

28

JIHAD IN SUFISM AS A PANACEA TO BOKO HARAM'S VIOLENT JIHADISM IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Since its emergence in 2002, the militant group *Ġamā'atahl al-sunna li-l-da'wawa-l-ġihād*,⁴⁹ popularly called Boko Haram, has waged a deadly jihad against the Nigerian state in a bid to establish an Islamic state in north-eastern Nigeria. The trademarks of this campaign include suicide bombings, the burning of churches, schools and government establishments, and the murder of Christians and moderate Muslims. This violence is symptomatic of the religious fanaticism, intolerance and extremism that has characterised northern Nigeria since the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in 1804 that overthrew the Hausa kings and imposed an Islamic theocracy. Sufism, on the other hand, is the mystical aspect of Islam that advocates the love of God and union with Him. The early followers of this spiritual movement regarded the asceticism associated with the mystical life as the internal or spiritual jihad. This article argues that this practice, if given an enabling environment to flourish, could minimise or bring to an end, religious intolerance and extremist violence, as well as enhance interreligious dialogue in northern Nigeria.

Keywords: jihad, Sufism, panacea, Boko Haram, violent

Introduction

Nigeria, with a population of 180 million, is the most populous country in Africa. The country was politically divided after independence from the British in 1960, between the north and the south. While the northern part is predominantly Muslim, the southern part is pre-dominated by Christians; the percentage of the two religions is approximately fifty per cent. There is a split in world view between the largely Muslim north and the largely Christian south; while the north was left by the British with the Islamic culture, with only the aristocratic classes and their children given Western education, the Christian south was largely westernised early by the British and the missionaries. The poor access to Western education in the North created a situation where the majority of the population remained illiterate by Western standards, and consequently, with limited opportunities and skills, leaving the population, especially the youth, highly impoverished, thereby creating an enabling atmosphere and breeding ground for violent extremism.

Modernity and Islamism

The onset of Islamic radicalism in the nineteenth century is mainly attributed to the colonisation of Islamic countries by the Europeans and the subsequent cultural shock of modernity that came with it. The fact that the emirs and the traditional Islamic leaders, and the very essence of Islamic rule, the union of politics and religion, were non-ceremoniously replaced by the colonisers' alien systems of law, education, and parliamentary democracy, is a big shock to the Islamic mind. It is within this context that one ought to understand the insurgency of Boko Haram. The Boko Haram insurgency is linked to the influence of the

⁴⁹The People of the Tradition of the Prophet (*Sunna*) Devoted to the Propagation of Islam and Jihad.

Wahhabi⁵⁰ movement from Saudi Arabia, and particularly to the emergence of a Salafi movement⁵¹ in Nigeria, in the 1950s and 1960s, known as *Jama'at Izalat al-Bida'aw-iqamat as-Sunna*⁵² or Izala. This movement, founded by Abubakar Gumi from Kadunas state, emerged in direct opposition to the already existing two prominent Sufi⁵³ brotherhoods or *tarīqa* - the Qādiriyya and the Tijāniyya. Just like the Salafists of Saudi Arabia, this movement stood in opposition to Sufism, and all un-Islamic innovations. In the words of Loimeier:

Izala fought against a broad range of customs labelled un-Islamic: innovations, such as amulets, saint veneration, supererogatory prayers; conspicuous consumption; and customary funeral ceremonies. In more general terms, Izala fought against an “esoteric episteme” symbolised in the position of the Sufi sheikh as the mediator between the faithful and the Prophet. Instead, it insisted on direct access to the sources of the faith without an intermediary, the ritual in its pure and simple form, and a modest style of living.⁵⁴

The development of Izala in the view of Loimeier is to be understood within the context of the politics of modernisation, which the British colonial administration started in the early 19th century and continued in the 1950s and 1960s with Ahmadu Bello (d.1966), the first and only Prime Minister of the northern region. He thus remarked:

The establishment of British education, British law and economic dynamics of the colonial and postcolonial period have indeed led to a deep crisis in the Nigerian Muslim society that can be described by the umbrella term “modernization shock.” In contrast, Muslim reformers such as Ahmadu Bello..., Aminu Kano..., and Abubakar Gumi..., tried to develop programmes of reform that sought to Islamize modernity.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, the establishment of Western education, or books (Boko), challenged the traditional Islamic education that had existed among the people since the era of Usman Dan Fodio. The “Boko” has been perceived as a threat and a symbol of the increasing presence of alien, colonial, Christian, materialistic and corrupt processes of Westernisation.⁵⁶ The organisational framework for the new reformers who sought to make Islamic practices in the north adapt to modernity was the first reformist organisation, the *Jama'at Nasr al-Islam* (JNI),⁵⁷ established in 1962, with the aim of supporting, in religious terms, the politics of modernisation, and offering an umbrella for all religious groups, irrespective of their religious affiliations. It was also to unite these groups and organise the

⁵⁰Wahhabis were followers of Ibn Wahhab (1703-1792), who through a succesful jihad with the family of Ibn Saud, created the present kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932.

⁵¹Salafism is a revival movement in Sunni Islam that calls for Muslims to cling to the original practice of Muhamad and the early Muslims. It prides itself as the authentic form of Islam that is free from innovations and politcal influences.

⁵² Arabic for “Movement or Community for the Removal of Innovation and Establishment of the Sunna.”

⁵³Sufismisthemysticalsect in Islam.

⁵⁴ Roman Loimeier, “Nigeria: The Quest for a Viable Religious Option”, in W.F.S Miles (ed.), *Political Islam in West Africa*, (Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 2007), 53.

⁵⁵Roman Loimeier, “Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria,” in “*Africa Spectrum*,” 47, 2-3, (2012): 139, in <http://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/afsp/article/viewFile/555/553>, accessed 21/4/2018.

⁵⁶Loimeier, “Boko Haram,” 139.

⁵⁷ The Community for the Reform of Islam.

building of mosques and schools, and the organisation of *hajj* and Islamic *da'wa* (mission) and promote religious unity in order to whittle down the religious powers of Sufi scholars⁵⁸ and Sultan of Sokoto, whom reformers despise.⁵⁹ These reformers were able to achieve a lot of success in their political and religious reforms that were aimed at creating a modern, but yet still Muslim, northern Nigeria. However, their works have been contested by representatives of religious and political establishments and by some radical groups that maintained that the reforms were not either radical enough in political terms or fundamentally un-Islamic, equivalent to another form of Westernisation. These groups represent the contemporary approach to Islamism in northern Nigeria.

Boko Haram Insurgency, Ideology and Teachings

The Islamic fundamentalist group began in 2002⁶⁰ as a peaceful Islamic splinter group from the Izala sect, committed to the propagation of the teachings of Muhammad and jihad (*Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad*), and was led by Muhammad Yusuf, a young man from Yobe state in the north-east of Nigeria.⁶¹ The movement started in Maiduguri by spreading the ideology that Western civilisation, education and values are sinful, unacceptable in Islam, and thus, forbidden. This belief gradually earned the group the name "Boko Haram," with *Boko* translating as "western education" and *Haram* as "sin" or "forbidden" in the Hausa language.⁶² He was later to establish his own mosque in his father-in-law's land, and referred to it as Markaz (Arabic centre) in Maiduguri neighbourhood. He named it after Ibn Taymiyya, who sought for an austere form of Islam as it existed in the time of Muhammad. He felt that the British colonialism and the creation of Nigeria had imposed an unIslamic way of life on Muslims through all the various layers of a modern state: Western schools, a Western legal system, Western democracy, and so on. He advocated for the development of an Islamic state where Islamic principles and the *Sharia* law would be obeyed, and denounced northern Nigeria's traditional leaders, including the Sultan of Sokoto, the country's highest Muslim spiritual figure.⁶³ According to Kyari Muhammad, the head of the Centre for Peace and Security Studies at Modibo Adama University in Nigeria, Yusuf's crusade against Western influence was heard and resonated in the North and elsewhere, because all that the many young people in North-eastern Nigeria know of Western-democracy is what they have been subjected to elite filling their pockets while the masses struggle to survive.⁶⁴

The group had been critical of the government institutions, especially the security forces. A dispute between the security forces and the Boko Haram group later turned into

⁵⁸Loimeier, "Nigeria: The Quest for a Viable Religious Option," 51.

⁵⁹ The Sultan is the representative of the Usman Dan Fodio and the custodian of the Sufi brotherhood movement, which the reformers oppose as being backward and full of innovations in religious circle.

⁶⁰ The exact date is in contest among scholars, some say 1999.

⁶¹ Muhammad Bala, "Still on Boko Haram" Daily Trust (Nigeria), 7 January 2012; in C. Obogo, "Politics, Religion, Deaths and Boko Haram," The Sun (Nigeria), 18 January 2012, in <http://www.sunnewsonline.com>, in Thaddeus Byimui Umaru, *Christian Muslim Dialogue in Northern Nigeria, A Socio-Political and Theological Consideration*, Xlibris LLC, U.S.A 2013, 77.

⁶²Umaru, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Northern Nigeria*, 77.

⁶³ M. A. Proulx de Montclos, "Nigeria's Interminable Insurgency? Addressing the Boko Haram Crisis", Chatham House Research Paper, September 2014, 7-8, in Mike Smith, *Boko Haram, Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*, (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2016), 81.

⁶⁴ Smith, *Boko Haram*, 84.

an open conflict in December 2003 in Kanamma, Yobe State, and Muhammad Yusuf's home state. In January 2004, approximately 200 members of the group attacked police stations on a massive scale, prompting the Nigerian media, to label the group, "Nigerian Taliban". After further attacks on police stations in Borno State, about 27 members of the group were killed by the security forces, while Muhammad Yusuf escaped to Sudan and then Saudi Arabia.⁶⁵ Further conflicts erupted again when the police raided the Boko Haram camps in Dutsen Tanshi/Bauchi as well as Biu on 26 July, 2009. This time around, the clashes were in five states of the northeast and left over 1,100 people dead in Maiduguri alone. Among the dead was Yusuf, who was killed in a police station after having been captured by the military and handed over to the police. After the death of Yusuf, a 20-man council assumed leadership and escalated the conflict⁶⁶ after the refusal of the government to compensate the group for the unlawful killing of their leader. The group equally changed its name from, *ahl al-sunnawa-l- jam'awa-l-hijra*,⁶⁷ to *jama'atahl-al-sunna li-l-da'wawa-l-jihad 'ala minhaj al-salaf*.⁶⁸ The new change in name reflects a change in the programme of the group; a new system of extreme radicalisation under a new leader, Abubakar Shekau. Shekau committed suicide on May 19, 2021, during an in-fight between his group and the rival Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP). The Islamic radicalism that has plagued northern Nigeria could be reduced or entirely eradicated if the Islamists redefine their understanding of jihad, from the violent, lesser jihad, to the spiritual jihad, which is practised within the confines of Sufism.

The Spiritual or Greater Jihad in Islam

The "greater" (internal) jihad (*al-jihad al-akbar*) is a struggle against self - self-purification and the suppression of base desires in order to rise to the contemplation of higher truth, whereas the lesser (external, martial) jihad (*al-jihad al-asghar*) involves physical combat against real enemies in real-time. The most famous tradition that points to the source of spiritual jihad is the following: "A number of fighters came to the Messenger of Allah, and he said: "You have done well in coming from the 'lesser jihad' to the 'greater jihad'." They said: "What is the 'greater jihad'?" He said: "For the servant [of God] to fight his passions."⁶⁹ AbdAllāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 189/797), who was the first person to write a work on jihad, *Kitāb al-ġihād*, noted that asceticism or the internal jihad carries more moral authority than the external jihad, precisely because the ascetic is outside of society and can judge it.⁷⁰ Furthermore, when jihad is considered in its Arabic meaning of "striving," some

⁶⁵ A. Brigaglia, "Süddeutsche Zeitung", 25/26 September 2004; iz3w "informationszentrum 3. Welt," August/September 2004; Paden 2005:170,187-188, in A. Brigaglia, "Testo, Tradizione e Confronto Esergetico: Gli 'Ulama' Contemporanei e gli Sviluppi dell'Esegesi Coranica nella Società Nord-Nigeriana (Kano e Kaduna, 1960-2002)", Ph. D. Thesis, Naples University, Naples, 2004 in Loimeier, "Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria," 150.

⁶⁶ Loimeier, "Boko Haram," 151.

⁶⁷ People of the *Sunna* of the prophet and the community and those who accept to emigrate from the unbelievers (Nigerian state).

⁶⁸ The community of the people of the *Sunna* who fight for the cause of Islam by means of jihad according to the method of the *salafs*. See Loimeier, "Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria," 152.

⁶⁹ Ibn al-Mubarak, *Kitab al-jihad*, no. 7, Beirut 1971, 30–31, in David Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, (California: University of California Press, 2002), 35.

⁷⁰ Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, 33.

traditions indicate a non-violent attitude of internal spiritual warfare, which involves the opposition of evil by speaking out against it.⁷¹ The most significant contribution to the question of Sufi jihad and one whose writing had significant effect on the jihad of later centuries in Africa and Asia was ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166), the founder of the early and widespread Sufi brotherhood of the Qādiriyya. He cited the tradition of the “greater jihad” versus the “lesser jihad,” as well as the need for actual fighting and the connection between the two:

[There are] two types of jihad: the outer and the inner. The inner is the jihad of the soul, the passion, the nature, and Satan. It involves repentance from rebelliousness and errors, being steadfast about it, and abandoning the forbidden passions. The outer is the jihad of the infidels who resist Him and His Messenger [Muhammad] and to be pitiless with their swords, their spears, and their arrows - killing and being killed. The inner jihad is more difficult than the outer jihad because it involves cutting the forbidden customs of the soul, and exiling them, so as to have as one’s example the Divine commands and to cease from what it forbids. Whoever takes God’s command as his example with regard to the two types of jihad will gain a reward in this world and the next. Bodily wounds on the martyr are just like someone cutting their hand—there is no real pain in it—and death with regard to the soul of a mujahid who repents from his sins is like a thirsty man drinking cold water.⁷²

Likewise, ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1731), a prolific Sufi author and poet and a member of the Qādiriyya and Naqshbandiyya Sufi orders, argues in the same line as his spiritual predecessor, al-Jīlānī, in his treatise, *Bayan al-jihad li-ahl al-widad*, (*The Explication of Jihad to the People of Friendship*):

There are two aspects of jihad: a lesser jihad and a greater jihad. As for the lesser jihad, it concerns man fighting his enemies among the unbelievers, for fighting them is an individual duty if they attack a stronghold of the Muslims. As for the greater jihad, it is among the most important commandments for one who is obligated to adhere to the precepts of religion and is [also] an individual duty. The believer is engaged in a constant jihad with his lower self, in order to protect himself against its malicious ruses, until he dies. [This is] in contrast to the jihad against the unbelievers, for the persistence of the unbelievers in their unbelief in this world does not impair the Muslims in their faith.⁷³

The great similarity between the statements of al-Jīlānī and al-Nābulusī underscores the uniformity of opinion among Sufis regarding the doctrine of jihad in Islam, especially its complementary nature. There is a common agreement that spiritual jihad is more difficult than martial jihad in that the struggle with the lower self is ongoing, whereas the struggle against unbelievers is not. They also express the importance of the martial jihad as an endeavour in which all observant Muslims must engage.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, 34.

⁷² ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, *al-Fath al-rabbani wa-l-fayd al-rahmani*, (Cairo, 1988), 83, in Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, 45.

⁷³ ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, *Bayan al-jihad li-ahl al-widad*, (Damascus: Maktabat al-Asad) manuscript no. 4008, p. 2, in Harry S. Neale, *Jihad in Premodern Sufi Writings*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 61.

⁷⁴ Neale, *Jihad in Premodern Sufi Writings*, 61.

The Nature of Spiritual Jihad (Sufism)

The original meaning of the Arabic word, ‘Sufi’, according to most modern scholars is from the Arabic word, *suf* – wool, and meant most likely “one who wears wool.” According to this opinion by the eighth century (the second century of Islam), the term was sometimes applied to people whose ascetic inclinations led them to wear coarse and uncomfortable woollen garments. Gradually the name came to designate a group of Muslims who differentiated themselves from other Muslims by stressing certain specific teachings and practices of the Qur’an and Muhammad. By the ninth century, those who were called Sufis adopted the gerund form *taṣawwuf*, which means “being a Sufi” or “Sufism,” as an appropriate designation for their activities and aspirations. However, they also called themselves by other names, such as “knowers” and “ascetics” and “renouncers” and “poor men.”⁷⁵ This is because most of these early pious people were devoted to asceticism and wore undyed, coarse woollen garments. The coarse garments symbolised voluntary poverty and renunciation of the world with all its pleasures.

The tradition of an internal spiritual jihad that complements the outer martial jihad was developed and cultivated in the history of Islam by the Sufis. These two aspects of jihad, that is, the spiritual jihad and the martial jihad, conform to the belief held by many Sufis that there is an inner (*bātin*) and outer (*zāhir*) meaning inherent in the Qur’an and *hadith* and in the practice, and even in the sayings and deeds of prominent Sufi *awliyā’* (saints/friends of God). The term “Sufi,” and the Arabic verbal noun *taṣawwuf* (the practice of the Sufi way) designate an array of traditions, practices, and affiliations that defy simple definition, even though most scholarship in European languages has consistently defined and continues to define these terms as Muslim mystic and Islamic mysticism, respectively.⁷⁶ W. Chittick describes Sufism as the interiorisation and intensification of Islamic faith and practice. According to Ahmed Ibn Abu al-Hussain al-Nuri, “Sufism is the name of a state in which one gives up the human desires; and the Sufis are those who live free from human jealousies and have become totally disassociated from worldly desires and human wishes.”⁷⁷ Similarly, Hazrat Abu Umar of Damascus maintained that “to shut your eyes before the world is Sufism.”⁷⁸

The Practice and Nature of Sufism and Spiritual Jihad in Nigeria

The image of Islam in northern Nigeria is that of a religion in search of a religious model that would help in the socio-political and cultural development of the region. The North has always been a combat ground for many ideological orientations, interpretations and understandings of Islam, which are reflections of the historical processes of the region’s socio-economic and political transformations. Islam came to northern Nigeria in the eleventh century through the trans-Saharan trade. However, it was at the onset of the seventeenth century that a major inroad was made in the propagation of the religion by the Sufi Brotherhoods (*ṭarīqa*, pl. *turūq*). The first of these Brotherhoods that became prominent in Hausa land was the Qādiriyya Sufi brotherhood which saw Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani as the “patron saint” of their movement. Hence, these Sufi forms of Islam that were based on the

⁷⁵ W. C. Chittick, *Sufism, A Beginner’s Guide*, Oneworld, Oxford 2000, 22.

⁷⁶ Neale, *Jihad*, 7.

⁷⁷ Ali b. Usman al-Jullabi al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjub*, (trans. G. M. N Ashrafi), (Lahore: Gohar Publications, n.d.), 90.

⁷⁸ Ali b. Usman al-Jullabi al-Hujwiri, 91.

greater jihad or spiritual understanding of jihad and its practice, presupposed a very peaceful Islamic practice and culture during this period.

The first major incursion of lesser jihad or the jihad of the sword, uncommon in Sufi Islam in the area of politics, in the history of sub-Saharan Africa, was the famous Fulani jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in 1804. This jihad achieved the subjugation of the traditional institutions of Hausa land and the appointment of Fulani religious clerics as Emirs and supreme leaders of the various Hausa kingdoms. Dan Fodio was affiliated to the Qādiriyya movement. Though the movement was established as a *ṭarīqa* in northern Nigeria by the early 19th century, its teachings did not assume the position of an “official ideology” for the empire.⁷⁹ However, the presence of Qādiriyya met stiff competition in 1831, with the coming of a Senegalese Scholar, Alhaji Umar Tal to Sokoto with a new *ṭarīqa*, the Tijāniyya, which claimed supremacy over the Qādiriyya brotherhood. The new *ṭarīqa* posed a problem for the ruling elite who could not bear seeing the legacy of Dan Fodio thrashed on the ground. Subsequently, the Sultan of Sokoto fought the new *ṭarīqa* and saw the dethronement of the Emir of Zaria who had rejected his authority after having avowed allegiance to the Tijāniyya in 1854-1855. The coming of the British and the incorporation of the northern Nigeria as a British protectorate in 1903 gave Tijāniyya scholars greater freedom to propagate their teachings. The earlier part of the 20th century was dominated by the activities of these two movements, which centred on the *tajdīd*, which is the renewal of the *salāsi*⁸⁰ of earlier founders by later scholars. Of prominence among the Tijani scholars of these years were the activities of Alfa Hashim (d.1931) and the Mauritanian Sheikh, Abd al-Wahhab Ujdud, also known in northern Nigeria as “Sharif Ujdud.”⁸¹ The middle of the century (1950s) saw a reform in these two movements, which saw a change in the character of the *ṭarīqa* affiliation, through the efforts of Ibrahim Niass (Tijāniyya) and Nasiru Kabara (Qādiriyya), who opened the teachings of the respective movements to all Muslims. In the words of Loimeier:

These movements, which could be seen as an expression of the changing political, economic and social conditions of the political era, were to influence northern Nigeria’s religio-political development. From the 1950s *tariqa* networks were to become conveyor belts for political activities, the mass mobilization of voters, and thus, primary tools of power in the hands of increasingly influential scholars.⁸²

The two movements presented a move towards the inculturation of Islam into the African traditional religion, as the *mallams*⁸³ became traditional healers and made use of unorthodox objects like the cut pages of the Qur’an as charms and amulets.

Many modern Muslims have regarded Sufism as alien to Islam, especially with the rise of Wahhabism and modern Islamic fundamentalism. The great historian of Islamic civilization, H. A. R. Gibb, rightly pointed out that biased Muslims look upon Sufism either as a “survival of superstitions” and “cultural backwardness” or as a deviation from “true Islam.” Gibb understood Sufism as a critical aspect of the experiential aspect of the Islamic religion, arguing that such attitudes have the potential of “eliminating the expression of

⁷⁹Loimeier, “Nigeria: The Quest for a Viable Religious Option,” 44.

⁸⁰Arabic Word for chains, or links. It is translated as spiritual genealogy; it is a practice where one Sufi master transfers his spiritual power or khilafa to his khalifa, or spiritual descendant.

⁸¹Loimeier, “Nigeria: The Quest for a Viable Religious Option,” 45.

⁸²Loimeier, “Nigeria: The Quest for a Viable Religious Option,” 46.

⁸³ Derived from *mawlānā*, meaning master or Lord, and used to refer to the local *imām* in Africa.

authentic religious experience” from the Islamic world.⁸⁴ In fact, Gibb’s observations are in line with the vast majority of Sufi teachers who understood their religious experiences as the animating spirit of the Islamic tradition. Therefore, they hold that from their point of view, “wherever this spirit flourishes, Islam is alive to its own spiritual and moral ideals, but to the extent that it languishes, Islam becomes desiccated and sterile, if it survives at all.”⁸⁵

Urgent Need for a Paradigm Shift in Understanding Jihad in Northern Nigeria

There is no gainsaying the fact that the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio fueled the present understanding of jihad in northern Nigeria, and the incursion of radical elements from the Wahabbi movement, leading to the establishment of the Izala movement that eventually metamorphosed into Boko Haram. Therefore, for an authentic move towards addressing the problems of insecurity, religious intolerance, and extremism in northern Nigeria, it would be important for Muslims to intensify their efforts towards the re-cultivation of the fundamental teachings and principles of Sufism. This understanding would inevitably lead to the enhancement of interreligious dialogue between Christianity and Islam, the two most dominant faiths practised by a greater percentage of the population. It would also help in whittling down the flames of extremism and religious fundamentalism that has been the bane of development in northern Nigeria.

Achieving this objective would inevitably involve the cooperation of the combined efforts of traditional rulers and representatives of Islamic religious leaders in the north and the state governments in order to effectively push this orientation of jihad in the present war against insurgency. This ideological approach would be helpful for the security forces whose major thrust has been the employment of both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches in the combat of Boko Haram and other related extremist groups in the North. An emphasis laid on the Sufi jihad as a non-kinetic approach will be of great help in overcoming and stemming the present crisis of insecurity, kidnapping, and banditry in the region.

Conclusion

The carnage caused by the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria has led to the loss of many lives and properties. Some sources estimate that over thirty thousand lives have been lost since the onset of the insurgency. It is a clear fact that those radicalised by the jihadist Salafist doctrinal incursions of the Boko Haram sect will find it difficult to meet at the table of interreligious dialogue. This is further compounded by the fact that the Wahhabi ideology has, over the years, tried to subdue Sufism and all it stands for. However, the practice of Sufism or the spiritual jihad remains the most veritable means for the true renewal of Islam in Nigeria when properly imbibed and inculcated. It stands to benefit the moral tenets of the religion in search of the love of God and virtuous living. Above all, it equally stands to open up the radical tendencies to dialogue with other religions. Such a sincere engagement would inevitably lead to the sharing of religious experiences of conversion, prayer, and encounter, which would eventually lead the religions to pursue common goals for justice and human liberation. An encounter like this would invariably

⁸⁴ H. A. R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, Beacon Press Boston 1962, 218, in W. C. Chittick, *Sufism, A Beginner’s Guide*, Oneworld, Oxford 2000, 3.

⁸⁵ W. C. Chittick, *Sufism*, 4.

pave the way for a greater dialogue of life, and when pursued relentlessly at the grassroots level, could eventually lead to a greater orientation of Islam in northern Nigeria to non-violence, tolerance and peaceful co-existence with people of other faiths.