think of either supporting him or not. On refusal, the Khawārij went terrorizing people on the question of faith. One of the victims of that attack was 'Abdullah bn Khabbāb who was killed because he admitted that the Khalifa were good people. This attitude made Ali to launch an attack on them after inviting them to repentance and payment of *diyāh*. In setting out his army he said to them that if Muslims fight them (the Khawārij) there will not be even ten of Muslims killed and not even ten of the Khawārij left. Ali pursued them and met them face to face on the banks of the Nahrawān where they stayed. With this attack, he was able to regain eight thousand out of the twelve thousand Khawārij to his side and with this, he succeeded in weakening them.

Conclusion

Considering the uprisings in the government of Ali and the steps he took in putting an end to the burning fire of *fitnah*, one would conclude that the Nigerian government could borrow from the steps he took in solving the terrorism of his time. The following steps are suggested to be relevant:

1- Researching the root of the insurgence. It is not possible to fight the insurgence without having a knowledge of their root. The knowledge of their associates will enable a government to know the source of their strength. Militants and political insurgents in Nigeria are majorly from a tribal affiliation that are alien to sophisticated weapons and this made it necessary to trace the origin of their terrorism and the source of their weapons.

2- Discrediting the dangerous ideologies of jihad. The word ‘Jihad’ implies striving in the cause of Allah. Technically, the word means making lawful effort to see that the religion of Allah prevails on earth. Both the literal and the technical meaning of the word are far from any act of aggression in the society. It cannot be ruled out that some ideologies propagated by some Muslims are violent initiating probably because of their worship with enthusiasm or their ignorance of the tenets of the religion. Individuals, religious organizations, and institutions of learning should be conscious of what is transmitted to younger generations.

3- Identifying with specifics, the radical religionists. In trying to suppress terrorism and insurgence in Nigeria, caution must be taken not to generalize issues. People should not be taken as terrorists on the basis that they share characteristics of dressing or appearance with the terrorists. In Nigeria, some armed robbers are always dressed in military attires and that does not make military men to be criminals, and neither are such armed robbery assumed to be representing the interest of the military.

4- Focusing more on education. Illiteracy is a menace that kills a nation. A country where education of the youths is not taken with seriousness is likely to face the challenge of insecurity. It is surveyed that more than ninety percent of the Nigerian insurgents are illiterates whose brains are

manipulated for violence. Leaders of these insurgents' twist verses of the Qur'an to justify their violent activities.

5- Focusing on economic reform. An idle hand, as said, is the workshop of the devil. The need to reform the nation's economy is paramount because most of those used to perpetrate evils are being cheapened with peanuts. The economic situation of the country is in no little way, contributing to the nation's level of insecurity.

6- Monitoring the media and the arts. The media houses in the country are not helping matter. Their role in escalating violence cannot be underestimated. It is necessary to keep the media under watch.

7- Embracing religious freedom. When people are allowed to practice their religion without any hindrance, the country will certainly be in peace. The case of the use of *hijab* which is generating tension in the country should be considered without a biased mind. It is hoped that if these steps are taken painstakingly, the country will be rescued of its security menace.

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