



DUTSE JOURNAL OF CRIMINOLOGY AND SECURITY STUDIES (DUJCSS)

Volume 3, No.1, August, 2019



ISSN: 2636-7068

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SHIITES IDEOLOGY AND GOVERNMENT'S REACTION IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

Since the inception of Shiites radicalism in Nigeria, the group's activities have been devastating on the security of the Nation. The radical ideology of the group was adopted from the Iranian ideology of Islamization of the entire country. The aim of the Shiites is to oust the existing government in Nigeria and install an Islamic government. This ideology made any existing government in power to wage war against the group. Shiites have been engaging in incessant violent attacks on the security agents in the country while demanding for relevance. In an effort to reduce or stop the menace of the group, the government has been detaining the Shiites leader, El Zakzaky and recently adopted judicial combat with the leader. Holding to the argument of the conflict theory and on the conclusion that the agitation of the Shiites is certainly impossible, the government should adopt civil strategies like inclusive dialogue (with the group through the Muslim Council of Nigeria) and less military efforts to stop the menace of the Shiites. However, this measure must urgently be taken to prevent Shiites from evolving into a more deadly group like the bokoharam, though it is historically traced to Shiites in Nigeria.

Keywords: Shiites; radicalism; ideology; Nigeria; government; reactions

Introduction

The ideology of the Shiites like any other previous religion extremist from Northern Nigeria is to Islamize Nigeria by installing an Islamic government that would be governed by Sheri'a law (Thruston 2017; Timothy and Al Chukwuma 2017). This ideology, which originated from the trend of radical Islamist movements (Danfodio Jihad, and the Mahdiyya) experienced in Nigeria before independence was believed to have been re-awakened in the post-colonial Nigeria by the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), the Shiites led by Sheik Ibrahim El-Zakzaky (Isa 2010; Timothy and Al Chukwuma 2017). From the historical purview, Shiites,

particularly, El zakzaky was at a time a radical ideologue of Islam, whose sudden popularity gave the government a great concern (Bukarti 2016), and the very motive of any government in power is to stop this ideology from spreading further.

The Shiites are known for Islamic radical ideology because of their historical affiliations with extremist wings of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and later the adoption of the Iranian revolution ideology (Paden 2008; Isa, 2010). This ideology, (adoption of Sheri'a law in place of the Nigerian Constitution) the Shiites believe would address issues of corruption and injustice in government policies and practices; therefor, challenging any government in power. Consequently, any government on power reacts to Shiites by attacking the group and apprehending/jailing their leader, El zakzaky. These government reactions to the Shiites group have always been done through military efforts, violating human rights of the Shiites members (BBC, 2015; Tukur, 2015). For instance, Abacha, the then head of state of Nigeria arrested the leader of the Shiite (El zakzaky) and sentenced him to death before he was released because of the sudden death of the head of state on 8th June, 1998. The trend of the group's radicalism continues with violent disturbances in Zaria, Kaduna and Abuja till the emergence of the current president, President Muhammadu Buhari. As tradition, the Shiites continue their agitation against the government of Muhammadu Buhari, as well as the security personnel. For example, the Shiites blocked the then Chief of Army staff, Buratai on the Abuja -Kaduna express way as a bit of their radical ideological submissions of questioning legitimate authority (Amnesty International 2018) and the leader was arrested to face the criminal justice system. Till date, the Shiites leader is under the custody of the Nigerian government.

More so, the adoption of military efforts by the government against the Shiites in 2015 attracts the attention of both national and international bodies like the Nigerian Human Rights Commission and Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Amnesty international condemning the brutal attack of the Shiites by the Nigerian army and urged the Nigerian government to investigate the incident (Tukur 2015). To this effect, there are different views to the reactions (use of military) of the government to the Shiites. According to Mazeedah (2019), the military (force) must not be used by the government to curtail the ideology of Shiites. He argues, if government must stop the radicalism of El Zakzaky, then, it must be done in a civil manner and not through the extra military violation of human rights laws that have already existed in the state. While Mazeedah (2019) suggested the adoption of civil method to the ending of the Shiites radicalism in the country, he didn't specify the nature of the civil dialogue to be adopted by the Nigerian government. Therefore, this paper aims at suggesting the types of civil dialogue that must be adopted by the Nigerian government to stop Shiites radicalism and their further development into a more deadly group.

Conceptual Clarification and Review of literature

Shiite Radical Ideology

The word radical has numerous meanings, one of which involves "correcting the wrong through all/any means or going to the source." Radicals means those who take new ideas and concepts back to people or those who try to replace new ideas and concepts with what is defined as 'unaccepted' by those providing the definition. They are those who are unafraid of upsetting the status quo or "common sense" conceptions of any kind which is evidenced in the behaviours and practices of the Shiites. To talk about radicalism is therefore to talk about the belief systems of radicals. Shiites radical ideology is the belief of the Shiites on the need to

change the western policies and practices (ideologies) of the Nigerian government to an Islamic ideology that is based on Sharia law which is free from injustice and corruption. Shiites radical ideology which is not different from the Islamic radical ideology is the agitations for the creation of the Islamic state that's free from injustice and corruption, and a state that would encourage the inclusion of the minority in government. Accordingly, Marxists explain Islamic radicalism by the exclusion of Muslim communities from freedom and wealth (Hendrik and Peter 2007). For example, the Shiites leader started as an agitator of an Islamic state in Zaria, Kaduna State. Consequently, the leader, Ibrahim al-Zakzaky became best known during his student years in the 1970s as a Muslim Brotherhood, influenced student leader demanding sharia law replace the Nigerian Constitution (Thruston 2017; Timothy and Al Chukwuma 2017). After the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979, however, he was among the many Northern Nigerian Muslims becoming interested in Iran as a model for the change Nigeria needed and even visited Iran to witness the Islamic Republic. Many other Nigerian Muslims who initially sought to emulate the Iranian Islamic Revolution in Nigeria drifted away from Tehran's ideological influence either because they received Saudi or Kuwaiti funding and remained in the Sunni-Salafi fold, or they became disillusioned by Iran because of its foreign policy—including supporting Hafez al-Assad during his violent suppression of a 1982 Muslim Brotherhood revolt in Hama, Syria. However, al-Zakzaky remained committed to Iran throughout the 1980s and emerged as its most prominent supporter by the turn of the 1990s (Tony Blair institute 2019).

Furthermore, El-Zakzaky became more pronounced about his Shiism in 1994; a number of his followers branched off and refused to become Shia. One follower who split from El-Zakzaky at this time was Muhammed Yusuf, who was then around 25-years-old and later co-founded Boko Haram in 2002-2003, but under Salafi influences (aymennjawad.org, 2018). With Nigerian Sunni-Salafi clerics reticent to either comment on the El-Zakzaky affair or an assertively call for an end to the violence, it appears more IMN public protests and more Nigerian Sunni government crackdowns on the IMN creating more willing victim from among Nigeria's Shias. Unfortunately, El-Zakzaky himself eventually accepted that there would be no such "Islamic Revolution" in Nigeria and instead began advocating for "Islamic *Evolution*" and even accepted his followers' participation in the Nigerian civil service. This ideology in a sane clime is a critical act of treason or treasonable felony.

There are numerous ideologies of the Shiites that look fanatical and contrast to the religion of Islam itself. Zakzaky's adherents to the notion that the display of the green-and-white colors of the Nigerian state during the celebration of Zakzaky's sixtieth birthday in 2011 demonstrate an acceptance of the Nigerian secular state by the sect. They explained that the green-and-white colors in the Shi'a view represent the colors of the house of the Prophet, which his Cousin Ali, the first Shi'a Imam adopted. El Zakzaky has a long history with the Nigerian government. He believes that an establishment or creation of a republic with integration of religious tenets is feasible (Gaffey 2015). In December 2015, the Nigerian Army raided his residence in Zaria, seriously injured him, and killed hundreds of his followers. Since then, he has remained under the state detention in the nation's capital, which was ordered in late 2016 (Sahara Reporters 2016). In 2019, a court in Kaduna state granted bail to him and his wife to seek treatment abroad but they returned back from India after 3 days on the premises of unfair treatment and tough restrictions by security operatives deployed to the medical environment (Al Jazeera 2019).

In August 2019, he was accused by the federal government of having ulterior motives against the laid down procedures for his medical trip (Punch 2019). El Zakzaky also accused the Nigerian government of heavily 'militarizing' his hospital ward; he made an allegation that the detention center he was held back in Nigeria is better than the hospital in India. In one of his accusations, he stated clearly that his own personal Doctor was not allowed to be part of medical team at the hospital in India (Punch 2019). As a response, the Nigerian government stated that the Shiite leader planned on going against the agreed terms of his release and medical treatment (Punch 2019). He requested that his passport be handed over to him but the state officials would not take this request into consideration. The situation exacerbated when he denied himself a preliminary medical check. In addition, he requested for free movement and access to any sort of visitors and he requested that the government lodged him into a five star hotel in India, not in the hospital. The request was denied due to the fact that he was lodged into the country and granted visa on grounds of medical treatment not as a tourist or a diplomat (Premium times 2019). On the government side, El Zakzaky is deemed a terrorist due to the previous judgment given by Justice Mahab, proscribing the Shiites as a terrorist group based on their violence practices and activities (Punch 2019). It is important to point out that the request of El Zakzaky was against medical ethics and practices of Medanta Hospital in India to select doctors to treat him. Because of his tantrums and antiques, the Indian authority willingly asked for his extradition back to Nigeria.

After these controversies, the Nigerian government expressed her willingness to duly prosecute El Zakzaky when he returns into the country. In this circumstance, his over bloated shout for being held illegally would be disregarded in the face of the public (Premium Times 2019).

Furthermore, the issue of El Zakzaky and the government has now shifted to eight charges of murder brought by Kaduna state against IMN leader Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, whom the government has detained for two years without charge. Complicating the issue is the Iranian government, which has periodically protested El-Zakzaky's confinement. Beginning from April, 2019, there have been daily protests in Abuja and cities in the north against El-Zakzaky's continuous detention. The demonstrations which have provoked the Kaduna state authorities to formally charge El-Zakzaky with murder; the murder charges which stem from an incident in Zaria in December 2015, if convicted, he could face the death penalty. The Federal authorities are holding El-Zakzaky in custody and the government spokesmen have said that El Zakzaky cannot be released until the Kaduna state judicial process is completed.

Federal and military spokesmen reported a Shiite mob led by El-Zakzaky attempted to assassinate Nigeria's chief of army staff, Tukur Buratai when they blocked his convoy. Buratai was not killed, but the formal charges against El-zakzaky accuse him and his followers of killing at least one soldier. In the aftermath, the army attacked IMN facilities, killing hundreds of people, including members of El-Zakzaky's family. El-Zakzaky and his wife were seriously wounded in the attack and subsequently arrested.

The El zakzaky movement shares ideological similarities with Boko Haram if not worse than Boko Haram. Advocacy of violence aside, there are striking ideological similarities between IMN and Boko Haram, at least for outside observers. They both see the secular state as evil, both want an Islamic state based on Islamic law, and both want the end to Western influence, including in education. IMN and Boko Haram also seek the end of northern Nigeria's

traditional political and religious elites. For IMN, the model appears to be the aspirations of the post-revolutionary Iranian Islamic state. Boko Haram's vision appears more nebulous and less developed, but both try to function as a state-within-state. Despite their similarities, the two groups are anathema to each other. IMN is opposed to Boko Haram's use of violence as claimed by El-Zakzaky, implausibly, that it is a creation of the "oil-hungry west". El Zakzaky opines that if Nigeria is to become a better nation and be corrupt free, it is only an Islamic government that can actualize the aim (Baba-Ahmed 2015; Timothy and Al Chukwuma 2017).

Government Response to the Shiites

The Nigerian state is inclined towards the utilisation of excessive force and extra judicial killings to suppress dissidents or opposing views to their policies and actions (Timothy and Al Chukwuma 2017). The most wide spread of its kind prior to the Shiites uprising was during the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo who caused quite a ruckus in Bayelsa state when he ordered the massacre of an entire village due to their conflict with the armed forces. However, several readings bothering on anti-terrorism point out that the use of force is counter-productive (Byman, 1998; Rosendorff and Sandler, 2004) and may rather aggravates further terrorism. This has become more enlightening particularly in this era of new terrorism which is characterized by Islamic radicalism and lethality (Neuman 2009). Present-day discourse on group violence is dominated by studies and policy decisions about de-radicalisation and Counter Violent Extremism (CVE). This contemporary debate puts into account the blow-back effect of battling dissident movements and the need to address issues such as ideology and psychosocial factors that tend to predispose individuals or groups to commit violent atrocities.

IMN has had uneasy dealings with the Nigerian authorities for decades and its leader has been jailed several times by successive regimes, spending a total of nine years in prison since the mid-1980s, mostly accused of sedition or civil disobedience. While IMN members have alleged that the Nigerian authorities want to destroy the IMN, Nigerian authorities have accused the IMN of disregarding the law and operating as a state within a state (Amnesty International 2016). For instance, the Shiites hardly give notice to the security agents particularly the police on any intending religious procession or protest. Contrary to Shiites frequent unnoticed processions, the Nigerian law explains that before any kind of religious procession is carried out, it must give the police prior notice so that the group could be protected if any kind of riot or violence escalates.

Processions, demonstrations and other activities organized by the IMN, usually without obtaining the necessary permits and at times blocking public roads, have resulted in confrontation with the Nigerian authorities and strained relations with other communities. In 2007, the IMN headquarters in the Northwest city of Sokoto was destroyed by the military, prompting the move of the organization's headquarters to Zaria, Ibrahim Al-Zakzaky's hometown (Amnesty International 2016). Influenced by the Islamic revolution in Iran, the movement now accepts being Shi'a after years of denial when the climate of opinion about Shi'ism in Nigeria was not particularly open. Even under various military governments, the movement demonstrated (and still does) vocal opposition to the secularity of the Nigerian State as a main preoccupation (Umar 2001).

The fear of the Nigerian government has been the fact that, the kid of Shiites radical ideology was the one that created movement like Al Qaeda in the Middle East, Taliban in Afghanistan and the Maitsasene in the Northern Nigeria before the 90s. These groups excluding the

Maitsasene group have continued to terrorise their regions and have turned them into crisis areas which was attributed to the failure of the government at that time to stem the ideology and therefore gave chance to the group to turn deadly (Al Jazeera 2016); and if the Nigerian government failed to the same, they might end up having another dreaded group like Boko haram (Paden 2008).

From the inception till now, Shiite has questioned the legitimacy of every government like the Iranian ideology. The Iranian revolution of 1979 was a critical moment that no state would feel like delving into or pray of happening to as it has brought a lot of death and social injury on the whole of Iran, still, creating a disparity of ethnicity among Iranians (Paden 2008). This same ideology is the ideological actions the Shiites possess which may be devastating on Nigerians just like the Iranians, even though Nigerians, particularly, the Northern parts have been feeling the heat of the activities of the Shiites.

Residents of areas surrounding the location of the Shiites also said they had been inconvenienced when the IMN holds their processions, especially the yearly Arba'een procession, causing traffic jams and long delays for motorists. Others expressed animosity towards the IMN on ideological and political bases, without citing any specific examples of problems they had personally experienced. Graffiti scribbled on the walls of some houses in the Gyallessu neighbourhood read "*Gyallessu is safer without El Zakzaky*" (Amnesty International 2016). Accordingly, Amnesty International (2016) reported that a resident of the area stated that:

Zakzaky's boys, his guards as they call them, blocked off roads in the area every time he moved in or out of his house without regards to the rest of the neighbourhood's residents, and imposed a speed limit; it was forbidden to drive a motorcycle a bit fast near his house

Another resident, said:

They did not allow soldiers or police vehicles to come into the neighbourhood, even those forces' members who live here could only come in as civilians. The authorities accepted this for years, allowing the Shi'ite to impose their diktat over the whole neighbourhood. This was wrong and it had to change.

The Shiites have shown some indications of adopting violent strategies against some state based religious organisations. The Shiites always have negative view against all other Islamic movement like the Sunni. They view themselves as the only people who own the salvation to paradise and then as only the vicegerent of god on earth, so it was easy for them to conflict with other Islamic religious group in Kaduna state (Al Chukwuma 2017). This supported the vicious statement of Abubakr Gumi. After the killings of Shiites members in Zaria, Sheik Ahmed Gumi; the son of Abubakar Gumi, the profound pioneer of the Izala development, distributed an open letter, mourning El-Zakzky over the passing of his children and at a similar saying that El-Zakzaky merited what came to pass for him due to his un-Islamic practices (Gumi 2015). Before the December 2015 massacre, some Shiite members were apparently assaulted amid their parade in the edges of the Northern territory of Kano by some members of the Sunni majority like the Izala and Muslim Society of Nigeria in November 2015, multi days after, El-Zakzaky certified that it was an organized assault (Lere, 2015). It

was due to this that the Federal Government recently obtained a court order to proscribe the Shiites' organization. Accordingly, Justice Nkeonye Maha issued the order in a ruling in which she also designated the activities of the Shiite organisation in any part of Nigeria "as acts of terrorism and illegality". The court restrained "any person or group of persons" from participating in any form of activities involving or concerning the IMN "under any name or platform" in Nigeria (Punch 2019).

Terrorist Proscription of the Shiites

The proscription of the group by court was ordered by the Attorney-General of the Federation "to publish the order proscribing the Islamic Movement of Nigeria in the official gazette and two national dailies" (Punch 2019) as terrorist group. The proscription was made three (3) days after a bloody clash between the Shiites and the Police, in Abuja because of the Federal Government application against the Shiites before a court in Abuja. The Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of Operations, Federal Capital Territory Command, Usman Umar, and a Channels Television journalist, Precious Owolabi, died in the clash with many others injured and property destroyed (Punch 2019). The Shiites have for over two years been regularly taking to the streets particularly in Abuja to demanding the release of their leader, Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, and his wife, Zeenat (Punch 2019). The couple has been in the custody of the Department of State since December 2015 after another bloody clash between members of the group and soldiers in the convoy of the Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Tukur Buratai, in Zaria, Kaduna State as earlier mentioned (Punch 2019).

In the application for the proscription of the group, the Federal Government accused the group of carrying out coordinated violent protests in the country. It alleged that the "aggressive activities" of members of the group had led to the loss of lives and destruction of private and public property in the Federal Capital Territory and other cities in Northern Nigeria (Punch 2019). The Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of Operations in the FCT Command, Nyinnaya Adiogu, who deposed to the affidavit filed in support of the application, also alleged that the Shiites engaged in series of illegal activities, "which are inimical to the corporate interest of the Federal Republic of Nigeria" (Punch 2019).

Such activities, according to Adiogu included setting up of a para-military guard called 'HURRAS'. The group was also accused of "nefarious activities", murders, attacks on security agents and provocative preaching and hates speeches while working towards an agenda of creating an Islamic State in Nigeria. The affidavit, which highlighted what it described as "series of violent and unlawful activities" of the group since 1991, stated that the activities of the IMN members under the guise of clamouring for the release of their leader had not only heightened tension and insecurity in the country but also earned the country negative rating globally (Punch 2019).

The affidavit stated in part, "On July 22, 2019, the respondent's members again launched another vicious cycle of violent protests around the Federal Secretariat (Abuja), during which they set a sub-station/Ambulance Bay of the National Emergency Management Agency, containing a truck and an ambulance on fire.

The affidavit also stated the "nefarious activities" of the group, to include, "unauthorised blocking of public highway (especially the Zaria-Kano Highway during their processions), engagement in illegal road traffic functions, illegal roadblocks, imposition of illegal curfews

and checkpoints, raids on police posts, prevention of arrest of their members, invasion of court premises to abort legal proceedings involving respondent members, refusal to submit to ordinary security checks, and attacks on security agents which led to the death of Corporal Dan Kaduna Yakubu''. 'HURRAS' the unregistered para-military guard established by the Shiites has been terrorising local residents through combat exercises (Punch 2019).

The affidavit also recalled similar clashes between members of the IMN with "security forces in Kaduna" in 1991, and another incident in 1996 when the members of the group allegedly "seized and decapitated a Christian, alleging that his wife used pages from the Quran to clean their baby" (Punch 2019).

It also alleged that in June 2005, the group "clashed with emirate authorities in Sokoto over access to the city's central mosque." It alleged that in July 2007, the group "murdered" a Sunni cleric in Sokoto, Umar Dan Maishiya, "for being highly critical of Shiites". It added as part of the group's unlawful activities that the activities of the El Zakzaky's members in Gyallesu, Zaria and environs have been threatening the peace and security of the affected areas over the years. The Shiites have been conflicting with local communities and forceful takeover or appropriation of mosques not belonging to the Shiites in Kaduna and Kano states as well as other northern states to them. "Violent protests, creating ethno religious strife and other criminal acts of aggression against individuals and communities which often results in deaths, grievous bodily harm and destruction of property were also allegation against the group" (Punch 2019). Hence, the IMN has over the years demonstrated its desire for attacking the security agents (Punch 2019).

However, the spokesperson for the group, Ibrahim Musa, said the government could not proscribe the movement, pointing out that its members are Muslims practicing Islam as "revealed" by Prophet Muhammed. He said the group was neither an association nor a political party that could be proscribed by fiat. It was also noted that the IMN was a mass movement and could not be made to abandon its religion just like that. Accordingly, the Shiites reported in the Punch (2019) that the group doesn't bear arms, doesn't force others to join their group; the Shiites are just demanding justice within the ambit of the law, and therefore, proscribing them as terrorist would be unjust (Punch 2019). This act, the Shiites spoke person described as an intentional Sunni calculated 'genocide' against the Shiites and it is driven by a Sunni president. To him, the Shiites have not violate any law of international stature because terrorism is an international crime, therefore, it must be noted that the judgment is a controversial judgment.

Theoretical Approach

In the examination into a social problem, several theories are indispensable. Theory creates a clear space for the explanation of issues and explains the underpinnings and the backdrops of social issues. For this study, conflict theory of Karl Marx was adopted. The conflict theory posits that the society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of the hustle and bustle for the small and limited resources that exist in the society. It holds that, social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than consensus and conformity (Marx 1838). The conflict theory has been used to explain wide range of social phenomena, including wars, revolution, religious violence, wealth and poverty and government suppression. While explaining religion and governance, the theory brought to fore the dangers of a radical movement to an existing social authority. It explains that since the two main object of social order is dominance and power, then, no social class or religious class can fight against that government except if it has

the backing of some dominant social classes in that society. That is, it only takes consensus before an existing government can be overthrown. It states further that this can only be done if the majority of the social class is in support of a revolution or physical reaction towards an existing government. When a minority group keeps pelting stones of revolution towards an existing government that has power and dominance, there is every possibility of a social conflict and the only losing side to this social conflict would be that minority group.

Accordingly, Timothy and Chukwuma (2017) were of the opinion that certain freedoms like freedom of religion and association were not given to Shiites by the government. To Karl Marx, this is among the little resources of an individual or a group in a society. The Shiites make their voice known and argued that the government is using their being minority to persecute them. Meanwhile, the federal government accuses the group of radicalism, questioning the legitimacy of every government from its inception (Timothy and Chukwuma 2017). The accounts of both parties makes it known to the public that the radical minority as posited by Marx cannot uproot an existing government and the government being the authority and dominance in the state, will continue to clamp down on Shiites if their radical tenets and principles are not changed. The theory is a tool that best explains the mainstream Islamic idealism and the sectarian factor that are now pervading the Nigerian politics. The IMN in Northern Nigeria is a pro-Iran Shiites group that is well hated by the mainstream Sunnis in Nigeria. Even in inter religious relationship, the opposite faith, like the Christians and the atheists and even in the political spheres still recognize the mainstream Sunnis as the only Muslims in the country.

It is quite obvious that most of the traces of Shiites in Nigeria are mostly in the academic sphere with most of them being lecturers at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and other Northern Universities. In Northern Nigeria, it is a sorry state as the main stream Sunnis do preach against the ideologies and the tenets of Shiism, This makes the Northern Nigeria a counter religion ground. The Sunnis have made it so obvious forgetting that the Nigerian state is a state of all religion; freedom of religion is an inalienable right. The Shiites felt intimidated by this hostile gesture towards them and had to act either violently or other similar ways. To Marx, people who are being kept under prejudice (sectarianism) will always fight back whether passively or violently, it is an act of fighting for relevance and getting their deserved right under the Nigerian government.

It must be noted that both the head of the Nigerian government, President Muhammadu Buhari and the head of the Kaduna state government, Mallam Nasir El Rufai are sunnis and that may affect their objectiveness response to Shiites. However, it is quite a sectarianism objective from both sides that intensify the fights against each other and made the Northern region a clash of Sunni-Shia, especially Zaria, Kaduna and Abuja to some extent.

Discussions

From the historical development of the Shiites in Nigeria, the group emerged to attract funds from Islamic countries like Iran and partly because of their political exclusion from the government policies [Isa, 2010; Timothy and Al Chukwuma 2017). Also, the Shiites' perception of alienation, injustice and corruption from the Nigerian government (Shmueli et al., 2006) led to their pronouncement of an Islamic state, to be govern by the principle of Sharia [a principle that is based on divine laws, justice and equity] rather than the constitution that encourages injustice, corruption and the wide gap between the have and the have not.

Also, extra-judicial killing and disproportionate use of force by the Nigerian security were also some of the factors responsible for the group's violent confrontations of the government. These factors exactly gave birth to Boko Haram (Agbiboa 2013). These arguments form the basis of conflict theory of Marx (Marx 1848). Consequently, the aim of the Shiites becomes to install an Islamic government that would include and accommodate the majority and reduce corruption if not eradication. This aim dominates the ideology of the Shiites and forms the premises of their violent confrontation of any government in power.

Though, IMN members do not recognise Nigerian law or its authority. Rather, they pledge allegiance to Iran and its spiritual leaders. The IMN does not seek police approval before staging its processions. The IMN holds different views and conducts certain activities that Sunni Muslims consider un-Islamic; they publicly question the faith of some wives, close friends, and associates of the Prophet Mohammad. The Sunnis another faction of the Muslims, regard this as blasphemous. Members of the IMN undertake regular processions that spark confrontations with the police, who try to stop marchers from carrying out illegal assemblies and from assaulting nonmembers. In Arbaeen, (one of the seasonal celebrations by the Shiites) IMN activists trek from Kano to Zaria – a journey of 159.16 kilometers, to pay homage to their leader. In the process, the Shiites causes a lot of problems and civil offences like road traffic violations and infringement on citizens' rights. In other marches, such as those on Quds Day and Ashura Day, members block public access to roads and engage in fight with anybody that tries to stop them. Another trigger of tensions is the alleged forceful takeover of Sunni mosques by Shiites, which caused violent conflicts in Sokoto and other parts of the North, especially in the 1990s.

Responding to the violent confrontations of the Shiites, the federal government of Nigeria has always adopt military force which has been escalating the group's violence to a more disturbing one (Mazeedah, 2019). The IMN has been outlawed by the Kaduna state government and its headquarters razed and the movement's leader apprehended and put in detention since his arrest in December 2015, despite a court order for his release. Therefore, the actions and inactions of the Nigerian government regarding the Shiites may degenerate into a more violent (Sa'ndig's 2015) group like the Boko haram. However, the then government of Kaduna State, Governor Hamed Muhammed Makarfi understood the inclusive demand of the Shiites, and instead of verbal dialogue with the group, the governor included the Shiite leader [Ibrahim El-Zakzaky] to his government. Throughout his government, the Shiites were peaceful, through the preaching of the peaceful co-existence by their leader who was in government. During this period, El-Zakzaky engaged in a nonviolent approach to Islamic evangelism. His new approach to Islamic preaching gained more moral and financial support from Iran because El-Zakzaky was able to organised strong movement by encouraging youths to pursue Western education, and engaging in charity work (Baba-Ahmed 2015). These reforms, condemnation of Boko Haram ideology and criticism of the United States (US) support for Israeli policies towards Palestine (ibid) by El-Zakzaky were some of the factors that motivated and attracted more membership to the group, particularly among the socially and economically deprived Muslims (Timothy and Al Chukwuma 2017).

Conclusion: Implication and Recommendations

The radicalization of the Shiites group in Nigeria is due to the pervasiveness of the mainstream or dominant group, including the government over them. The Shiites main stimulus for agitation is their fight for relevance which is to some extent ironical as the

religion (Islam) under which they claim, still refer to them as ‘Kaafirs’ or heresies which makes them a less relevant group even in the Islamic set up. The extra judicial killings of some religious groups by the government majorly cause the groups extreme radicalism. Reference can be drawn from the issue of the Boko Haram; although, Boko Haram is deadly now, but if the IMN continues on this same track (they have been threading for a very long time and the government has not find a permanent solution to the issue) they might turn into deadly group even more deadly than Boko Haram. If the Shiite's catastrophe is not taken care of through a nonaggressive and tactful way, Nigeria should anticipate an analogous chronicle that enthused Boko Haram to implement a ferocious stratagem. Pained radical Islamists take a lengthier period to systematize and accomplish carnages. For illustrations, after the extra-judicial butchery (Kanama battle) of its head and the demolition of its encampments by the Nigerian securities (Walker 2015) in 2009, Boko Haram carried out few attacks in 2010 before it retreated and became a full-fledged terror group in 2011 (ibid). After 9/11 attack of the World Trade Centre and the consequent invasion and man-hunt of the Taliban members by the US in Afghanistan, the Taliban migrated to Pakistan to re-enforce themselves into a stronger violent movement. Islamists frame these forms of retreat as *Hijra*. It can be traced to the migration of Prophet Mohammed from Mecca to Medina for refuge, before his return to Mecca to defeat his enemies (Isa 2010). Thus, radicalisation is caused by deep insecurity in the minds of the religious followers and their leaders which resulted partly from unemployment and the perceived exclusion of the minority from government and government policies and practices. Since the causes of this religion extremism are civil, then, the government must abolish the use of force (whether military or police) for a peaceful dialogue which this paper refers to as ‘*civil strategic inclusion dialogue*’. Civil strategic inclusive dialogue involves peaceful discussion(s) with the extremists with full respect for human rights and diversity, and to the understanding of their agitations with the aim of addressing their demand within the law. Other components of the ‘civil strategic inclusion dialogue’ are:

1. Socio-political inclusion and unlimited opportunity for all
2. Fight against corruption and all forms of ill-treatment of certain people
3. Economic inclusion and open space for growth (mobility)
4. Religious tolerance and diversity in the society
5. Promotion of rule of law and human rights
6. Adequate service delivery and full security of the citizens
7. Promoting gender equity, equality and women’s empowerment
8. Engaging youths in peace building
9. Working with religion organizations and religious leaders to counter the abuse of religion by violent extremists and
10. Using the media to promote human rights and tolerance.

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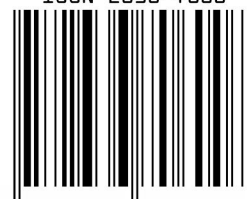
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ISSN 2636-7068



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