

CONCEPTUALIZING BOKO HARAM: VICTIMAGE RITUAL AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

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DEDICATION

To the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, and the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in their efforts to reduce conflicts, prevent wars and curtail terrorism.

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ABSTRACT

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In this study, rhetorical analysis through the framework of victimage ritual is employed to analyze four Boko Haram messages on *You Tube*, five e-mail messages sent to journalists from leaders of Boko Haram, and a BlogSpot web page devoted to Boko Haram. The aim of this analysis is to understand the persuasive devices by which Boko Haram leaders create, express, and sustain their jurisprudence on acts of violence. The goal of this study is to understand how leaders of Boko Haram construct and express the group's values, sway belief, and justify violence.

The findings show that Boko Haram desire to redeem non-Muslims from perdition, liberate Muslims from persecution, protect Islam from criticism, and revenge perceived acts of injustices against Muslims. The group has embarked on this aim by allotting blame, vilifying the enemy-Other, pressing for a holy war, encouraging martyrdom, and alluding to an apocalypse. Boko Haram's audience is made to believe that Allah has assigned Boko Haram the task to liberate and restore an Islamic haven in Nigeria. Therefore, opposition from the Nigerian government or Western forces is constructed as actions of evil, thus killing members of the opposition becomes a celestial and noble cause. This juxtaposition serves to encourage the violent Jihad which leaders of Boko Haram claims Allah assigned them to lead in the first place. As a result of this

cyclical communication, media houses, along the Nigerian government, Christians and Western ideals become the symbolic evil, against which Muslims, sympathizers and would-be-recruits must unite. By locking Islam against the Nigerian government, Western ideals and Christianity in a characteristically hostile manner, Boko Haram precludes any real solution other than an orchestrated Jihad-crusade-or-cleanse model in which a possible coexistence of Muslims and the enemy-Other are denied, and the threat posed by the enemy-Other is eliminated through conversion or destruction. As a result, this study proposes that Boko Haram Internet messages Boko Haram's mission reveals a movement of separatism, conservatism, and fascism. A movement based on the claim that its activism will establish a state in accordance with the dictates of Allah.

Kristina H. Sheeler, Ph.D., Chair

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| The Rise of Boko Haram | 1 |
| CHAPTER ONE: REVIEW OF LITERATURE..... | 7 |
| Socio-Political Movements..... | 7 |
| Power, Discourse, and Victimage Ritual | 10 |
| CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY | 17 |
| Rationale | 17 |
| Research Procedure..... | 19 |
| Theoretical Framework: Victimage Ritual | 21 |
| You Tube Videos, BlogSpot's, and E-mails as Artifacts..... | 22 |
| Choosing the Artifacts | 23 |
| Description of Artifacts..... | 24 |
| CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS | 35 |
| The Framing of Islamic Fundamentalism | 36 |
| Self-Defense and the Normalization of Islamic Violence | 40 |
| Rhetoric of Blame: The Provocation for Islamization..... | 42 |
| Vilification of the Enemy-Other | 44 |
| Sustaining a Holy War | 47 |
| The Rhetorical <i>Waliyy</i> : Constructing Islamic Sainthood..... | 49 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 53 |
| Constructed Core Values | 53 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Expressing Core Values | 54 |
| Limitations | 56 |
| Future Direction | 57 |
| Suggestions for Effective Counter Communication Strategy | 60 |
| Talking Points and the Factor of Religion | 64 |
| REFERENCES | 67 |
| CURRICULUM VITAE | |

INTRODUCTION

The Rise of Boko Haram

Boko Haram, a group of disenchanting Muslim youths in Northern Nigeria, declared war on the Nigerian state in 2009. Nigerian security forces attribute Boko Haram's foundation to Abubakar Lawan who established the Ahlul sunnawa jama ahijra sect at the University of Maiduguri, Borno State in 1995. However, most local and foreign media trace Boko Haram's origin to 2002, when Mohammed Yusuf emerged as the leader of the sect (Onuoha, 2012). According to Onuoha, Boko Haram flourished as a non-violent movement until Mohammed Yusuf assumed leadership, shortly after Abubakar Lawan left to pursue further studies in Saudi Arabia. The group's official name is Jama'iatu Ahlis Sunna Liddaawati Wal-Jihad, which in Arabic translates to "people committed to the propagation of the prophet's teachings and Jihad" (Ekanem, Dada, and Ejue, 2012, p. 189). Based on this description, Boko Haram is clearly a group of Islamic fundamentalists. The sect has transformed under various names such as the Muhajirun, Yusufiyah, Jama'iatu Ahlis Sunnah Liddaawati Wal-Jihad, and Boko Haram. The catalyst of the sect's insurgency has been clearly established by scholars. Adesoji (2010) and Ekanem et al. (2012) argue that the prevailing economic debility in Nigeria, especially in northern Nigeria, the associated desperation of politicians for political power, and the ambivalence of some Islamic leaders, who only passively condemned the extremist group as it bred, sum up the basis of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria. These domestic dynamics along with growing Islamic fundamentalism around the world make the study of the Boko Haram uprising imperative.

Despite the existence of various conflicting accounts of the establishment of Boko Haram, Onuoha (2012), Forest (2012), Toni, (2011), Adesoji, (2010), and Ekanem, Dada, and Ejue, (2012) assert that Yusuf criticized northern Muslims for participating in what he believed to be an illegitimate state and encouraged his followers to protest against the Nigerian government, and withdraw from society and politics. Yusuf's followers rejected Western civilization and called for the strict enforcement of Sharia law. Because of its anti-Western focus, and its mission to create a 'better' Nigeria through strict adherence to Islam, the group came to be known by locals and eventually by the government as Boko Haram (Forest, 2012).

Boko Haram's mission to restore a conservative version of Islam follows a long history which traces back to the 19th Century when Usman Dan Fodio embarked on a Jihad to implement a stricter version of Islam in northern Nigeria (Hiskett, 2004). Boko Haram's attempt to restore Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria began by positing Western culture, including Christianity and democracy as something forbidden (Forest, 2012). By blaming Western culture for the economic, political and social predicaments of northern Nigeria, the sect aimed to cleanse, or rid Nigeria of "the secular authorities, whom they came to view as representatives of a corrupt, illegitimate, Christian-dominated federal government" (Forest, 2012, p. 63). To emphasize the urgency of their values, Boko Haram made a point of eliminating anyone who questioned their perspective. On 13th March 2011, Sheikh Ibrahim Ahmed was gunned down just after he finished his Maghrib prayers at Gomari Mosque in Maiduguri, Borno State by Boko Haram members. The Sheikh often gave sermons against Boko Haram at the local mosque. According to

Soloman (2012) the strategic logic behind the assassination was clear: “From now on there will only be one interpretation of the Quran – the Islamist one” (p. 68).

Boko Haram’s membership has cut across the broad spectrum of northern Nigerian society, but a great number of members came from its poorest groups (Adesoji, 2010). The group’s membership extended from “former university lecturers, students, bankers, a former commissioner, and other officers of Borno State, to drug addicts, vagabonds, and generally lawless people” (Adesoji, 2010, p. 100). However, the common denominator among all members was their desire to overthrow the secular government and to propagate Islamic law. In its early stages, the group mainly attacked Christians using clubs, machetes, and small arms as part of a strategy to provoke sectarian violence. But by late 2010, Boko Haram had begun making and using crude but effective improvised explosive devices (Forest, 2012). The group began to apply violent urban guerrilla tactics whereby snipers and drive-by shooters target policemen and soldiers. Soloman (2011) argues that the specific targeting of the security forces was Boko Haram directly challenging the authority of the Nigerian state.

When Boko Haram began to attack the elements of the Nigerian state, the Nigerian army was deployed to reinforce and assist the overwhelmed local police forces. After numerous stand-offs, more than 800 people were killed (Ademola, 2009), and many Boko Haram members were arrested, and some were paraded in humiliating fashion outside the police stations. Yusuf, along with his father-in-law Baa Fugu and other sect members were publicly executed on 30 July, 2009 outside the police station in Maiduguri (Forest, 2012). For many members of the sect, the perceived unjust circumstances surrounding the death of Yusuf served to amplify pre-existing animosities toward the

government which stemmed from “poverty, deteriorating social services and infrastructure, educational backwardness, rising numbers of unemployed graduates, massive numbers of unemployed youths, dwindling fortunes in agriculture... and the weak and dwindling productive base of the northern economy” (Forest, 2012, p. 64). The accumulation of a broad range of socioeconomic and political grievances now justified, in their minds, a terrorist campaign. Members of Boko Haram have been responsible for attacks against government officials, military patrols, churches, politicians, academic institutions, police stations- from which the group’s members have stolen weapons used in subsequent attacks- and Christian and Muslim figures of traditional and religious authority, who have been critical of its ideology (Onuoha, 2012).

The Boko Haram uprising has been examined from diverse academic lenses. Adesoji (2010) documented and analyzed the Boko Haram uprising, as well as its links to the promotion of Islamic revivalism. Ekanem et al. (2012) philosophically and legally appraised Boko Harams' activities and the call for amnesty. Onuoha (2012) examines Boko Haram’s philosophy, how the group emerged, its main operational tactics and the group’s impact on security in Nigeria. Forest (2012) explores the origins and future trajectory of Boko Haram, and especially why its ideology of violence has found resonance among a small number of young Nigerians. However, communication analysis of the root causes and underlying conditions, motivators and enablers of terrorism, including the agitation propaganda of Jihadists, are vital to understanding and shaping appropriate countermeasures to the threat from Islamic terrorism (Bockstette, 2008).

The rhetorical choices and prowess of Boko Haram’s founder Mohammed Yusuf contributed to Boko Haram's mobilization and participation; yet there is little or no

rhetorical analysis of Yusuf's oratory or those of the sect's current leader Imam Abubakar Shekau and spokesperson, alias Abul Qaqa. There is a paucity of extant research on Boko Haram's rhetoric. Bockstette (2008) argues that Jihadists place a great deal of emphasis on developing comprehensive communication strategies in order to reach their desired goals and desired end states. Their ability to develop and implement such sophisticated strategies shows their fanatic conviction and their professionalism: "Their communication goals are aimed at legitimizing, propagating and intimidating," (p. 5). According to Bockstette (2008) government officials can counteract the three primary terroristic communication goals- the propagation and enlargement of their movement, the legitimization of Jihad and the coercion and intimidation of their enemies. Boko Haram has communicated its Jihad into a reality that threatens the stability of the Nigerian state, as well as the interests of the international community in Nigeria.

What counter terrorism scholars have established is that in order to ease the underlying conditions, motivators and enablers of terrorism, governments must develop an effective counter strategic communication plan, which exploits weaknesses and contradictions in the Jihadists' use of strategic communication management techniques: "This is vital in winning the asymmetrical conflict with Jihadist terrorists" (Bockstette, 2008, p. 6). Before a counter communication strategy against Boko Haram can be effectively advanced, it is critical to understand the sect's rhetorical devices. Therefore, I will examine the discursive activities and rhetorical choices of Boko Haram, to discover how their messages reinforce the sect's identity, bait Islamic support and propagate violence against perceived enemies of Islam. Boko Haram's chief rhetorical function is

the creation and maintenance of in-group solidarity through hostility toward out-groups, or what Kenneth Burke calls, “congregation through segregation.”

In the following chapters, I review relevant literature regarding movements, power, discourse, and victimage ritual. Next I present a rationale for this study and provide an explanation of my chosen artifacts: four Boko Haram messages on *You Tube*, five e-mail messages sent to journalists from leaders of Boko Haram, and a BlogSpot web page devoted to Boko Haram. Finally, I present my thesis methodology: rhetorical criticism permeated with the theoretical framework of victimage ritual. This method of analysis will guide the discovery of how Boko Haram messages reinforce the sect’s identity, bait Islamic support and propagate violence against perceived enemies of Islam.

CHAPTER ONE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Socio-Political Movements

The emergence of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria is not unique, but rather current expressions of a long-term struggle in the region, most notably the Islamic movement of Shaihu Usman Dan Fodio in the 19th Century. The Sokoto caliphate established by Usman Dan Fodio, ruled parts of what are now northern Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. Ever since the Sokoto caliphate fell under British rule in 1903, Muslims in the region have resisted Western education (Marchal, 2012, p. 3). According to Marchal, Boko Haram should, therefore, be considered “a movement of restoration” (p. 2).

However, scholars disagree on the fundamental definition of social movements. While some scholars embrace a discourse-centered approach to social movements which places emphasis on idea and identity generation, and transformation; others have advocated a “functional” approach to social movement studies (Triece, 2000). Examining social movement as a function, Stewart (1980) asserts that social movements ultimately “transform perceptions of history; transform perceptions of society; prescribe courses of action; and mobilize for action” (p. 300). Also analyzing social movements as a function, Gregg (1971) postulates an “ego-function” of social movements, which operates to form, build, and reaffirm the self-hood of the protesters themselves. As a discourse-centered approach, Cathcart (1972) posits that social movements are carried forward through language, both verbal and nonverbal, in strategic forms that bring about identification of

the individual with the movement: “This form of a movement is a rhetorical form, one which gives substance to its rationale and purpose” (p. 86). Although diverse approaches to examining social movements exist, movements, including the Boko Haram uprising, begin with perceived grievance. Frequently, these grievances are framed as an “injustice” (Gamson, 1992) and are thus used to help mobilize constituents and sympathetic bystanders to work for particular goals (Marwell and Oliver, 1984). Two key variables that help translate social grievances into the collective action of a social movement are the development of shared consciousness and collective identities (Taylor and Whittier, 1992; Johnson, 1999) and the presence of political opportunities (Tarrow, 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001). Cathcart (1972) also adds to the role of grievance in social movement, contending that for a movement to come into being there must be one or more actors who, perceiving that the “good order” (the established system) is in reality a faulty order full of absurdity and injustice, cry out through various symbolic acts that true communion, justice, salvation cannot be achieved unless there is an immediate corrective applied to the established order” (p. 85). Social movements convey issues such as injustice, lack of fairness, and inequality as imperfections.

However, Vatz (1974) argues that we come to regard something as imperfect through persuasion; we come to perceive urgency through persuasion and people come to see themselves as capable of taking effective action through persuasion. Aspinall (2007) reasons with Vatz by stressing the need to think of grievance, not as an objective measure, but rather as a socially constructed value, such as identity, ethnicity or indeed, greed, that arises and may be understood only within a particular historical, cultural, political context. Aspinall (2007) asserts that inequality gives rise to the rhetoric of

grievance, and without the identity framework, there would be no grievances, at least no politically salient ones. Grievances are instead integral to the ideological frameworks through which the social world, including notions like “justice” and “fairness,” are constructed and understood (Aspinal, 2007). As Vatz states: “In some circumstances, the context may give rise to ways of thinking about group identity and entitlement that prompt interpretations of the economic system in grievance terms, linked to condemnation of the wider political system or of ethnic adversaries” (Vatz, 1974, p. 958). However, most protest parties have risen, agitated briefly and disappeared without having introduced or even modified a single important idea (Kerr, 1959). Stewart, Smith, and Denton (1989) argue that “persuasion permeates social movements, and is the primary agency available to social movements for satisfying major requirements or functions” (p. 16). Blain (1994) argues that an effective movement rhetorical discourse must constitute a field of knowledge, and constitute an ethics. As Blain posits, actors must argue the truth of a problem, an injustice or a danger in a convincing way, including knowledge of the subjects and objects of struggle. Actors must argue the solutions in an activating way, including the vilification of opponents as malevolent power subjects and hero-ization of activists as moral agents and power subjects. This knowledge-ethic model is “tactical” in the sense that it is designed to arouse moral outrage at opponents' actions and practices, and to goad the outraged into action (Blain, 1994, p. 808). Boko Haram has satisfied several models of protest, social or political movements, through strategic discursive activities.

Power, Discourse, and Victimage Ritual

Localized conflicts, violence and an intensification of terror attacks continue to plague the 21st Century, as societies incessantly manage perceived injustices, and dissonance in ideologies, cultures and beliefs. Such struggles often result in an outright war, genocide, rebellion, or terrorism depending on the rhetorical situation and rhetorical discourse. Scholars, deriving ideas from Kenneth Burke and Michel Foucault, and the results of research, have addressed useful concepts in gaining understanding of, and critiquing victimage rhetoric as a process.

Engels (2010) asserts that the rhetoric of victimage ritual is the politics of resentment and the tyranny of the enemy-Other. Engels' assertion bolsters the notion that rhetoric is the tactical use of words to move people into action - support politicians and political programs, to fight wars and sacrifice for causes. Victimage rhetoric, therefore "is the associations among politics, warfare, and strategic discourses, and the polemical use of words" (Blain, 1994, p. 806). The rhetoric of victimage often emerges in the power struggles that bring proponents into conflict with opponents. According to Brummet (1980) people are often mysteries to each other because of racial, sexual, national, or economic differences. In the face of fear, hatred or threat, participants in the social order take responsibility to unite their group against the other- usually with victimage rhetoric. Examples of such hierarchal participants in history include William Lynch, Adolf Hitler, Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin. Blain posits that historically and etymologically, movements, politics and warfare are linked to persuasive discourse by the ritual of victimage rhetoric.

Victimage rhetoric begins with perceived threat. Gordon and Arian (2001) posit that perceived threat, including competition for scarce resources, clearly plays a major role in the development of negative dispositions toward an out-group. Demoulin et al. (2004) refer to this type of ‘othering’ as infra-humanization, to attribute a “lesser humanity” to an out-group. Bogod (2004) addresses examples of infra-humanization. In attempts to achieve so-called racial purity, Bogod asserts that Nazi Eugenics developed the theory of ‘life unworthy of life’ (Lebensunwertes Leben). This theory categorized stigmatized groups as Untermenschen, ‘lower people’ who should be ‘eliminated’ from society, including criminals, gypsies, homosexual people, political dissidents, Black people, disabled people and those with mental health problems (Bogod, 2004).

Disgust and revulsion feature prominently in images of dehumanized others who are often perceived as contaminating and despised (Haslam, 2006). Staub (1989) asserts that moral exclusion has been achieved through systematic violations of human rights, political oppression and slavery. Causing or allowing harm to those outside of one’s moral community is justified and rationalized on the premise that the enemy-Other are expendable, undeserving, exploitable, and irrelevant. As propaganda, dehumanization can be rationalized as necessary and ‘good’ and perhaps not even construed as dehumanization. According to Vanderford (1989) one of the main features of protagonists' motives in victimage rituals is the aim to destroy the destroyer.

Activists through rhetoric mobilize people to engage in activism by gaining their rhetorical identification with an actual or impending violation of some communal ideal. Activists mount education campaigns and public appeals to get those they address to identify with the opponent's acts of violation. In political movements, narrative patterns

function to differentiate “good” and “evil” subjects, which permit activists to act on the actions of those they address. Political actors must inevitably resort to the tactics of victimage rhetoric to achieve their objectives which is recruitment, motivating action, solidarity, attacks on adversaries, addressing the public (Blain, 1994, p. 808). The constructed knowledge of the causes of danger takes the form of villainous powers inflicting or threatening to inflict some terrible wrong. Blain (1994) posits that this effect can be intensified by amplifying on the negative subjective motives, aims, and intentions of the agents and agencies responsible for the violation.

Drake (1998) asserts that dehumanization is not confined to terrorists and is indeed common in wartime. Castle and Hensley (2002) discuss that dehumanization is not invariably abnormal behavior, but can be a learned, conditioned response. Haslam (2006) and Stollznaw (2007) argue that dehumanization is a common social phenomenon, grounded in ordinary social-cognition. Stollznaw (2008) argues that “dehumanization has long been the tool of discrimination” (p. 177). The word features prominently in contemporary socio-political discourse and is an underlying theme of violence and inter-group conflict. Dehumanization as a guiding ideology underlying acts of enslavement, terrorism, torture and exploitation, is tacitly sanctioned as a tool of war and propaganda. Dehumanization has been used by governments, movements and individuals to portray a target as “bad”, “inferior” and therefore unworthy of equal respect or protection (Stollznaw, 2008). This has been achieved through language and metaphor. Morris (1969) explains that due to distinguishing factors of consciousness and language, people strongly differentiate between humans and non-human entities, including animals. Morris goes on to posit that when we analyze the discourse of

dehumanization, a moral appears to emerge, that we 'should' regard and treat all humans with a respect and equality that is reserved for humans alone. Perhaps this discourse uncovers a contemporary traditional belief amongst some speakers, that all people are equal in some fundamental sense.

However, Stollznaw (2007) claims that despite any possible moral ideals, not all humans' view all other humans as essentially equal and this is revealed and constructed by their discourses. As Day and Vandiver (2000) note: "Genocide is never performed on equals" (p. 15). Identifying the other as "bad" presents the assumption that the agent is someone "good". This perception is coupled with a moral "force" or "ideal" (Day and Vandiver, 2000). Dehumanization is the contravention of this possible "social code" that all humans should therefore be treated as equals (Stollznaw, 2007, p. 179). Greenberg et al. (1998) assert that the use of derogatory ethnic epithets is a common method of dehumanization during inter-group conflict. For example, "the Jew's inferiority is reflected in the repeated dehumanization of Jews in words and cartoons as animals – monkeys, pigs, donkeys, rats, worms, scorpions, spiders and octopuses" (Day and Vandiver, 2000, p. 53). As examples of "sanitizing language", Bar and Ben-Ari (2005) cite the use of "neutralize or clean-up" to refer to acts of killing. During the Nazi Holocaust, "eradicate and exterminate were covert terms for kill corresponding to the metaphorical epithets rats, vermin and cockroaches" (Bar and Ben-Ari, 2005, p. 143). Coates (2003) cites American characterizations of Japanese people during World War II as lice, scorpions, cockroaches, gophers and malarial mosquitoes" (p. 135). Gibson and Haritos-Fatouros (1986) state that: "Greek military police (1967 - 1974) referred to their torture victims (Communist political dissidents) as worms" (p. 111). Shay (1995) cites an

example from the Vietnam War of 1957 to 1975. According to Shay, the Vietnamese were thought of as monkeys, insects, vermin, childlike, unfeeling automata, puny, inscrutable, uniquely treacherous, deranged, physiologically inferior, primitive, and barbaric; and devoted to fanatical suicide charges. Evidently, humans rarely kill in random ways; they are motivated by words, and their actions are shaped by mass mediated arguments that establish the reasons for the kill (Voth and Nolan, 2007).

Through propaganda, negative connotations are associated with the enemy-Other. The media plays a critical role in how victimage discourse is constructed or perceived, whether during war, genocide or acts of terrorism. Victimage ritual may start off as propaganda campaigns, but escalate into the slaughter of large numbers of human beings. The Rwandan genocide, for example, was fueled by widely-disseminated media messages in print and radio, repeatedly calling the Tutsi ethnic community serpents and cockroaches (Kagwi-Ndungu, 2007). As we saw particularly in Rwanda in 1994 and post 9-11, emphasizing voices of political demagogues in the media, especially through the radio and television venues, can inflame feelings of fear and anger (Altheide, 2006). Media sentiments can lead to horrible distinctions between in-groups and out-groups such as Hutus and Tutsis, Jews and National Socialist Germans, Arab Sudanese and Black Sudanese, Bosnian Muslims and Catholic Croats, Jihadists and Westerners, and members of Boko Haram and their perceived enemies. Soldiers and populations on the whole are often led into genocides, terrorism, wars or violence by mediated campaigns of misinformation and propaganda, linked to a series of distinct but progressive stages, each integral to the process. Bytwer (2005) posits that all subsequent Nazi propaganda followed Hitler's basic line, intensifying in tone as the war progressed:

Although Hitler and the Nazis suppressed the details of the Holocaust, they clearly and publicly made the argument that the destruction of the Jews was Germany's response to Jewish plans to destroy Germany, using words in both cases that is consistently translated as destroy (*vernichten*), wipe out (*auslöschen*), exterminate (*ausrotten*), and extirpate (*ausmerzen*). These words were repeated regularly in public not only by Hitler and Goebbels, but also by leading Nazi books and periodicals and in the speeches and conversations of hundreds of thousands of Nazi propagandists, who were instructed to use these and similar words in presenting Nazi thinking to ordinary citizens (Bytwer, 2005, p. 39).

The dehumanization rhetoric prevalent in contemporary post 9-11 media discourse has antecedents in Western media treatment of the Japanese in WWII. The Japanese were systematically presented as pests, such as bats and mosquitoes. Dower (1986) writes that the rhetoric of pest and infestation slipped into the rhetoric of extermination and eradication, as in the popular poster found in U.S. West Coast restaurants during World War II that proclaimed: "This restaurant poisons rats and Japs" (p. 98). Since the war on terror was declared, Middle-Eastern identities have been eroded. Rayan El Amine (2005) cited in Steuter and Wills (2009) notes that the Islamic menace "has replaced the red menace, and the 'evil empire' of the cold war has become the . . . 'evil doers' of the Arab and Muslim world" (p. 12). The use of metaphorical derogatory epithets is a form of linguistic objectification; to confer non-human status upon a human.

Understanding narratives and symbols as they relate to victimage ritual puts customs, language, culture, traditions, religion, ethnicity and race into context. Narration becomes the central characteristic of the human condition (Fisher, 1984); therefore humans by nature respond to symbols and patterns. Because symbolic forms have the rhetorical ability to induce cooperation by the public, victimage ritual can therefore be seen as the semiotic representation of the enemy-Other, through an executed form of

identification and classification. The action of symbolic forms also raises interesting theoretical questions about the relationship between rhetoric and its situations (Brummet, 1980). The metaphors that collectively construct the enemy-Other in pro-war, pro-violence rhetoric require attention because of the potential consequences of the strategic use of words. Steuter and Wills (2009) theorize that “the saturation of these metaphors in public speeches, narratives, and media reporting, has resulted in the dominance of the complementary enemy-as-animal, enemy-as-prey and enemy-as-disease patterns” (Steuter and Wills, 2009, p. 20).

The literatures reviewed for this thesis have contributed immensely to the body of knowledge of the ritual of victimage rhetoric, and invite continuous investigation of the critical use of words, or discursive actions that move people to engage in such acts as terrorism, fight in wars or sacrifice themselves for causes. The aim of this study, therefore, is to join in the conversation on the ritual of victimage rhetoric, by offering a qualitative assessment of the messages published by Boko Haram on the Internet, to describe, analyze, and understand the communicative devices by which Boko Haram leaders create, express, and sustain their jurisprudence on acts of violence. In pursuit of this aim I will utilize rhetorical analysis as a qualitative research method (Foss, 2004). Rhetoric is defined as “the human use of symbols to communicate, in some cases to persuade others, and in other cases, an invitation to understanding” (Foss, 2004, p. 5). Rhetorical analysis allows researchers to systematically investigate and explain symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical process.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Rationale

Bockstette (2008) argues that the mass media and especially the Internet have become the key enablers and the main strategic communication assets for terrorists and have ensured them a favorable communication asymmetry. With the Internet, terrorists are able to compensate for a significant part of their asymmetry in military might. According to Bockstette (2008) Jihadists craft their strategies based on careful audience analysis and adapt their messages and delivery methods accordingly, adhering to the fundamental rules underlying any communication or public relations campaign. Jihadists' skillful use of the mass media including the Internet to compensate for asymmetrical disadvantages has enabled them to continuously generate new generations of terrorists. The study of the rhetorical choices of Boko Haram is a prerequisite to advancing strategic discourses against the group.

As has been established, terror groups are increasingly using the Internet to identify themselves, frame their missions, and control their narratives (McNamee, Peterson, and Pena, 2010). Catherine and Rollins (2011) find that the Internet is used by international insurgents, Jihadists, and terrorist organizations as a tool for radicalization and recruitment, a method of propaganda distribution, a means of communication, and ground for training. The Internet has also proven to be a useful tool for Boko Haram. The group has uploaded several messages on *You Tube*, blogged about their activities, and disclosed plans, thoughts and actions to journalists, through e-mail messages. The

proposed scope of this thesis, therefore, would be the messages of Boko Haram published on the Internet because the Internet and the advent of the World Wide Web in particular, have significantly increased the opportunities for terrorists to secure publicity, and promulgate psychological warfare by purveying strategically constructed messages (Conway, 2006). Rowland and Theye (2008) argue: “If terrorism is fundamentally rhetorical, understanding the nature of that message and why some find it so appealing that they are willing to sacrifice for it is essential” (p. 53). In order to describe, analyze, and understand the persuasive devices by which Boko Haram leaders create, express, and sustain jurisprudence on acts of violence, I will rely on the guiding research question: What are the core values of Boko Haram, and how do leaders of the group construct and express the group’s values, sway belief, and justify violence to its audience?

Research Procedure

To answer this research question, I will deconstruct and interpret the communicative options used by Boko Haram leaders to reveal the version of reality that has been selected, and is being presented to the audience. I begin by examining Boko Haram's messages published on the Internet using rhetorical criticism and the theoretical framework of victimage ritual. My artifacts will be examined closely in order to construe how the separate components of Boko Haram's messages fit together to reflect the sect's ideology and values. Thus, I will identify the social mythos, pathos, logos, and metaphors that Boko Haram rely on to initiate an expected response from their target audience.

The literature reviewed for this study lays the argumentative foundation upon which I present and analyze Boko Haram's *You Tube* videos, a BlogSpot web page attributed to Boko Haram, and e-mail messages sent by Boko Haram to journalists. These messages contain the kind of data that are the focus of rhetorical analysis. Through inquiry and explanation of the discursive acts emerging from my artifacts, the relevant aspects of Boko Haram's discourse will be identified, and claims will be made and supported by warrants, backings, and qualifiers.

Analysis will include detailed description of the themes or issues that emerge from dissecting Boko Haram's messages. I will compare observed strategies established in previous studies, and in different contexts, to my findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). I will establish a clear chain of evidence from my initial guiding questions to the thesis conclusions (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). At the end of my analysis I will draw conclusions about the overall meaning derived from the artifacts. My assertions or explanations will reflect lessons learned from this study.

This study focuses on the messages published in 2011 and 2012 because the sect's position, its mission and its resolve was clearly established in 2012 (Marchal, 2012). This time period proves sufficient to yield substantial cyber discourses reflective of Boko Haram's embraced ideologies. The chosen time period also marks a particularly pronounced level of friction and tension in the Boko Haram uprising. By describing and understanding Boko Haram's Internet messages, this thesis enters the scholarly conversation about power, discourse and victimage rhetoric. Understanding the rhetorical choices and strategies of Boko Haram is important because it allows for the advancement of counter strategic communications, counterpropaganda, and public diplomacy activities to be effectively implemented.

Theoretical Framework: Victimage Ritual

Boko Haram's Internet messages will be examined through the theoretical framework of victimage ritual. Burke (1950) coined the term victimage ritual in his book, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, to capture the essence of movement discourse. Because Boko Haram is molded as a "movement of restoration" (Marchal, 2012, p. 3), victimage ritual will function as a context to analyze and understand the communicative devices by which Boko Haram leaders create, express, and sustain their jurisprudence on acts of violence.

The framework of victimage ritual has been expanded upon by a plethora of scholars from the disciplines of communication, history, psychology and sociology; and tested with evidence from the genealogy of the Anglo-American discourse of terrorism in social, scientific, and psychological discourses (Blain, 2010).

Victimage ritual is sufficient for my analysis of the messages of Boko Haram because the discourses of victimage:

First, constitute knowledge of the field of power struggle – argue the truth of a problem, injustice, or danger in a persuasive way, including the vilification of opponents as malevolent power subjects. And second, constitute an ethic of political action – argue for solutions in an activating way, including the heroization of activists as moral agents and power subjects (Blain, 2005, p. 34).

This framework provides critics with tenets for examining literature or media texts attempting to gain support for war, genocide or terrorism.

You Tube Videos, BlogSpot's, and E-mails as Artifacts

In an age of Internet communication technologies, rhetors use the Internet to convey their message because the Internet has become a prime means of communication worldwide. The Internet's unprecedented global reach, combined with the difficulty in tracking communications, makes it an ideal tool for extremists to repackage old hatred, raise funds, and recruit members (Anderson, 2006). There is exhaustive scholarship on the use of the Internet by violent groups and hate groups. McNamee et al. (2012) argue that violent groups and hate groups are increasingly using the Internet to send messages mainly to educate others; encourage participation within the group and among the public at large; invoke divine privilege; and indict external groups and organizations. Boko Haram has also utilized the internet to communicate with the public. In 2012, the sect posted *You Tube* videos, sent e-mail messages to journalists, and created a web page to blog about their activities.

Choosing the Artifacts

Boko Haram published several messages on *You Tube*, blogged about their activities, and sent numerous e-mails to journalists. I reviewed several of these messages and selected the messages published in 2011 and 2012. This time period proved sufficient to yield substantial cyber discourses reflective of Boko Haram's acclaimed ideologies, beliefs, and justifications. The selected time period also marked a particularly pronounced level of friction and tension in the conflict between Boko Haram and the Nigerian state. Once narrowed down, I chose four *You Tube* videos, five e-mails/letters published by journalists, and a BlogSpot dedicated to Boko Haram, which I adjudged satisfied my study's criteria of significance and timelines.

To determine significance, I chose videos or messages on the basis that they responded directly to major discursive practices and events, and what I evaluated to constitute Boko Haram's attempt to clarify their actions and positions to the public. To ensure timeliness, I selected messages from 2011 and 2012. Finally I selected messages on the basis that they conveyed characters, actions, settings, motives, language, metaphors, narratives and symbols. I continued to monitor other messages published by Boko Haram until I was convinced that the group's rhetorical choices to influence belief and justification had been established. I proceeded to examine these rhetorical choices in order to gain insights into Boko Haram's ideology and how it mediated acts of violence. I proceeded to examine these artifacts to understand how the group's messages and its target audience negotiate the tricky middle ground between rhetorical epistemology, and, in a way, help offer a more nuanced account of how Boko Haram allot blame, vilify the enemy-Other, press for a holy war, encourage martyrdom, and allude to an apocalypse.

Description of Artifacts

Imam Abubakar Shekau's *You Tube* Message Uploaded on January 15, 2012:

“Message to Jonathan 1”

Imam Abubakar Shekau was the second-in-command to Boko Haram's founder Mohammed Yusuf, who was killed by the Nigerian police in July 2009, after days of fighting between security forces and members of Boko Haram. Shekau was thought to have been killed in the gun fire exchange with security forces. But he reappeared in videos posted on the internet in 2010, 2011, and 2012, proclaiming himself as Boko Haram's leader (*BBC*, June 2012). The Nigerian president had addressed the country about the group, and promised to defeat the insurgency. Shekau's video message was a response to the president's address. Shekau attempted to control the national dialogue about Boko Haram and frame the debate about its actions.

Shekau began his speech by baiting sympathy:

Everyone has seen what the security personnel have done to us. Everyone has seen why we are fighting with them. We hardly touch anybody except security personnel and Christians and those who have betrayed us. Everyone knows what Christians did to Muslims, not once or twice.

Shekau goes on to state the purpose of his video message: “Why I've come out to explain myself is because of the explanation Jonathan and the CAN president gave on us, including the various versions people give about us that we are like cancer (a terrible ailment) in this country called Nigeria.” Shekau continues to argue that democracy and the Nigerian constitution is paganism, and there are some things that God has forbidden in the Quran, such things as Western education. He goes on to address Christians:

You Christians should know that Jesus is a servant and prophet of God. He is not the son of God. This religion of Christianity you are practicing is not a religion of God- it is paganism. God frowns at it. What you are practicing is not religion. Aside that, you Christians cheated and killed us to the extent of eating our flesh like cannibals!

Shekau concludes his message by saying:

We follow the tenets of the Quran and anybody that thinks he can fight God shouldn't think his prayer or praying in the mosque can save him! Any Muslim that cheats and hides under the cloak of religion, if we know such person, we won't hesitate to eliminate him. Yes, I am saying so because it doesn't take 5 minutes to kill just as we're being killed. We follow the teachings of the Quran. This is what God has told me to explain. Alhamdulillah!

Abul Qaqa's Telephone Conference with Nigerian Journalists, Published in *ThisAfrica.com*, on March 21, 2012: "Boko Haram: No More Dialogue with Unbelievers, the War Now Continues"

Abul Qaqa, an alias, is the alleged spokesperson for Boko Haram. News media reported that Abul Qaqa had been arrested and killed by the Nigerian military. On February 2nd 2012, a man claiming to be Abul Qaqa held a telephone conference with newsmen in Maiduguri, Borno State in northern Nigeria. In the telephone conference, the man claimed, "...I am Abul Qaqa, the spokesman of the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnati Liddaawati Wal-Jihad." The supposed Abul Qaqa proceeded to reiterate the mission and planned actions of Boko Haram

Abul Qaqa began his message by clarifying the news of his death: "We want to react on what security agents said in respect of the arrest of one of our own. The person that was arrested was Abul Dardaa, and not Abul Qaqa. I am Abul Qaqa..." The alleged spokesman went on to assert that:

Almighty Allah has told us repeatedly that the unbelievers will never respect the promises they made. As such, henceforth, we would never respect any proposal for dialogue. In fact, we have closed all possible doors of negotiation. We would never listen to any call for negotiations. Let the government forces do whatever they feel they can do and we too would use all the wire withal at our disposal and do what we can. If the government thinks arresting our members will discourage us from launching onslaught, then let them continue arresting and killing our members.

Abul Qaqa went on to appeal to Muslims to join the fight: “We are calling on all Muslims in this part of the world to accept the clarion call and fight for the restoration of the caliphate of Usman Dan Fodio which the white man fought and fragmented. The white man killed prominent Islamic clerics and emirs and also replaced the white Islamic flag with the Union Jack. We want all our people to come together and restore our loss glory.”

Abu Qaqa concluded by saying: “The truth is that we have been doubtful on the seriousness and purposeful commitment of the government.”

Imam Abubakar Shekau’s Message on *You Tube* Posted on April 12, 2012: “Boko Haram threaten to kill President Jonathan within three months”

The Nigerian president had threatened to defeat the Boko Haram insurgency within three months. In this video message, Boko Haram’s leader, Imam Abubakar Shekau responds to the boast by the Nigerian government:

We have heard some talk from this President, Goodluck Jonathan, boasting that in 3 months, he will finish us off. Now, no one talks that way except he who has gone astray of his creator, because nobody can bring things to bear except Allah. Even then, by the grace of Allah, our main aim remains that we are killed and made martyrs in the duty of Allah, so we may gain the fruits of Allah's promises to his servants, as written in his book, the holy Qur'an.

Shekau goes on to say that the group only kills when someone has “gone afoul of Allah, or the religion of Allah, or the prophets of Allah.” Shekau said he only delivered important message to the world in the name of Allah. He concludes by saying: “These past few days that we have been, some days we kill a thousand, then after perhaps two days, they kill a hundred of ours. Allah says he sees his servants. It is pertinent that Allah see the servants who have intentions to do his deeds.”

Boko Haram’s Message to the Nigerian Media, Uploaded to *You Tube* on May 1, 2012: “Sako game da harikanjaridar ThisDay”

Boko Haram had bombed *ThisDay*, a news media house. And in an 18 minutes video posted on *You Tube*, the group threatened to attack more media houses, naming *Voice of America* (Hausa), *Radio France* (Hausa), *Daily Trust*, *Guardian Newspapers*, among others. The group also gave reasons why they bombed *ThisDay* office in the Nigerian capital city of Abuja and other media houses. The narrator in the video was not identified. “This is a message from Jamaatu Ahlis Sunnah Lil Daawati Wal Jihad, and we wish to inform Nigerians our reasons for attacking some media houses,” the video narrator said. The video also shows a live coverage of the *ThisDay* building bombing in Abuja. The group created the new *You Tube* video under the name Alhaji Mani.

Video has background music in Hausa language. The narrator says: “Nigerians, our name is not Boko Haram; we are Muslims, Ahlis Sunnah. We attacked *ThisDay* because we will never forget or forgive anyone who abused our prophet.”

The first written message says: “Public awareness department presents: Reasons for attacking *ThisDay* Newspaper”. The video also shows coverage of the suicide attack

at *ThisDay* office in Abuja. A man wielding a rifle and reciting some prayer verses is shown. Shots of the late leader of the sect Muhammad Yusuf, delivering a sermon, were shown. The video message concludes with the narrator saying:

We are grateful to God for the success recorded on the attack on *ThisDay*, and we hope to continue such attacks... We promise to demolish 500 buildings for any one of our houses that the government destroys. We have already started with Gombe and Kano. These media houses have committed a lot of offences that is detrimental to Islam, and we don't have the power to forgive them. We will take revenge on them by God's grace.

Abul Qaqa's E-mail Message to Journalists, Published in a *CNN* Article on June 18, 2012: "Boko Haram claims responsibility for Nigeria church bombings"

Boko Haram had blown up three churches in northern Nigeria, and Abul Qaqa sent an e-mail to journalists to claim the attacks. In the news article following the attacks which the Nigerian Red Cross said left 50 people dead, *CNN* news cited a response from Abul Qaqa: "Let them know that now it's the time for revenge God willing. From now on, they either follow the right religion or there will be no peace for them." Abul Qaqa's message response to the attack on Christian churches in the Nigerian cities of Zaria and Kaduna were "retaliation on Christians for destroying mosques and turning others into beer parlor and prostitution joints". *CNN's* Vladimir Duthiers and Nana Karikari-apau and journalist Safiya Akau contributed to this report.

Abul Qaqa's E-mail message to Journalists, Published in an *Aljazeera* News Article on July, 10, 2012: "Nigeria's Boko Haram claims responsibility for funeral attack"

Boko Haram had attacked a funeral in northeastern Nigeria. In the news article following the attack that killed dozens of people, including two prominent politicians,

Aljazeera News cited a response from Abul Qaqa, Boko Haram's spokesman: "We are responsible for the attack on Plateau and we will continue to hunt for government officials wherever they are." Abul Qaqa concludes: "This information helps Nigerian security forces in arresting our brethren. We will not spare any reporter or staff wherever we find him, by the grace of God."

Abul Qaqa's E-mail message to Journalists, Published in the *Nigerian Newsreel* on July 31, 2012: "Boko Haram claims responsibility for attacks on Sokoto, VP's Zaria home"

Boko Haram had attacked the family house of Vice President Namadi Sambo and the office of the Assistant Inspector General of Police Ibrahim in Sokoto State. In this news article by the Nigerian Newsreel following the attack, journalists cited an e-mail response from Abul Qaqa, Boko Haram's spokesman:

We have reasons for all our activities and we only kill those who wronged us. We attacked Sokoto because many of our brethren have been incarcerated there. We are gladdened by the successes we recorded at the office of the AIG [Assistant Inspector General] in Marina and the police divisional office at Unguwan Rogo as well as the police station at Arkila. We wish to reiterate that our crusade is not for personal gain; it is meant to ensure the establishment of an Islamic state by liberating all Muslims from the excesses of the infidels.

Abul Qaqa concludes by saying:

We strongly believe that Almighty Allah will reward us with his famous paradise in the hereafter as he rightly said in chapter 9 verses 111 of the Holy Quran. The fact is that we are the warriors of the Almighty and even the security forces are finding it difficult to contain our activities. We want to stress that in our struggle, we only kill government functionaries, security agents, Christians and anyone who pretends to be a Muslim but engage in assisting security agents to arrest us.

Boko Haram's Letter to the Kano State Office of the Wazobia/Cool FM, Published on Sunday, September 16, 2012 at 3:17pm

Journalists had been reporting about the activities of members of Boko Haram, and the group wrote a letter to express their disapproval. The letter reportedly written by Jama' Atul Qatlul Kafir Fi Sabilillhi (an affiliate of Boko Haram), addressed to the Kano State office of the *Wazobia/Cool FM* offices on Sunday, September 16, 2012, identified a target list of radio stations to be attacked. The letter warned the Muslims employed at the Station to be careful of their activities near the entrance of the radio station. The brief letter read:

As we embark on fresh attacks to commemorate the insult done to our beloved MUHAMMAD (SALLAHU ALAIHI WASALLAM), this is hereby warning you/alerting your station that you might be affected due to some disregard attitudes towards Islam and our people. Reports came to us that your stations are Christians inclined and we made our investigations to ascertaining that. There are some people among you that fall in our target list as we noted their CAN [Christian Association of Nigeria] membership and they shall expect our wrath in a short-while, but for now, WE WARN! We also forewarn our Muslim brothers in the station not to be involved in any act of offence to Islam and that they should limit their movements into the stations to avoid being affected. We once again commend the Jihad of our brothers in Libya that killed an American envoy and some non-Muslims; it is indeed an act worthy of commendation and adoption!

Imam Abubakar Shekau's *You Tube* Message Uploaded on September, 30, 2012: "A Message to The World!"

Boko Haram continued to receive condemnation for their attacks and Abubakar Shekau posted a message to address public fury. Shekau begins by stating the purpose of his message:

The message is for three purposes, all plans against Prophet Mohammed and Muslims will not succeed and just wait and see what we will do. The second is, they were arresting and molesting our members who are just serving Allah. We did not even talk and now they have continued capturing our women, this week about seven women were captured and we don't even know where they are, but they are being held by infidel enemies of Allah.

Shekau goes on to say that:

In fact, they are even having sex with one of them [arrested female suspects of Boko Haram]. Allah, Allah, see us and what we are going through. It is in one place that they are holding seven women, in other places they are more than that. Only Allah knows the actual number of our women being held, women who are married in accordance with Islamic law.

Shekau addresses reports that there were ongoing dialogue between the Nigerian government and Boko Haram. He said: "They are spreading that we are dialoguing with them, it is a blatant lie. There is no body that we are dialoguing with. It is a lie and mischief that they are talking with Boko Haram using fake names, and they are boasting that they have found solution." While rejecting claims of a dialogue between the Nigerian government and members of Boko Haram, Shekau does not hesitate to victimize the Nigerian government. "You are killing our people and at the same time, they are saying they are dialoguing with us."

The short video comes to an end after Shekau threatens the Nigerian leaders:

Since you are now holding our women, (laughs) just wait and see what will happen to your own women. Just wait and see what will happen to your own wives according to Sharia law, (laughs) just wait and see if it is sweet and convenient for you...Allah is with us. We are working for Allah, and not attacking Muslims but infidels, we are not against Ummah but those against work of Allah.

Web Page Devoted to the Activities of Boko Haram, Created on July 23, 2011:

“(<http://yusufislamicbrothers.blogspot.com/>)”

The web page displays the regular white and blue default colors of any BlogSpot web page. The page contains information about Boko Haram’s mission and messages uploaded to the page on different dates in 2011. The page has 65 members. The page has been dormant since Saturday July 23, 2011.

On Wednesday June 22, 2011, the group posted:

A fatwa is hereby placed on NYERI DEBBIE YAKOWA for referring to us as a mess on her Facebook page on Wednesday, the 15th of June, 2011 at exactly 12:59 which we ignored. She again insulted the BOKO HARAM on Monday the 20th of June 2011 at 8:11pm. Read below the two different postings on her Facebook page making wild and unsubstantiated accusations against BOKO HARAM. The Brotherhood will trace you and get you so that you can substantiate your allegations. IT IS NOT A THREAT BUT A PROMISE. WATCH OUT FOR US.

On Monday 27, June 2012, the group posted a photo of a man with a gun, sitting in a car, smiling and waving to the camera. The man is identified in the post as Alhaji Mohammed Manga. The post reads: “Alh Mohammed Manga: The martyr who sacrificed his life for the cause of the brotherhood.” The supplemental message to the celebration of Manga the Martyr reads:

Warning, in the name of Allah, the annihilator of tyrants. Peace and Blessing of Allah on the holy prophet and pure progenies. AFTER SEVERAL WARNINGS, THE BROTHERHOOD STRUCK AT INFIDELS WHO WERE DRINKING ALCHOHOL AT THE DALA KWAMTI AREA OF DALA ALANDERI IN MAIDUGURI. WE WISH TO RETERATE OUR EARLIER WARNINGS THAT LAW ABIDING CITIZENS SHOULD NOT PATRONISE DRINKING JOINTS, MAMMY MARKETS, CROWED PLACES AND POLICE STATIONS IN THE NORTHERN STATES. BE WARNED! BE WARNED!!

On Tuesday, June 28, 2011 the group posted: “OUR GALLANT FIGHTER'S STORMED THE CUSTOMS AREA OF MAIDUGURI WHERE MEMBERS OF THE JOINT TASK FORCE MAINTAIN A SECRETARIAT NEAR CUSTOM HOUSE ON DIKWA ROAD IN MAIDUGURI.” The message is supplemented by a photo of a blown up car in flames.

On Tuesday, 5 July 2011, the group posted: “TISSUES OF LIES BY THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT, THROUGH THE STATE SECURITY SERVICE (SSS).”

The supplemental message reads:

NONE OF OUR COMMANDERS AS ALLEGED BY THE SSS WERE ARRESTED. ALL OUR LOYAL COMMANDERS ARE AT THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS AND AT WORK AS AT THIS MOMENT. THE SSS SHOULD RELEASE ALL INNOCENT CITIZENS THEY HAVE ARRESTED AND HAVE BEEN PARADING AS OUR MEMBERS. THEY ARE NOT OUR MEMBERS, INCLUDUNG THE LAWMAKER FROM THE KADUNA STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY WHO WAS WRONGLY ARRESTED AND ALLEGED TO BE OUR MEMBER/FINANCIER.

On Saturday July 9, 2011, the group posted:

Our Strength and Support is from the People. The supplemental message reads: “We do not live in camps, we are well known by the people, we are supported by the local people, the locals love us, the locals support us, the locals will never betray us, because they believe in our cause...”

On Saturday July 23, 2011, the group posted: “A Call to Service.” The supplemental message reads: “The brotherhood remains one indivisibility entity...we call on all true faithful’s who believe in our cause to join us by enlisting as a follower and become a member of the brotherhood on our site.”

This BlogSpot web page devoted to Boko Haram inevitably resorts to the tactics of victimage rhetoric to achieve their objectives which is recruitment, motivating action, solidarity, attacks on adversaries, and addressing the public.

CHAPTER THREE

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Boko Haram like most organizations is a hierarchical group run by resolute men who insist on articulating, explaining or defending their rhetorical vision to the Nigerian public, and perhaps the world. With a mission to convert the nation or parts of it to Islam, liberate Muslims from persecution, keep Islam from criticism, and revenge perceived acts of injustices against Muslims, leaders of Boko Haram have carried out attacks on Churches, the United Nation Headquarters in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, universities, and several security establishments. In his approach to movement discourses in his 1941 rhetorical analysis of *Mein Kampf*, Kenneth Burke argues that political actors must inevitably resort to the tactics of victimage such as recruitment, motivating action, solidarity, and attacks on adversaries, when addressing the public, in order to achieve their objectives. These tactics involve vilification of opponents and the heroization of the troops. Boko Haram employs victimage tactics, in conjunction with image appeals, in order to persuade moderate Muslims, sympathizers and would-be-recruits. The subsequent sections will delve into how the leaders of Boko Haram allotted blame, vilified the oriental other, pressed for a holy war, encouraged martyrdom, and alluded to an apocalypse.

The Framing of Islamic Fundamentalism

Leaders assume responsibility toward other participants, especially when they have access to the tools of communication. Ismail (2009) explores how resorting to cyberspace may help those classified as terrorists to express their deeds, stances and objectives in order “to speak for themselves, as opposed to letting conventional media represent their causes” (p. 8). In the face of perceived misrepresentation, Boko Haram leaders turned to the Internet to clarify their insurgency. Self-proclaimed leader Mallam Abubakar Shekau emerges on *You Tube* to articulate Boko Haram’s mission and reconstruct its identity. Shekau presents Boko Haram, not as a societal ill, but as societal liberators:

Why I’ve come out to explain myself is because of the explanation Jonathan [Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan] and the CAN [Christian Association of Nigeria] president gave on us, including the various versions people give about us that we are like cancer in this country called Nigeria...No, we’re not cancer, neither are we evil...Our objective is not to kill or humiliate or steal...I have no objective than to help the religion of God that is all I can explain (Shekau, *You Tube*, January 15, 2012).

Shekau’s pledge to “help the religion of God” denotes the belief in the righteousness of Boko Haram’s mission, and precludes the group’s ideological vision of an Islamic Nigerian state. Shekau declares: “We are trying to coerce you to embrace Islam, because that is what God instructed us to do.” Boko Haram’s charge to coerce non-Muslims to join Islam suggests a proclivity for violence, if met with resistance. According to the e-mail message to journalists published on *Nigeria Newsreel* website, on July 31, 2012, an unnamed Boko Haram spokesperson said: “We have reasons for all our activities and we only kill those who wronged us. We attacked Sokoto [Northern Nigerian state] because many of our brethren have been incarcerated there.” This

message attempts to put Boko Haram's mission in perspective by employing what Blain (2009) describes as "a dramatic ritual struggle of heroes against villains, good against evil, the just against the unjust- a strategy that creates, alters or sustains power relationships" (p. 49). In an e-mail message to *Nigeria Newsreel* Boko Haram said: "We wish to reiterate that our crusade is not for personal gain; it is meant to ensure the establishment of an Islamic state by liberating all Muslims from the excesses of the infidels." Boko Haram's message employs supernatural sentiments to lock the Nigerian state and Islam into an inimical dichotomy. As Drake (1998) writes, "some ideologies, particularly separatism and politicized religion, may include elements of historical, semi-mythical, and supernatural beliefs" (p. 55). This inadvertent tactic fortifies Boko Haram's mission to liberate Nigerian Muslims, either by converting non-Muslims or ridding the Nigerian state of non-Muslims.

Like most violent groups, Boko Haram is rarely mindless or indiscriminate in its attacks. Ideology provides terrorists with the moral and political vision that inspires their violence, shapes the way in which terrorists see the world, and defines how they judge the actions of the perceived enemy-Other. Shekau emphasizes Boko Haram's moral and political vision in his *You Tube* message:

If we kill, then definitely, it is someone who has gone afoul of Allah, or the religion of Allah, or the prophet of Allah... We are nothing but followers of Allah. People, listen, we never have the intentions of some miscreants such as those going around collecting moneys from the public, doing whatever they want, we are not them (Shekau, *You Tube*, April 12, 2012).

This statement functions to solidify Boko Haram as a group whose actions are legitimate and justified. "Any Muslim that cheats and hides under the cloak of religion, if

we know such person, we won't hesitate to eliminate him. Yes, I am saying so because it doesn't take 5 minutes to kill just as we're being killed" (Shekau, *You Tube*, 2012). The threat of retributive justice avowed on perceived non-righteous Muslims indicates that Boko Haram's political vision is a righteous Islamic state.

Boko Haram's dramatic ritual struggle emerges from the rhetorical perception that Islam is under threat, being betrayed or being disregarded. Shekau expresses this thought in his *You Tube* message:

We decided to defend ourselves, and God has said if you follow him, he will give you strength... We serve God and we do not harm anybody, but anybody that looks for our trouble, we will face such person or persons... We hardly touch anybody except security personnel and Christians and those who have betrayed us (Shekau, *You Tube*, 2012).

As Shekau's message suggests, Boko Haram has a zero-tolerance policy toward perceived disregard for Islam. Boko Haram portrays critics of Islam, or critics of Boko Haram as constituting a threat to Islam. This portrayal, as Gordon and Arian (2001) assert, aids in the development of negative dispositions toward an out-group. The ideology of a terrorist group constructs enemies by providing measures against which to evaluate the innocence or guilt of entities. By targeting government personnel and Christians, Boko Haram constructs a world view that is evident in the movement's creed. Converting non-Muslims into Islam is Boko Haram's primary goal; killing is secondary and perhaps incidental. Drake (1998) writes that "this attitude on the part of terrorists explains how being a member of a particular religion or race can make someone a target for attacks without the victim or victims seeming to have done anything blameworthy" (p. 61). Boko Haram's construction of the enemy is evident in the group's attack on

Churches, the United Nations' Headquarters in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, universities, and several security establishments.

The decision to turn to terrorism or violence is often influenced by “the failure of nonviolent methods of achieving a group's goals, or the repression of nonviolent methods by state or non-state bodies” (Drake, 1998, p. 57). However, sometimes the motivation is just ideological. Ideology plays a vital role in terrorists' target selection because it supplies terrorists with a preliminary motive for action and provides them a prism through which they view events and the actions of the enemy-Other. As Boko Haram states: “From now on, they either follow the right religion or there will be no peace for them” (Boko Haram spokesperson, *CNN*, June 18, 2012). Demoulin et al. (2004) assert that such rhetoric “underpins unconventional theories of race and the Eugenics movement” (p. 259). In this case, it is the pseudoscientific belief of the ideological superiority of Islam and fundamentalism over Christianity and Western ideals.

Boko Haram's mission reveals a collage of separatism, religion, conservatism, and fascism. These ideological categories are mutually inclusive to the political aspiration of Boko Haram's leaders. As Shourie (2002) asserts, at the heart of every fundamentalism are the millenarian presumptions that: There is one way, and one way alone to the Millennium; that that one way has been revealed to us, and to us alone; that should the rest follow it, the world shall surely reach the Millennium” (p. 626). Following Shourie's argument, Boko Haram leaders, through discursive acts, position themselves as those allowed to speak and write in a discursive formation. Foucault (1972) explains that discursive rules dictate that we pay attention to certain people. Through tactical

discourse, Shekau argues that the audience should be shown the way and, if necessary, compelled to tread the way.

Self-Defense and the Normalization of Violence in Islamic

Shekau presents Boko Haram as victims who are merely resisting persecution; an antithesis strategy which promotes social solidarity among a victimized group and baits sympathy from neutral observers. To a large degree, what we observe through the Internet, Ismail (2009) argues, are “efforts to convey the culture of resistance which terrorists groups believe adequately characterize their mission and conduct” (p. 4). In the *Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke (1969) argues that “this binary symmetry creates an expression of conjoined opposites which stigmatizes the oppressor and encourages the oppressed to cohere...” (p. 22). Shekau conjures Burke’s binary symmetry by saying: “Allah, Allah, see us and what we are going through...They are only killing us, they are only killing us” (Shekau, *You Tube*, September 30, 2012). By accusing the Nigerian state of killing Muslims, Shekau urges Muslims to cohere and defend themselves, perhaps by killing back. While ideology is not the only factor which determines whether a potential target is attacked, Drake (1998) argues that “it provides an initial range of legitimate targets and a means by which terrorists seek to justify attacks, both to the outside world and to themselves” (p. 53). Boko Haram adamantly seeks to encourage affiliation with the moderate Muslims, and would-be-recruits, thus it emphasizes on target identification and justification: “We are working for Allah, and not attacking Muslims but infidels, we are not against *Ummah* [Muslims in the Diaspora] but those against work of Allah...” (Shekau, *You Tube*, September 30, 2012).

In a letter obtained by *247ureports.com* which was delivered to the Kano State office of the *Wazobia/Cool FM* offices on Sunday September 16, 2012, Boko Haram spokesperson wrote: "...We also forewarn our Muslim brothers in the station not to be involved in any act of offense to Islam and that they should limit their movements into the stations to avoid being affected" (Boko Haram spokesperson, *247ureports.com*, September 16, 2012). This message not only urges Muslims to remain faithful to Islam, but it also urges them to avoid the vicinity of Christians who may come under attack. Emphasis on the safety of Muslims appears in several Boko Haram's messages: "The fact is the bottom line of our struggle is to set the Muslims free from enslavement. We only kill the unbelievers... It is erroneous to say that we are killing Muslims. We don't kill innocent Muslims" (Boko Haram spokesperson, *Nigeria Newsreel*, July 31, 2012).

Boko Haram further posits itself as a community supported group. On a web page dedicated to Boko Haram, a blog post reads: "Our strength and support is from the people...We do not live in camps, we are well known by the people, we are supported by the local people, the locals love us, the locals support us, the locals will never betray us, because they believe in our cause..." (Islamic, July 13, 2011). Boko Haram constructs a fairly specific ideology with clear political objectives, and a sufficient motive for belonging to the group. Moderate Muslims, sympathizers, and would-be-recruits are invited to adhere to Boko Haram's ideology through a constructed aversion of the perceived enemy.

Rhetoric of Blame: The Provocation for Islamization

Boko Haram's mission has spun out of a perceived anti-Islamic agenda by the enemy-Other. Rogan (2006) asserts that the politics of blame for Jihadists serves both an internal and external function. "Internally, it aims at religious education and at creating common theoretical and ideological ground. Furthermore, it incites and enhances the morale of the Jihadists. And externally, the propaganda is part of a psychological warfare aiming at demoralizing the enemy" (Rogan, 2006, p. 25). Boko Haram pursues internal and external influence on its audience by accusing the Nigerian government, media houses, and democratic institutions of stigmatizing, misrepresenting, and failing to serve the interest of Islam. Shekau begins the politics of blame by recalling perceived injustices meted to Nigerian Muslims:

Everyone knows what wickedness was meted out to our members and fellow Muslims in Nigeria from time to time in Zango kataf, Tafawa Balewa, Kaduna, villages, Langtang, Yelwa shendam. Different things were meted out to Muslims in this country...Everyone knows what Christians did to Muslims, not once or twice...Everyone has seen what the security personnel have done to us. Everyone has seen why we are fighting with them (Shekau, *You Tube*, January 15, 2012).

In outlining these perceived injustices meted to Muslims, Boko Haram appeals to the pathos of sympathizers, moderate Muslims, and would-be-recruits. "...They said we should be killed and our mosques destroyed...Even at that, without provocation, you slaughtered us and took our wives and humiliated us" (Shekau, *You Tube*, January 15, 2012). By disregarding historical frameworks, externalizing blame, and presenting graphic narratives, Boko Haram attempts to bind Muslims together and pit them against the enemy-Other. The core claim in Shekau's message is that Muslims have been unjustly wronged. Shekau's negative assessment of the perceived enemy serves to permit any

abuse or acts of violence its audience can carry out in revenge. Schneider (1991) explains that such negative assessment leads to the demonization or dehumanization of the enemy-Other. Blame creates division, and Shekau's rhetorical dichotomy between Muslims and the enemy-Other draws upon long-standing binaries by which epideictic rhetors have utilized when defining perceived enemies. To stir division, a rhetor must "stir deep emotions of hate and revulsion against the enemy...This can be accomplished only by...dramatization..." (Brough, 2007, p. 152). Melodramatic hate and repulsion is conjured in Shekau's message:

They were arresting and molesting our members who are just serving Allah. We did not even talk and now they have continued capturing our women, this week about seven women were captured and we don't even know where they are, but they are being held by infidel enemies of Allah. In fact, they are even having sex with one of them (Shekau, *You Tube*, September 30, 2012).

Steuter and Wills (2009) argue that the threat of difference is exaggerated and emphasized in times of war. Shekau's narration of the Nigerian government raping Muslim women in their custody satisfies the propaganda strategy fundamental to wartime discourse. Shekau's message posits the Nigerian state and government as antagonistic toward Islam and this serves to create the preconditions necessary for militant recruitment and Jihad because it functions to incite rage, draw support, and bait sympathy among its audience.

Vilification of the Enemy-Other

Boko Haram resorts to the vilification of Christians, democracy and Western ideals, in order to foster its rhetorical mission, to convert non-Muslims into Islam, liberate Muslims, defend Islam from persecution and criticism, and revenge perceived acts of injustices against Islam and Muslims. The chief social function of vilification is the creation and maintenance of in-group solidarity through hostility toward out-groups (Hirsh, 1990). Shekau exhibits this ideal by marginalizing Christianity: “You Christians should know that Jesus is a servant and prophet of God. He is not the son of God. This religion of Christianity you are practicing is not a religion of God-it is paganism. God frowns at it. What you are practicing is not religion” (Shekau, *You Tube*, January 15, 2012). Shekau describes Christianity as paganism. He demotes Christianity’s messiah from a god-status to a prophet-status, thus reducing the religion’s perceived glory. This message asserts that Christian’s perception of Jesus is wrong and therefore interprets the religion as strange and inferior to Islam. Through a Burkean lens, Brummet (1980) writes that mystery and hierarchy are the prelude to victimage ritual. Brummet (1980) defines mystery as “anything strange, foreign, unknown, or separated from ourselves and hierarchy as a system of social order in which participants assume roles, rights, and responsibilities towards other participants” (p. 65).

Upon marginalizing the Christian ideology, Shekau moves to dehumanize Christians: “Aside from that, you Christians cheated and killed us to the extent of eating our flesh like cannibals” (Shekau, *You Tube*, January 15, 2012). According to Ivie (1994) “above all else, the function of prowar rhetoric is to establish a ‘realistic’ image of the enemy’s savagery in order to eliminate peace as a viable alternative to war. The metaphor

of force is the constitutive form of that image...” (p. 277). Frank and Melville (1988) argue that the language and imagery through which the enemy-Other is represented play a key role in making it psychologically acceptable to engage in atrocities against them. By accusing Christians of acts of unwarranted violence against Muslims, Boko Haram generates an emotional appeal which can then be transformed into a campaign to fight Christians. The image of Christians eating the flesh of Muslims like cannibals makes it easy for would-be recruits to be cannibals in return.

After attacking the concept of Christianity, Boko Haram attacks Western ideals: “Everyone knows that democracy and the constitution is paganism and everyone knows there are some things that God has forbidden in the Quran that cannot be counted- even western education” (Shekau, *You Tube*, January 15, 2012). By reducing Christianity, democracy and Western education to something forbidden by God, and thus sinful, Boko Haram attempts to justify why it seeks to eradicate these concepts from the Nigerian state. Boko Haram resorts to violence because it is convinced these concepts can be eradicated by destroying those who subscribe to them. Paganism as used by Boko Haram connotes vileness.

Boko Haram persuades its audience by utilizing discourse charged with threat and authority. A Boko Haram narrator in a *You Tube* video asserted that: “...The government has now resorted to arresting our wives and children and also demolishing our houses, like they did in Biu recently, which is why we have also resolved to start attacking government schools, especially, tertiary ones” (Boko Haram narrator, *You Tube*, May 1, 2012). Pro-government, pro-Christian, and pro-Western media houses are also vilified as the common enemy against the work of Allah. “These media houses have committed a lot

of offenses that is detrimental to Islam, and we don't have the power to forgive them” (Boko Haram narrator, *You Tube*, May 1, 2012). Not having the power to forgive leaves Boko Haram with only one choice, to punish the enemy. The media houses, along with the Nigerian government, Christians and Western ideals become the symbolic evil, against which Muslims, sympathizers and would-be-recruits must unite.

Christianity, democracy and Western education are constructed as vile to Islam, and therefore forbidden. This framing seeks to exclude these concepts from the ethical realm of Islam, making it easier to actively fight against. Boko Haram's vilification does not only dehumanize the enemy-Other, but it tabooizes the ideologies held by the enemy-Other. By vilifying these concepts and their subscribers, Boko Haram attempts to unite Muslims against Christianity, democracy and Western education.

Sustaining a Holy War

The war between Boko Haram, the Nigerian state, Christianity, democracy and Western ideals is born out of communication; the action, interaction, and reactions of the entities involved. Boko Haram sustains this war through a strategic rhetoric described by Reid (1976) as the optimistic appeal which “assures the audience that victory is inevitable should they enter into the war” (p. 282). In an e-mail sent to journalists and published by *CNN*, Boko Haram said: “We are optimistic that we would dismantle this government and establish Islamic government in Nigeria. Let the federal government and its agent’s do what they can; and we in return, would also do what we can (Boko Haram spokesperson, *CNN*, June 18, 2012). Boko Haram communicates ability, capacity and divine supremacy. The implication of such rhetoric can serve to persuade potential recruits or attempt to dissuade the Nigerian government from further arrests or attacks on members of Boko Haram. Ivie (1980) asserts that wars can be initiated through the rhetorical conventions of force versus freedom, aggression versus defense, and irrational versus rational.

Boko Haram however utilizes Ivie’s aggression versus defense model: “If the government thinks arresting our members will discourage us from launching onslaught, then let them continue arresting and killing our members” (Boko Haram spokesperson, *CNN*, June 18, 2012). This rhetoric satisfies Ivie’s idea of portraying the enemy as the “voluntary aggressor and the audience as the passive victims of aggression, only entering into war to ensure security” (Ivie, 1980, p. 290). Boko Haram attempts to convince its target audience that the Nigerian state including its Western ideals, democracy and Christian population has, is, and would act against Islam. Moderate Muslims,

sympathizers, and would-be-recruits are being persuaded by Boko Haram to respond in the defense of Islam: “Let them know that now it's the time for revenge, God willing” (Boko Haram spokesperson, *CNN*, June 18, 2012). By communicating perceived threat and vilifying the enemy, Boko Haram increases support for punitive and aggressive actions against the threatening out-group.

According to Shekau:

We follow the teachings of the Quran. This is what God has told me to explain. That is why Jonathan, you should know that this is beyond your power. It is not our doing but that of God...God created the earth, he knew what was going to happen and he has promised in the holy book that he will help his religion. It is beyond your power. What you see has been happening, God allowed it because you have refused to follow him and you have betrayed his religion (Shekau, *You Tube*, January 15, 2012).

Shekau argues that its war against the Nigerian state is divine, and that the outcome is predetermined. By invoking Allah and the Quran, Shekau purveys the ideology that the Nigerian state would inevitably reach an Islamic utopia predetermined by God: “The fact is that we are the warriors of the Almighty and even the security forces are finding it difficult to contain our activities” (Boko Haram spokesperson, *Nigeria Newsreel*, July 31, 2012). From a functional perspective, these messages unveil a secret plan that explains the turmoil perceived by moderate Muslims, sympathizers, and would-be-recruits. The secret plan is that God will soon establish an Islamic utopia. The legitimacy of this plan is created by likening the current travails to those of the greatest Islamic authority, the prophet Mohammed. Abul Qaqa says: “The noble prophet Mohammed was also tried and tested during the war of Uhud, he persevered and at the end of the day, he emerged victorious. The fact is that, we don't have an element of doubt in our minds that one day; we would surely emerge victorious from this onerous

encounter” (Abul Qaqa, *This Africa.com*, March 21, 2012). The psychological context that undergirds Abul Qaqa’s confidence of divine victory addresses a sense of disorder and turmoil perceived by the audience. However, Boko Haram’s reference to Allah functions to bolster the group’s characteristics, responsibilities, and supernatural invocation because “legitimizing authority in the form of a greater force: God, Jesus Christ, Yahweh, Allah, or nature” (Duffy, 2003, p. 310), justifies a groups attitudes and actions toward other groups.

The Rhetorical *Waliyy*: Constructing Islamic Sainthood

Boko Haram assures members, moderate Muslims, and would-be-recruits of spiritual ends by glorifying the sacrifice of one’s life for Allah. This strategy or rhetoric of martyrdom, invites conformity to norms and set standards for what Boko Haram designates as ‘true’ behavior. Calhoun (2004) argues that the rhetoric of martyrdom can dazzle, terrorize, devastate, invigorate, and motivate. Anticipating military response by the Nigerian government, Shekau assures would-be-recruits of a divine, apocalyptic end:

If I am caught, and they press me against the ground, stepping on my head, and raining blows upon my body, I am the bearer of the oath I have made to God... There's no God like Allah therefore if any misfortune should fall upon us, as long as there are others who have been engaged in Jihad before us, and have suffered the same fate, then his will is done (Shekau, *You Tube*, April 12, 2012).

Boko Haram exhumes power through the rhetoric of martyrdom to mobilize Muslims, sympathizers, would-be-recruits to engage in activism by alluding to an ongoing or impending divine promise.

Even then, by the grace of Allah, our main aim remains that we are killed and made martyrs in the duty of Allah, so we may gain the fruits of Allah's promises to his servants, as written in his book, the holy Qur'an...May Allah help us all, may Allah aid us in what we are doing. May Allah give us the will to be killed in doing His deed (Shekau, *You Tube*, April 12, 2012).

This display by Boko Haram constitutes an act of witnessing intended to achieve devotion to a higher power or a higher cause through sacrifice- through violent suffering, in this case death or self-sacrifice. According to Smith (1997) martyrdom is “at heart a public and political spectacle; it is the most dramatic symbol of defiance and condemnation that a man or woman can achieve, a display of individuality sealed and sanctified by death” (p. 10). Boko Haram undermines the concerns of death, assures its fighters and volunteers of divine blessings, and promotes a transcendental existence.

If a Muslim who is pure of heart sits to puts his eye to these verses, no matter what befalls him in the hands of the enemies of Allah, whether he is harmed, of caught, or killed, he will be full of laughter. Your body shall not die, and you must not have bad feelings with what is happening to you, you are the bearers of your mission (Shekau, *You Tube*, April 12, 2012).

Boko Haram’s rhetoric of martyrdom highlights the group’s ideology- its beliefs, attitudes, psychological dispositions, motives, desires and values. On the group’s web page, a message reads: “We strongly believe that Almighty Allah will reward us with his famous paradise in the hereafter as he rightly said in chapter 9 verses 111 of the Holy Qur’an...” (Boko Haram, <http://yusufislamicbrothers.blogspot.com/>, July 23, 2011). What this message does is interpret the world by which Boko Haram operates. Beasley (2001) argues that ideological rhetoric relies heavily on a strong moral component, reminding listeners of their righteous duties. The group’s use of suicide bombers serves as a

spectacle of violence designed to draw attention to the act itself and to freeze the local, national and international observer in an act of witnessing.

Sherpardson (2007) argues that martyrdom and its accompanying language is a powerful tool for the reform movement. Boko Haram demonstrates this truism by providing its audience the means to resist persecution and legitimize the existence of the Islamic faith, to strengthen and mobilize its members from within, and to recruit new followers: “The brotherhood remains one indivisible entity...we call on all true faithful’s who believe in our cause to join us by enlisting as a follower and become a member of the brotherhood on our site...” (Boko Haram, <http://yusufislamicbrothers.blogspot.com/>, July 23, 2011). Boko Haram’s rhetoric offers an ideational model of identity, and functions to persuade moderate Muslims, sympathizers, and would-be recruits to think of themselves as sharing certain ideals, and also as sharing a particular attitudinal disposition, that defines their common character in terms of both principles and position.

Because it is during these conditions of being caught, or putting yourself in harm's way, and the rest unfortunate events, that is the time when those with ulterior intentions will falter. Thus, the martyrs will be chosen from you. In the end, Allah does not love pretenders. These are the things Allah told us. May Allah grant us faith. This is the message (Shekau, *You Tube*, April 12, 2012).

The dominant ideology embedded in Boko Haram’s messages is that Islam cannot be criticized or undermined, and true Muslims must take pleasure in fighting or dying for Islam. Boko Haram rhetors depict the present as “a pivotal moment...in which history is reaching a state that will both reveal and fulfill the underlying order and purpose of history” (Brummett, 1991, p. 9-10).

By the sacrifice of a few martyrs, the underlying order, an Islamic Nigerian state with liberated Muslims free of persecution and criticism, will be established. In a telephone conference with journalists, Boko Haram spokesperson, Abul Qaqa said:

We are calling on all Muslims in this part of the world to accept the clarion call and fight for the restoration of the caliphate of Usman Dan Fodio which the white man fought and fragmented. The white man killed prominent Islamic clerics and emirs and also replaced the white Islamic flag with the Union Jack. We want all our people to come together and restore our loss glory (Abul Qaqa, *ThisAfrica.com*, March 21, 2012).

These words hinge on the sociopolitical context in which they emerge as a necessary spiritual, cultural, and political practice for Muslims. By evoking memories of the white man (British colonialists) and accusing them of killing Islamic clerics and emirs, Abul Qaqa does what Boudreau and Polkinghorn (2008) describe as the “historical fabrication of sophisticated reality in victimage ritual” (p. 176). The goal of such rhetoric, Boudreau and Polkinghorn (2008) argue, is to “emphasize that the ‘other’ is morally culpable of great crimes, thus less than human and deserving of punishment” (p. 176). According to Mills-Knutsen (2011) physical violence, in human history proves to be the most common response to the threat of evil. The response to a perceived attack on Islam is a Boko Haram violent Jihad; “something evil threatens and we as human beings respond with some kind of violence” (Mills-Knutsen, 2011, p. 288).

CONCLUSION

Constructed Core Values

Redeeming non-Muslims from perdition, liberation of Muslims from persecution, protecting Islam from criticism, and revenging perceived acts of injustices against Muslims are the values that have emerged from Boko Haram's discursive activities. Boko Haram's values are embedded in a fundamental Islamic vision which they have communicated as the new order, the more perfect order, and the desired order for Nigerian Muslims. Boko Haram portrays critics of Islam or critics of Boko Haram as constituting a threat to Islam. Through strategic rhetorical choices Boko Haram depicts the Nigerian government, Western and Christian entities as standing in the way and will of Allah, and calls on its audience to put these entities out of harm's way by conversion or kill them for constituting an opposition to Allah. These are the options presented to Boko Haram's target audience. The perfect order will come only by converting non-Muslims into Islam or killing those who fail to conform.

Boko Haram's audience is made to believe that Allah has assigned Boko Haram the task to liberate and restore an Islamic haven in Nigeria. Therefore, opposition from the Nigerian government or Western forces is constructed as actions of opposition, thus killing members of the opposition becomes a celestial and noble cause. This juxtaposition serves to encourage the violent Jihad which leaders of Boko Haram claims Allah assigned them to lead in the first place. As a result of this cyclical communication, media houses, the Nigerian government, Christians and Western ideals become the symbolic evil, against which Muslims, sympathizers and would-be-recruits must unite. This

strategy not only normalizes violence in fundamental Islam, it rejects people with a different view; people who represent the Nigerian government, Western ideals and Christianity. As Shourie (2002) states:

The fundamentalists are ever ready to use every possible device; they are convinced that their opponents too are going to do so. Dread and paranoia are the inevitable consequences- the dread that everyone is conspiring against Islam, that none will stop at anything to undermine Islam, that therefore a true fundamental Muslim's life must stop at nothing to defend Islam (Shourie, 2002, p. 629).

Boko Haram's social formations and language constructions provides a prism through which its audience view the actions of the perceived enemy-Other. By locking Islam against the Nigerian government, Western ideals and Christianity in a characteristically hostile manner, Boko Haram precludes any real solution other than an orchestrated Jihad-crusade-or-cleanse model in which a possible coexistence of Muslims and the enemy-Other are denied, and the threat posed by the enemy-Other is eliminated through conversion or destruction.

Expressing Core Values

Claiming to be carrying out the will of Allah; to defend Muslims and the religion of Islam, Boko Haram has allotted blame, vilified the enemy-Other, pressed for a holy war, encouraged martyrdom, and alluded to an apocalypse.

Boko Haram assures members, moderate Muslims, and would-be-recruits of spiritual ends by glorifying the sacrifice of one's life for Allah. This strategy invites conformity to norms and set standards for Boko Haram's version of what is 'true' behavior. Boko Haram demonstrates this maxim by providing its audience the means to

resist persecution, which is by killing the persecutor or dying for Allah in the process of fighting the persecutor. To persuade its audience to engage in such symbolic acts, Boko Haram dehumanizes the enemy-Other, and makes taboo the ideologies held by the enemy-Other. Hence, Boko Haram defines Islamic fundamentalism in terms of violent Jihad and martyrdom.

Boko Haram's values are expressed through the segregation of Muslims and Christians. This division is similar to the division created between Hutus and Tutsis, Jews and National Socialist Germans, Arab Sudanese and Black Sudanese, Bosnian Muslims and Catholic Croats, Jihadists and Westerners. By blaming the enemy-Other for the plights of Muslims in Nigeria; dehumanizing the enemy-Other and tabooizing their ideologies, Boko Haram attempts to move moderate Muslims, sympathizers, and would-be-recruits into acts of terrorism, wars or violence against the enemy-Other. Boko Haram's language of elimination does not remain merely figurative; it influences the creation and justification of violence. This victimage strategy is bolstered by the construction of Islamic sainthood.

Boko Haram's mission reveals a collage of separatism, conservatism, and fascism. The group gains power on the claim that they are the ones who shall establish a state in accordance with the dictates of Allah. The leaders of Boko Haram, through discursive activities attempt to persuade their audience that the desired order, cannot come about through moderate Islamism, the Nigerian state, and Western culture. Boko Haram resorts to the vilification of Christians, democracy and adopted Western ideals.

Limitations

This study depends on messages published on the internet by individuals who cannot be adequately verified. This study relied on translations of the original messages published in the Nigerian *Hausa* language. Meaning is often lost when information is transferred from one language to another. Generally, questions revolve around the reliability of the information available on the Internet: Is it possible that non-Boko Haram leaders would lead a deliberate campaign of wrong information through *You Tube* videos, a BlogSpot web page, and e-mails to journalists? It is certainly possible for non-Boko Haram members or non-Jihadists to spread false statements and rumors in order to discredit Jihadists. Even if the Internet messages are from Boko Haram leaders, scholars have established that there are several examples of Jihadist groups taking responsibility for attacks that they never executed and exaggerating the number of casualties of the attack.

However, critics are less concerned with the epistemology of the messages, than they are with the implications, consequences, and possible interpretations. Foucault (1972) cited in Foss and Gill (1987) suggests: “Knowledge is whatever is considered to be truth in a discursive formation. Whatever can be talked about or is an object of discourse constitutes knowledge,” (Foss and Gill, 1987, p. 390). Nonetheless, it is unlikely that the leaders of Boko Haram would publish wrong information if they intend to persuade their supporters, moderate Muslims, would-be-recruits or sympathizers. Misinformation would thus deceive not only scholars and observers, but potential Jihadists as well.

Future Direction

Future research on Boko Haram or similar uprisings should focus on how the rhetorical constructions of values, identification, myths and ideologies can be deconstructed through effective counter communication strategies: How can Islamic fundamentalism constructed through the framework of violence and martyrdom be deconstructed? How can rhetorically normalized violence in Islam be de-normalized? How can the perceived enemy-Other be liberated from formulated blame? How can a vilified people and their tabooized ideas be humanized and accepted? How can Islamic sainthood be constructed outside violence and war? These are some of the questions I encourage scholars of victimage ritual to pursue further. Voth and Nolan (2007) maintain that it is easy to draw a sense of inevitability that human beings will always kill one another. Rhetors will continue to define situations for individuals, help form attitudes, give commands or instructions of some kind, and determine actions to be taken. Communication scholars must continue to synthesize findings, determine new directions for study and produce powerful theories that not only enhance our understanding but lead to the advancement of counter communication strategies.

Since restraint is usually required to preserve peace or truce, the question about what roles the media, including the Internet media can play in ensuring restraint is imperative. For example, Dajani (2003) cited in Witte (2006), in a critical study of Palestinian coverage of the Israeli's *Operation Defensive Shield* in 2002, urged newspapers editors and reporters to:

Banish highly emotional terms such as "massacres," "catastrophe," "hell," "disaster," etc. from headlines to avoid harmful ripple effects resulting in tragic consequences"...anticipate that such terms have the power to intensify public fear, cause panic and could result in flight or incite violent revenge...filter and tone down stories of high drama and violence that may cause public anger and concern (Witte, 2006, p. 8).

Future theory and study in the ritual of victimage rhetoric should work to explain how Internet media can or cannot check dehumanization propaganda and confute victimage rhetoric. Such studies can also examine methods of message control and narratives that create similarity and common group membership between perceived opponents. Pruitt and Hee (2004) suggest that lifting the veil of dehumanization and demonization can greatly increase the odds of de-escalating a conflict, or even of conflict prevention. Scholars must continue to find the means and methods of breaking the cycles of victimage ritual. I base these suggestions on my assessment of gaps in the existing literature and pointers from the efforts of the United Nations establishment. This suggested direction must not limit potential direction of work in the ritual of victimage rhetoric. Assessing the previous works on victimage rhetoric allows scholars to continue to expand literature and address avenues that enhance the understanding and study of terrorism, genocides, and wars, and how they can be managed. Scholars must continue to synthesize findings, determine new directions for study and produce powerful theories that not only enhance our understanding, but also lead to a practical solution of problems.

In addressing the question: What are the core values of Boko Haram, and how do the leaders of the group construct and express the group's values, sway belief, and justify violence to its audience, I have argued in this essay that: Boko Haram has allotted blame, vilified the enemy-Other, pressed for a holy war, encouraged martyrdom, and alluded to an apocalypse in order to redeem non-Muslims from perdition, liberate Muslims from persecution, protect Islam from criticism, and revenge perceived acts of injustices against Muslims. Boko Haram's artifacts were examined through the framework of victimage rhetoric. The analysis of Boko Haram's Internet messages fits John Vasquez's (1983, 1987) classification of wars as either wars of rivalry or wars of inequality, "the strong seeking dominance or the weak seeking liberation" (Cashman, 2007, p. 366). Boko Haram claims to seek liberation for Muslims.

The creation of Boko Haram, its values, and actions, like every uprising, movement or organization, are constituted in social, cultural, and political communication. The sect's rhetorical construction of Western culture follows the rhetorical style of Al-Qaeda's Jihadists who often identify westerners as infidels- a word that connotes "enemies," "evil-doers," and everything bad to radical Islam. Ismail (2009) asserts that terrorist campaigns are not static in their nature. Thus, Boko Haram's ideologies may develop and change over time, and this may be reflected in the pattern of their attacks and possible negotiation. Nonetheless, critics must continue to use the available information on the Internet to create a thorough and systematic understanding of the communication strategies of Jihadist, and other terrorists or violent movements.

Suggestions for Effective Counter Communication Strategy against Boko Haram

Boko Haram has attempted to persuade vulnerable Muslims to engage in violent Jihad through the construction of war-or-nothing messages. Therefore counter communication would aim to dissuade vulnerable Muslims from accepting the clarion call to violence or increase their latitudes to reject violent Jihad. Strategically framed talking points utilized in interfaith dialogues, public messages, media propaganda, community forums, and education campaigns must exploit the weaknesses and contradictions in the ideologies purveyed by leaders of Boko Haram.

The analysis of Boko Haram's messages provides insights on how to counter or mollify the potential impacts of the violence-inducing messages of terror groups. By employing frames of injustice, blame and agency in their messages, leaders of Boko Haram have encouraged violence by vilifying the enemy-Other, pressing for a holy war, encouraging martyrdom, and alluding to an apocalypse. Therefore, authorities must design and frame talking points that: (a) Recognizes and restructures Boko Haram's grievances, accept a need for justice and fairness, and proffer plans to address injustices through legal and social means. (b) Reconstructs Boko Haram's leaders as activists, invite them to engage the government as legitimate change agents, and condemn violent actions or approaches based on universally sound codes of ethics and morality, and paradigms of civility, human rights, and justice. (c) Humanizes groups blamed by Boko Haram, and portray as victims, those blamed by Boko Haram for their grievances, and those vulnerable to the manipulations of Boko Haram.

First, authorities must design and frame talking points that recognizes and restructures Boko Haram's grievances, legitimize a need for justice and fairness, and proffer plans to address injustices through legal and social means. Boko Haram leaders construct the group, not as a societal ill, but as societal liberators. Boko Haram asserts that there is an ongoing anti-Islamic agenda orchestrated by the Nigerian government, Christians, and Western forces. Talking points must refute the existence of an anti-Islamic agenda, but recognize the existence of injustice faced by Muslims, Christians, and people of diverse beliefs. The problem of injustice must be decentralized from Islam. However, this strategy will help deconstruct the rhetorical Muslim community created by Boko Haram because it recognizes the injustices and grievances faced by Muslims and non-Muslims.

Authorities must accept the need for reform, but must emphasize the importance of civil and peaceful means to addressing the challenges that the Nigerian state faces. A counter grievance message must resort to common human struggles, values, and wants. Talking points should also articulate the implications of Boko Haram's violent messages, and point out to vulnerable Muslims that the intentions of Boko Haram's messages are not to help resolve the issues but to incite violence and encourage war. Consequently, the economics of war, the politics of war, and the impact of war must be included in community education efforts. Agents such as Imams, pastors, and community leaders must praise young Muslims who have accepted peaceful and civil means to resolving whatever injustice that many Muslims and non-Muslims across Nigeria are facing. Imams must deconstruct Boko Haram leaders as messengers of Allah. Therefore, media houses

must empower and create visibility for Muslim authorities and reconciliatory agents, and target their non-violent messages accordingly.

Second, authorities must construct Boko Haram's leaders with positive frames while condemning their violent actions or approaches. Talking points must construct Boko Haram's leaders as change agents, rights activists with moral, ethical, civil capacities. Rather than label them as terrorists, Boko Haram should be recognized as a legitimate civil group and invited to engage in civil resolution and solution to the challenges facing Muslims and non-Muslims in Nigeria. This will help separate Boko Haram's leaders from the problem, and increase their latitudes of civil compliance.

Venerable frames of Boko Haram could function to invite leaders of Boko Haram into a rhetorical community of respected social activist, and arouse their moral sentience on civility, due process, and the rule of law. Talking points that utilize venerable frames of Boko Haram as civil social agents must be juxtaposed with the expectations of a civil social agent. This will help frame Boko Haram to vulnerable Muslims who may be susceptible to radicalization. This strategy would also legitimize the parallel criticism of Boko Haram's violent approaches and rhetoric. Consequently, violent attacks, suicide bombings, and target killings become criminal acts, propagated only by criminals. This strategy provides Boko Haram the illusive choice to identify themselves as social agents or criminals. The later which would function to legitimize the use of force against Boko Haram.

Third, authorities must humanize groups blamed by Boko Haram for the alleged sufferings of Muslims, and portray as victims, those blamed by Boko Haram for their grievances, and those vulnerable to the manipulations of Boko Haram. Christians,

Western forces, including Western education and values, are blamed for the injustices that Nigerian Muslims face. The decentralization of blame from Christians or Western values will help reduce the division necessary for a particular group to attack or resent the other. Therefore the limitations and flaws of humankind, and human systems must be contained in talking points. Nonetheless, these talking points must reiterate the desire to correct the systemic failures that foster injustices. Talking points must reject this frame by admitting to the imperfections that exists in all belief systems, government institutions, ideologies and social agencies. Authorities must reiterate that agents within these systems are sometimes hapless and susceptible to wrong doing. Boko Haram's leaders and vulnerable Muslims who heed the clarion call of violence must be used as examples of how imperfect, exposed and susceptible to wrong doing human agents and social agencies can become.

Talking points must recognize the flawed nature of all human kind but emphasize the need to demand in ourselves the love, kindness and goodwill that exists within us. Authorities must make political arguments that focus on the interest and perspectives of all Nigerian Muslims, Christians and people of other beliefs in Nigeria. The sources of grievances and injustices must be talked about as products of a country that is developing democratically. Strategic counter communication should redirect Boko Haram's messages of injustice, blame and grievances to the need for viable solutions that foster peaceful coexistence, stability, and prosperity for all. This way Muslims or non-Muslims are separated from the problems.

Talking Points and the Factor of Religion

Central to the violent messages of Boko Haram is the rhetoric of religion. Boko Haram wants to convert non-Muslims into Islam, liberate Muslims from persecution, protect Islam from criticism, and revenge perceived acts of injustices against Muslims. Therefore religious talking points must acknowledge Islam as a peaceful religion, position interfaith and peaceful coexistence as divine, recognize and celebrate teachers of Islam and Muslims who stand for peace, love and kindness.

Boko Haram attempts to dictate true behavior of a true Muslim in terms of violence and martyrdom. At the core of most religions are the teachings of love, peace, and kindness. Therefore authorities must direct the discourse back to this fundamental religious values. The five pillars of Islam include worship, belief, kindness, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and visiting Mecca once in a person's lifetime. These tenets do not connote or denote violence, and therefore talking points must construct true Islamic behavior in these terms. Talking points must define Islam as a religion of peace and kindness, and construct violence or violence-inducing rhetoric as non-Islamic, unholy, and ungodly. Religious authorities must collectively reject terrorism as a way of Allah, and frame religious violence as shameful and dishonoring to Allah, just as Christian violent crusades against Muslims in times past were shameful and dishonoring to God.

Religious leaders in Islamic communities have a stake in the radicalization of vulnerable Muslims. Moderate Islamic voices in Nigeria must continue to receive air time from media houses in order to control the public discourse and perception of violent religious insurgencies. Boko Haram claims it attempts to redeem non-Muslims from perdition. This mission suggests a rejection of the co-existence of Muslims and non-

Muslims. Authorities must address the importance of peaceful coexistence and the respect and regard for other beliefs. To this end, Imams must emphasize peaceful evangelism that is void of violence or coercion. Imams must also stress the rights of non-Muslims to be non-Muslims. Authorities must emphasize in their talking points that no Nigerian is worthy of persecution, oppression or marginalization. Boko Haram's leaders assures members, moderate Muslims, and would-be-recruits of spiritual ends by glorifying violence and the sacrifice of one's life for Allah. Boko Haram purvey war-or-nothing, suicide bombing-or-nothing, killing-or-nothing messages, through language, both verbal and nonverbal.

Agents and actors must draw on peace-seeking messages from the Quran, the Bible, and other books of moral codes to deconstruct violence as the appropriate and only means to social justice. Talking points must invite vulnerable Muslims to understand civil approaches to justice, and the regard of human rights and civility. Talking points must stress the importance of the collective actions of government and non-government agencies, communities and religious leaders from all faiths.

Authorities must broaden the options for solutions so that violence is not the only option. Because Boko Haram posits itself as servants and agents of Allah, Imams, Community leaders, and the Nigerian government must emphasize that terrorism is non-Islamic, and the way of Allah is peace, love and kindness to our fellow humankind. Talking points must stress that no Nigerian must be persecuted or attacked for their belief or lack of belief. Authorities, community and religious leaders must forewarn vulnerable Muslims of the consequences and implications of Boko Haram's victimage rhetoric, and encourage them to be critical and mindful. However, government leaders must continue

to stress the fact that the threat to the civility, security and unity of the Nigerian state and people will not be tolerated by the Nigerian government and the International community.

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- YMCA Champion: Organizational Leader Award, 2012

- Tournament Champions, University of Cincinnati Intercollegiate Forensics, 2012
- Distinguished Achievement Award in Forensics, University of Indianapolis, 2010
- National Robert and Dana Curtis Memorial Oratorical Award: 2010 First-Place Winner
- Pi Kappa Delta, National Forensics Honors Medal, 2010
- Intercollegiate debate and speech: State and National champion, 2009, 2010
- University of Indianapolis, Outstanding Student Leadership Award, 2009
- Best New Short Fiction: Penpusher Award, UK, Spring 2008
- Dorlis Gott Armentrout Award for Best Undergraduate Poetry, Etchings, 2008, 2009
- Dean's List, University of Indianapolis, Spring 2008
- Dean's List, University of Indianapolis, Fall 2008
- Academic Honors List, University of Indianapolis, Spring 2007
- Academic Honors List, University of Indianapolis, Fall 2006

ACADEMIC PUBLICATION

Ori, K. (2010). Humanitarian Intervention. *Augsburg Honors Review*; Vol. 3, 2010

SKILLS

- Communication analysis
- Internet communication technology (ICT) management
- Teaching, consulting, and research