# RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: A CASE FOR RATIONALITY OF RELIGION

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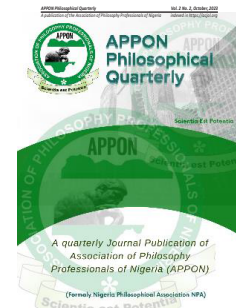Kogi State University, Anyigba,
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**Abstract**
*It is common knowledge that Nigeria, over the years, has been besieged with numerous security challenges. Some of these challenges are cases of criminality for livelihood while some others are cases of sheer terrorism founded on some misconceived, miscommunicated and irrationally imbibed religious doctrines and teachings. In the cases of criminality for livelihood, criminals are most likely to give up their criminality if sustainable alternative means of livelihood are provided but in cases of terrorism founded on ill-conceived religious doctrines, there seems to be no alternative since it flows from deep convictions, most times premised on some eschatological gains. It is based on these facts that this paper focuses on religion-induced terrorism. Using the analytic and hermeneutic methods therefore, this paper argues that people should subject religion-induced actions to the test of (at least) basic rationality such that if a religious doctrine or interpretation pushes an individual to terrorise and kill fellow human beings for instance, such a person should first reflect on that doctrine within the context of basic rationality or common sense. To achieve this, we have, among other things, suggested in this paper that certain benchmark of rational soundness and comprehension should be set for any person who is to be charged with the responsibility of interpreting and teaching religious doctrines across all religions in Nigeria. This way, destructive religious indoctrinations and by extension, religion-induced insecurity will be minimized in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Religious extremism, Terrorism, Rationality, Insecurity, Nigeria

## Introduction

Insecurity is a global challenge that has continued to ravage countries of the world, especially in this age of inevitable globalization. More worrisome however, is the different dimensions insecurity continues to assume on the global scene. "The 21st century will therefore be defined by security threats unimpeded by boarders – from climate change, arms proliferation and terrorism to conflict, poverty, disease and economic instability."[1]

Nigeria is a country afflicted by all aforementioned forms of insecurity at alarming rates. Many states within Nigeria continue to experience flooding and other forms of insecurity arising from climate change. Kidnapping, armed robbery and related crimes are pervasive across the regions of the country owing to proliferation of small and light weapons. Poverty is another form of insecurity to which Nigeria is obviously a pathetic victim as more Nigerians continue to drop on daily basis below the poverty line due to inflation, food insecurity, high cost of living without corresponding income and corruption in the face of which the government appears to be clueless and helpless. The National Bureau of Statistics corroborated this in their report of the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Survey according to which 63% of persons living within Nigeria (133 million people) are multi-dimensionally poor.[2]

This is not unconnected to economic instability as a form of insecurity.

As serious as the above forms of insecurity appear, our attention in this paper is on terror induced insecurity in Nigeria. For some years now, Nigeria has experienced terrorism in different forms from various terror groups across its length and breadth, ranging from activities of the dreaded Boko Haram group and Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) to those of bandits, kidnappers, unknown gunmen, etc. Now, some of these terrorist activities like kidnapping for ransom, could be motivated by hunger and lack of other basic needs. Regarding terrorists in this category, one can expect that when sustainable alternatives like job creation, improved economy, among others, are made available to address their needs, they may have a rethink and give up their terrorist disposition and activities. On the other hand, however, there is religion - induced terrorism, which is borne out of some extremist conviction that certain acts of terrorism against certain groups or practices are divinely mandated and must be carried out against all odds, even at the cost of their lives. Because of how deep the convictions of terrorists in this latter group are, premised on a divine mandate in view of divine rewards, it becomes more difficult to get them out of terrorism even when alternative means of

1. Stephen Stedman, Bruce Jones and Carlos Pascual, *Managing Global Insecurity: A Plan for Action.* (Stanford: The Brookings Institution, 2008) 6.
2. Emmanuel Elebeke, "133m Nigerians Multidimensionally Poor – NBS". *Vanguard Newspaper*, November 17, 2022. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/11/133m-nigerians-multidimensionally-poor-nbs/

addressing their needs are provided.

The scope of this paper, properly speaking therefore, covers religion-induced terrorism as a form of insecurity in Nigeria. The aim is to investigate the basis for religious extremism that culminates in terrorism and insecurity in Nigeria in order to make a case for rational foundation to faith as a way of addressing religious extremism and by extension, religion-induced terrorism and terror related insecurity in Nigeria. There are lots of literature on Boko Haram and insecurity in Nigeria with emphasis on the need for religious tolerance, overhaul of Nigeria's security architecture, dialogue, etc but there seems to be none of the literature that addresses the rationality of religion. This is the gap this paper intends to fill.

**Insecurity and Terrorism in Nigeria**
Before interrogating the challenge of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria, it is important to briefly identify the meanings of insecurity and terrorism. The concept of insecurity is a crosscutting and multi-dimensional concept which has been subject of debate as it is viewed differently by different scholars.[3] However, some definitions can offer a broad understanding of the concept. One of such definitions is that which defines insecurity as "a state of being subject to danger or injury. It is the anxiety of feeling vulnerable and unsafe".[4] Beyond defining insecurity as a mere *feeling*, insecurity can be seen as "a chronic threat to human life, territories, states, religious beliefs and institutions, among others"[5] This implies that insecurity can be in various forms like poverty, proliferation of arms and terrorism. Now, what is terrorism as a form of insecurity?

Terrorism is easy to identify but difficult to define as a concept. This is because terrorism can mean different things to different persons within different contexts. Navigating a nexus between diverse definitions however, Onuoha defines terrorism as "the premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or infrastructure within a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of individuals or group behind such violent acts."[6] He further states that the expectations of the terrorists may be for a change of status quo in terms of the political, economic, ideological, religious or social order within the affected state or for a change in the (in)actions or policies of the affected state in relation to its interaction with

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3. Callistar K. Obi. "Challenges of Insecurity and Terrorism in Nigeria: Implication for National Development", *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development,* 8, no. 2 (2015): 11-18

4. Emmanuel Williams Udoh. "Insecurity in Nigeria: Political, Religious and Cultural Implications", *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion,* 5 (2015): 2

5. Callistar K. Obi. "Challenges of Insecurity and Terrorism in Nigeria" 18

6. Freedom C. Onuoha. "Nigeria's Vulnerability to Terrorism: The Imperative of a Counter Religious Extremism and Terrorism (CONREST) Strategy", Special Report II, *Peace and Conflict Monitor*, February 02, 2011, 1

*108*

other groups or states.[7] Similarly, in the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism by the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior and the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice held in Cairo, Egypt in 1998, terrorism was define as "any act or threat of violence, whatever its motives or purposes, that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda and seeking to sow panic among people, causing fear by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, or seeking to cause damage to the environment or to public or private installations or property or to occupying or seizing them, or seeking to jeopardize national resources". In the same trajectory, the United States Department of State defined terrorism as "acts of violence that are politically and sometimes religiously motivated and that are perpetrated against civilian targets by individuals, clandestine agents, or sub-national groups."[8]

From the foregoing definitions and as identified by Onuoha, "four elements form the essential features of terrorism or terrorist act. First, the act must be *violent*; whether premeditated or instantaneous. Second, the direct targets of such attack are usually *non-combatant*; usually without a direct relation or influence on the real motive behind the act. Third, the act takes place largely in an *environment of relative peace*, but sometimes could involve conflict situations. Finally, the ultimate motive for the resort to violence is to cause fear (in the psyche of the public) in order to influence those in political authority to respond to the demands or expectations of the individual or group behind the attack."[9] Terrorists' modes of operation often include suicide bombing, car bombing, launching of rocket propelled grenades, assassinations, abductions and kidnapping, disguising and hijacking.[10]

As a global challenge, two types of terrorism have been identified; domestic and transnational. Domestic terrorism involves terrorist activities in a host country, and their targets are fellow citizens, their properties and the country's institutions and policies either for political reasons or otherwise. The activities of Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria and Tamils in Sri Lanka are examples of domestic terrorism. On the other hand, transnational terrorism involves more than one country. An example of transnational terrorism is the US attack of 9/11.[11]

From the preceding definitions of insecurity and terrorism, it is obvious that Nigeria is a victim of insecurity in its

7.  Freedom C. Onuoha. "Nigeria's Vulnerability to Terrorism".
8.  United States Department of State, 2002
9.  Freedom C. Onuoha. "Nigeria's Vulnerability to Terrorism" 1
10. Jacob Omede and Andrew Abdul Omede. "Terrorism and Insecurity in Nigeria: Moral Values and Religious Education as Panaceas", *Journal of Education and Practice,* 16, no. 11(2015): 121
11. Todd Sandler, John Tschirhart and Jon Cauley. "A Theoretical Analysis of Transnational Terrorism. *American Political Science Review*, 77, no. 4 (1983): 36–54.

diverse dimensions which include terrorism. Road transportation has become extremely risky across Nigeria as chances of being kidnapped or robbed while on transit are very high. Many had thought that the introduction of train services in some parts of the country would guarantee their safety from kidnapping and other forms of attacks but the recent attack on the Abuja – Kaduna train by suspected terrorists proves that even rail transport is not safe in Nigeria. The unwholesome activities of the so called "unknown gunmen" in the South East and other parts of Nigeria also further complicate the already terrible security challenge of Nigeria. All of the above sources of insecurity in Nigeria can be drastically reduced if some more fundamental motivations for those crimes are addressed. If, for instance, the country improves her economy and creates jobs through which people can legitimately earn a decent living, many of those who took to kidnapping, armed robbery and other crimes for lack of capacity to meet basic needs may have a rethink since the primary motivating factor has been addressed. Similarly, if the agitations of those clamouring for better inclusiveness in governance or outright secession from the Nigerian state as the motivation for their criminal activities are addressed, there are possibilities that they may also give up their criminal activities. Religion-induced terrorism however, is of serious concern since it is difficult to address because of the conviction that comes with

it. This accounts for why Boko Haram, like other terrorist groups, seems to be extremely difficult to decimate. In what follows therefore, an assessment will be made of the history of religious extremism in Nigeria and the religiously extreme ideology that led to the formation and sustained terrorist activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria.

**Religious Extremism and Terrorism in Nigeria: Boko Haram in Focus**
Religious extremism and terrorism have become dangerous and hostile trends in the post cold world war era. Scholars have postulated various alternative explanations to the surge of religious extremism and terrorism globally. One of such explanations traces the root cause of this unfortunate trend to the activities of the United States internationally, especially its foreign policy objectives of enforcing democracy all over the world particularly, in the Muslim states.[12] The US involvement in proxy wars to halt the influence of the Soviet Union in the Middle East by supporting the Mujahedeen fighters through the provision of training and military hardware to fight Soviet intrusion in some parts of Africa such as Congo, Angola and other parts of Southern Africa are considered as remote factors that have given rise to terrorism.[13]

Furthermore, the US involvement in the War in Iraq, the support for Israel during the Israel and Hezbollah war, the

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[12.]   M. Mamdani, Good Muslim, *Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. (Senegal: Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa, 2004) 38 - 62

[13.]   Mamdani, Good Muslim, *Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* 45

Palestinian question, and its impact on the Middle East; the US and the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and her current war on terror which has seen the death of Al Qeada leader, Osama bin Laden, and other key Al Qaeda leaders, have generated resentment in the Muslim community and it has reverberated in various regions of the world including parts of Northern Nigeria, where more than 100 people lost their lives in 2001, following US military campaign in Afghanistan. However, this explanation does not account for low level of religious extremism and terrorism in some strong Muslim states, particularly in Saudi Arabia which is the symbolical headquarters of the Muslims all over the world. The Saudi Arabian government has been a strong ally of the US for years and has not experienced an upsurge of extremism and terrorism in comparison with other states in the Middle East such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, etc.[14]

The first major experience of organised religious militancy in Northern Nigeria, after independence came with the Maitatsine uprisings, which some scholars have connected to the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in the 19th century.[15]

Usman Dan Fodio's jihad established the powerful Sokoto Caliphate (1804– 1903) under the ultimate law of Sharia. The Maitatsine movement was formed by an Islamic preacher called Muhammadu Marwa (nicknamed 'Maitatsine'– that is, 'the one who curses').[16]

Marwa migrated from Cameroon to northern Nigeria in 1945.[17] Maitatsine attacks against Islamic authorities in Kano state were condemned by the British colonial authorities, who found him an extremist preacher. In Kano, Marwa became an Islamic zealot preoccupied with the purification of Islam. He believed that Islam had come under the corrupting influence of modernisation (Westernisation).[18]

Marwa fascinated the urban poor in the northern city of Kano with his message that 'denounced the affluent elites as infidels, opposed Western influence, and refused to recognize secular authorities'.[19] Some of the poor and marginalised people of northern Nigeria – the *talakawa*(' commoners') – were attracted to Maitatsine because 'he condemned the hypocrisy and ostentation of the *nouveau riche* and promised redemption and

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14. Mamdani, Good Muslim, *Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* 47
15. Daniel E. Agbiboa and Benjamin Maiangwa, "Nigeria United in Grief; Divided in Response: Religious Terrorism, Boko Haram and the Dynamics of State Response", *African Journal of Conflict Resolution.* 14, no. 1 (2014): 71
16. Agbiboa and Maiangwa, "Nigeria United in Grief; Divided in Response" 82
17. Peter J. Pham cited in Agbiboa and Maiangwa, "Nigeria United in Grief; Divided in Response" 73
18. Nathaniel D. Danjibo cited in Agbiboa and Maiangwa, "Nigeria United in Grief; Divided in Response" 75
19. Human Rights Watch, "Spiralling Violence: Boko Haram Attacks and Security Forces Abuses in Nigeria", 2012: http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/16/nigeriapost-election-violence-killed-800

salvation to God's righteous people'.[20] The Maitatsine uprisings resulted in eleven days of violent clashes with state security forces in Kano in December 1980. A tribunal of inquiry established by the federal government in 1981 discovered that 4,177 people were killed in the violence, excluding members of the police force who lost their lives trying to check the excesses of the sect. Nevertheless, state security forces were indicted in extrajudicial killings and arbitrary torture of Maitatsine members in their custody.[21] Although the Nigerian military crushed the uprisings and killed its leader, the next five years (1981–85) witnessed the deaths of hundreds of people in reprisal attacks between remnants of the radical movement in the north and state security forces. Remarking on the issue, Falola considered the Maitatsine uprisings in Kano and neighbouring areas of northern Nigeria in the 1980s as the first public religious violence in post-colonial Nigeria.[22] Perhaps, it is also the first religious violence in Nigeria that, in all practical terms, demonstrates how religious ideology could link extremist groups from two different countries since, as mentioned earlier, Marwa (the Maitatsine leader) was a Cameroonian national. The technical end of Maitatsine uprisings in the 1980s notwithstanding,

waves of violent religious activism drenched northern Nigeria from the 1990s onward.

The history of organised religion-induced terrorism in Nigeria is traceable to the advent of a group of Islamic militants called "Boko Haram" in 2002. "Boko Haram" is translated to mean "western education is evil". The progressive destructive activities of "Boko Haram" made the US department of states to designate them as terrorist organization in November, 2013. Since the emergence of this sect in 2002, thousands of human lives had been lost to their attacks, including many members of the Nigerian military. The killings have continued to assume different dimensions unabated as their escalated activities created widespread insecurity among Nigerians, increased tensions between various ethnic communities, interrupted development activities, frightened off investors and generated concern among Nigeria's northern neighbors.[23]

"Boko Haram" is the popular moniker for an Islamist movement that calls itself the "Sunni Community for the Propagation of the Prophet's Teaching and Jihad". Unlike al-Qaeda and its affiliates, its focus is specifically on Nigeria and adjacent

[20]    Raymond Hickey. "The 1982 Maitatsine Uprisings in Nigeria: A Note. *African Affairs*, 8, no. 31 (1984): 251–256.
[21]    Daniel E.Agbiboa. "Is Might Right? Boko Haram, Joint Military Task Force, and the Global Jihad". *Military and Strategic Affairs*, 5, no. 3 (2014): 53–72
[22]    Toyin Falola.*Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*. (Rochester, NY, Rochester University Press, 1998), 138
[23]    Innocent Eme and Jide Ibietan. "The Cost of Boko Haram Activities in Nigeria", *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 2, no. 2(2014): www.arabianjbmr.com/pdfs/OM.../2.pdf

countries rather than international jihad. A blend of a sectarian agenda with violence is distinctive of Boko Haram. According to the movement's rhetoric, its aim is to establish the kingdom of God on earth through justice for the poor accomplished by the unwavering application of Islamic law, or sharia. Anything that gets in the way of this goal must be destroyed. For Boko Haram, violence is not a perversion of Islam; it is a justifiable means to a pure end.[24]

The group adheres to the strict Wahhabi understanding of "*tawhid*" (the oneness of God or monotheism). According to Boko Haram rhetoric, a secular nation promotes idolatry, i.e. state worship. The pledge of allegiance to the flag and singing of the national anthem are indicators of such idolatry and hence punishable by death. For Boko Haram, the state is a nest of corruption that exploits the poor. The state is formed and sustained by Western values and education, both of which are against the will of Allah.[25]

Boko Haram is a recent manifestation of a decade-long civil war within Islam. Radical reformers in what is now Nigeria have long claimed that Muslim leaders are "infidels" if they are "unjust", even when such rulers claim to be Muslims. This often manifests as a conflict between Salafi fundamentalists and the tolerant Sufis who dominate the traditional Nigerian Muslim elites. Boko Haram is thus, a direct threat to the traditional Islamic establishment, which is led by the Sultan of Sokoto and the Shehu of Borno, both of whom the movement has tried to murder; it also claimed responsibility for killing the Shehu's brother and bodyguards of the sultan.[26] An aspect of the broad Islamist revival in northern Nigeria has been a Salafi rejection of the secular state. Charismatic preachers organise communities that withdraw from secular life. Usually, such groups are quietist, even pacifists; however, at times they can turn violent, usually in response to the secular state's heavy handedness. Boko Haram's trajectory is a classic example of such a response.[27]

Mohammed Yusuf, a charismatic preacher, organised his community in the city of Maiduguri around 2003, which sought to establish God's kingdom on earth by detaching itself from wider society. Although the movement was antagonistic to the Nigerian state and rejected Western education as non-Islamic, it remained largely non-violent until 2009. In that year, there were disagreements over local issues that were likely manipulated by local politicians, which resulted in Yusuf commanding a direct attack on the state, to which the security forces responded brutally. In the

24. John Campbell, "Boko Haram: Origins, Challenges and Responses", Policy Brief of the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, October, 2014: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/184795/5cf0ebc94fb36d66309681cda24664f9.pdf
25. Campbell, "Boko Haram: Origins, Challenges and Responses"
26. Campbell, "Boko Haram: Origins, Challenges and Responses"
27. Campbell, "Boko Haram: Origins, Challenges and Responses"

course of suppressing the uprising, the police murdered Yusuf. This was captured on video and went viral on social media,[28] while several hundreds of Yusuf's followers were extra-judicially killed. The movement retreated, re-emerging in 2010 under the dead leader's deputy, Abubakar Shekau.

The reconstituted Boko Haram sought revenge against the security forces and committed itself to the overthrow, through violence, of the Nigerian state government and the compromised Islamic establishment. The movement has called for the replacement of the sultan of Sokoto with a *shura* (council) dominated by Boko Haram.[29]

By origin, a splinter of Boko Haram, Ansaru's base is in Kano and Kaduna. Its full name in English is "Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa". Its leadership is unclear; Abu Usama al Ansari is often identified as its leader, but little is known other than his name. Its spokesmen claim the group split from Boko Haram because of the latter's frequent killing of Muslims. Ansaru avoids Muslim casualties and instead actively attacks Christian churches and government officials.[30]

Ansaru has introduced tactics commonly associated with the Sahel and al-Qaeda that were previously unknown in West Africa, such as kidnappings and suicide bombing, including use of female suicide bomber. The group had links with radical Islamist groups in Algeria and Mali, but it is unlikely that it takes direction from them. However, its fighters include some individuals from outside Nigeria, especially Chad and Niger. There is evidence of tactical cooperation between Ansaru and Boko Haram, and it is possible that they have reunited. The Chibok schoolgirls' kidnapping has the flavour of Ansaru, but Shekau claimed responsibility. Ansaru has issued no public statements for many months, which is another indication that it may have merged back into Boko Haram.[31]

Funding for Boko Haram and other radical groups comes from bank robberies, kidnapping ransoms, the theft of weapons from government armouries, and smuggling. Vehicles used for suicide attacks and car bombs are usually stolen. The large number of weapons in radical hands that come from government armouries suggests that radical Islamic groups have infiltrated the military and other institutions of government, as senior military officials and even President Jonathan have acknowledged.[32]

28.   Aljazeera Quoted in Campbell, "Boko Haram: Origins, Challenges and Responses"
29.   Campbell, "Boko Haram: Origins, Challenges and Responses"
30.   Campbell, "Boko Haram: Origins, Challenges and Responses"
31.   Campbell, "Boko Haram: Origins, Challenges and Responses"
32.   Pamela Dockins. "Army, Boko Haram working together in parts of Nigeria?" Voice of America, April 5th, 2014. ‹http://www.voanews.com/content/army-boko-haramworking-together-in-parts-of-nigeria/1887128.html›

## Rationality of Religion: A Way out of Religion-Induced Terrorism in Nigeria

It is clear from the preceding analysis that religion-induced terrorism is a consequence of religious extremism. There are three major dimensions of religious extremism. First, an entire religion may be extremist if its doctrines and activities defy fundamental principles of rationality and morality. Secondly, a religion may have sound doctrines but in the process of interpreting those doctrines, believers of such religion may slip into extremism for lack of proper understanding of the doctrines and decide to uphold an extremist version of the original religion. At the third level however, custodians and teachers of religious doctrines may become fanatical and transmit such fanaticism to their religious faithfuls. The case of Boko Haram in Nigeria can be interpreted within the context of the second and third dimensions of religious extremism highlighted above as more traditional Muslims seem not to be in tune with the version of Islam practiced by the Boko Haram sect.

How can people abandon the comfort of their homes and relocate into forests with arms and weapons to unleash mayhem on fellow human beings in the name of religion? How on earth, can people, in the name of God, be making religious invocations and incantations before killing fellow humans perceived not to be of the same creed with them? How can people think they can fight and kill fellow humans for a "God" who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient? How can people believe that by suicide bombings targeted at government structures, places of worship and other public spaces, suicide bombers and their commanders will enjoy eternal rewards? How can someone believe that his/her religion should be the only religion in a digital age as the 21st century and a pluralistic and secular state as Nigeria? All these questions point to the fact that religious extremism is the root cause of religion-induced terrorism in Nigeria and other parts of the world as religious extremism defy the basic principles of rationality and morality.

In view of this, the medieval problem of faith and reason seems to resurface. Tension between the sphere of reason and the sphere of faith have been one of the most controversial issues in the history of our civilization for over three hundred years. They have contributed to many divisions, conflicts, and even wars.[33] Are faith and reason mutually exclusive or are they compatible? In each case, which is primary when there is tension between faith and reason? Faith as an integral component of religion, is the disposition to believe in something,[34] in this case, the Supreme Being. In other words, it is the

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[33.] Gennady Shkliarevsky, "Discovering the Harmony of Reason and Faith in the Symphony of Eternal Creation", https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3603628

[34.] Sylvester Idemudia Odia and John Olubunmi Thomas. "Resolving the Tension between Faith and Reason: A Discourse in the Philosophy of Science", *Scientia: PLASU Journal of General Studies* 1, no. 1 (2018): 80-90

tendency to believe in a supernatural being even when such supernatural being cannot be seen. Since supernatural beings are spiritual beings, it may seem inappropriate however, to approach the belief in them from a purely rational perspective. For example, issues of the Christian trinity and other eschatological religious beliefs like life after death, heaven and hell, eternity etc., are difficult to comprehensively explain solely from the rational perspective without recourse to faith.

On the flip side however, religious doctrines and beliefs have to be basically reasonable to be meaningful. In other words, they should *make sense* and conform to basic principles of rationality; they should not be repugnant to reason and good conscience. In cases where religious doctrines and beliefs violate basic rationality, the question should be; between faith (religion) and reason (rationality), which is more fundamental in the ontological framework of the human person? Of course, we are first and foremost, born as rational beings before we decide what to believe. This makes rationality a more ontological option when there is tension between faith and reason. But ultimately, faith and reason should be complementary. Slightly different from, but largely similar to this position is that of Shkliarevsky who averred that:

> Neither of them (faith and reason) can claim ontological primacy over the other. Also,

they do not represent two separate and largely independent *magisteria*, as Stephen Gould among many others have argued. They are two phenomena closely related and complementary to each other in the frame of the process of creation that gives rise to both of them. As two intimately related and complementary phenomena, faith and reason are integral parts of our common human heritage. The recognition of their commonality will allow us to use and combine the important achievements made in the domain of faith and in the domain of reason… Such mutual enrichment will benefit humanity as a whole. The mutual cooperative and complementary relationship between the two domains will undoubtedly help our civilization to solve many problems it faces today—problems that are associated with deep divisions produced by the opposition between reason and faith.[35]

This is the basis of the "rationality of religion" for which we make a case in this paper, as a panacea for terrorism and religious intolerance in Nigeria. Rationality, which is our distinctive feature as humans should not be thrown to

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[35.] Shkliarevsky, "Discovering the Harmony of Reason and Faith in the Symphony of Eternal Creation"

the wind in defence of any faith or religion, especially when it hurts or even takes the lives of fellow humans. Thus, "rationality of religion" refers to the conformity to basic principles of rationality of religious doctrines, beliefs and actions in the bid to avoid religious extremism and its consequent evils.

**Conclusion**

There is hardly any human person who does not believe in one thing or the other. Even when atheists claim not to believe in any supreme being, there are other things or beings they believe and are convinced about. Within this context, there is hardly any person without a religion, which is a good thing. Religion is therefore not considered in an entirely negative light in this paper, and the fact that Boko Haram has been used as a reference in this paper does not mean that Christianity and other religions within Nigeria do not exhibit some negative tendencies capable of compromising the security of the country too. Our position in this paper, however, is the fact that since religion deals with belief and *conviction*, extra care is required from religious groups and their leaders in constituting their doctrines and transmitting same within the matrix of rationality in a manner that is unconducive to extremism. This is because religious extremism leads to a host of irrational beliefs, convictions and actions (like terrorism) that put the security of lives and properties at risk. Beyond the believed eschatological promises of religion, every true religion should champion the preservation of human life at all levels. The basic logic of the "golden rule" explains this; if it is wrong for someone else to terrorise or even kill you for having a different religious affiliation, then, it is also wrong for you to terrorise and kill another person for having a different religious affiliation or creed from yours.

From this perspective, an understanding of a major problem associated with evaluating cultural systems like religion as posited by Agbakoba will help to mitigate the spread of religious extremism. Since the truth and falsity of religion, like other cultural systems, cannot be determined by empirical demonstrations (at least, at the current level of human scientific development), it is widely held that we can only examine its internal consistency, that is, the logical relationship between beliefs, values, etc at various levels of generality, ranging from the particular to the supreme belief(s). However, the internal consistency of a system does not give objective truth nor does it enable us to readily make cross cultural comparisons because every postulate finds its meaning and its logical (rational) connectedness within the system in which it occurs; there is hardly any objective standard which we can employ for this purpose. One internally consistent cultural system cannot readily be shown to be more rational than another such system. So, our choice of such cultural system can only be based on subjective preferences, which cannot provide the basis of superiority of one

system over another.[36] With this understanding, religious intolerance which is a catalyst to religious extremism will be minimized.

Since we are confronted with the problem of religion-induced terrorism as a consequence of religious extremism in Nigeria and this paper propose religious rationality as the panacea, the question then is; how do we cultivate and entrench the rationality of religion in Nigeria? In this paper, we propose a sufficient level of soundness for custodians and teachers of religious doctrines in Nigeria. Fanatics should not be made to interpret and teach religious doctrines, especially to children at the point of infantile indoctrination. Once the wrong doctrines are taught and imbibed at that early stage, children get convinced about the wrong doctrines, which eventually form the basis of their actions and social life. Under such circumstances, religious fanaticism becomes inevitable and the society will be at the receiving end of their eventual terror. In a nutshell, basic principles of rationality must form the basis of religious doctrines and their interpretations if we must deal with religion-induced terrorism and related threats to security in Nigeria.

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