Where the Rain Began to Beat Us?
Voice of Jacob, Hands of Esau: The External Roots of Terror and Beginning of Religious Disaffection and Intolerance in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
More than 2000 souls have been killed in several religious and ethno-religious attacks between January and March of 2014 alone in clashes between the dreaded Boko Haram, the violent Islamic sect and security agents and populace on one hand and between nomadic Fulani herdsmen and their host communities on the other. This is more than half the figure of what the State of Israel lost in Yom Kippur War (which they saw as a disaster) and about what America has lost in Afghanistan till today. Yet Nigeria is not officially at war.

Religion has assumed a somewhat worrisome dimension in the public life of Nigeria. Between 1980 and 2000 there were more than 30 bloody religious riots across the length and breadth of Nigeria but mostly in the North and between adherents of different faith traditions or between ethnic nationalities with varied dominant religious configurations.

However the post-9/11 world has introduced complex variables into an otherwise bad situation. The use of religion as a tool of terror is a reality in our world which we cannot wish away. Expectedly, the nations of the West, and even other nations, have been forced to find a framework to integrate religion into national security discourse in spite of the mantra of secularization. Up to 1980 there was peace, love, tolerance and mutual respect between religions in Nigeria except for one unfortunate controversy over Sharia at the Constituent Assembly in 1978.

This paper examines the origin, external roots of terror and the beginning of religious disaffection and controversy which have now snowballed into bloody conflicts and open violence. It also documents the era of peaceful coexistence between faith traditions in the early days of Nigeria nation and also suggests recommendations for the way forward.

INTRODUCTION
Considering the havoc that has been done to this nation today in the name of religion, it is doubtful whether those who consider religion as a curse can be blamed. If the good done in the name of religion and the evils are to be juxtaposed together it is doubtful which would tip. Today religion has largely become a curse to Nigeria not a blessing. It is the number one challenge now facing Nigeria and the survival of the nation depends on it. Yet Nigeria has benefited enormously from religion.

Religion has made enormous contributions to the development of Nigeria in various fields. In his Inauguration Speech as Prime Minister in 1960 on the attainment of Independence Tafawa Balewa acknowledged the role of the missionaries in the nation’s development and eventual liberation. Most of the schools, colleges and medical centres were built and then manned by missionaries and their agents. These facilities attended to all citizens without any discrimination whatsoever.

Christianity was introduced to Nigeria first through missionaries of Methodist and later CMS bodies in 1842. With time other mission agencies came located across the length and breadth of the land to prosecute their evangelism. Islam had preceded Christianity to Nigeria and had been firmly established first in the Sokoto Caliphate from where it spread its tentacles to other parts of the North and even the South. A Jihad to propagate the faith in the Southwest had been waged in the eighteenth century but was halted at Oshogbo and defeated. However unlike Christianity Islam was spread by itinerant mallams and traders in the Southwest. Thus by the nineteenth century there was a sizable portion of Moslems in the south before the coming of Christianity. Towns like Osogbo, Ede, Iwo and Ibadan have begun to develop dominant Moslem populations.

The colonial policy ensured that each mission agency kept to its sphere of influence and ensured peace among religions and missions. Lord Lugard reached an understanding with the Northern emirs not to interfere with their religion and not to allow missionaries, entry to the North. All these were to ensure peace and religious harmony. Thus up to the time of decolonization there was no major account of religious strife in Nigeria and even after Independence. Though Nigeria was racked with several crises they were more political and ethnic in nature than religious. The Western Crisis was political through and through not religious because both Awolowo and Akintola were both professing Christians. The Civil War was not a religious war but political war even though some foreign propaganda tried to show that it was to get the sympathy of Christian nations. The military coup of the January 15, 1966 was not ‘a Christian
coup against Moslem leadership’ because there were Christians killed in the coup like Akintola, Ademulegun, Okoti- Eboh etc. And the counter-coup was not a Moslem reaction either because Danjuma, Bali and several others who featured in the coup are not Moslems; and Gowon the main beneficiary of the coup was a Christian. Thus we can say that Nigeria never witnessed a major religious crisis up to 1980. Up to 1980 there was religious peace, accommodation, forbearance and tolerance in Nigeria. Up to this time the different Faith-based organizations (Christian, Muslims and Traditional religionists) lived in harmony and there was no serious crisis save for some occasional skirmishes like the walk-out staged at the Constituent Assembly in 1978 by some ‘Islamic fundamentalists’ (apologies to Chinua Achebe) over the issue of Sharia. But there was no problem generally on religion. Until 1980 when things changed. But why?

It is the object of this paper to show that a radical element, a very radical ideology entered into Islam sometimes in 1980 and the effect was worldwide; and that based on this fact the Nigerian version of Islam changed radically in its outlook, relationship with other religions, belief systems to accommodate this new dimension. Two major things happened in the 80’s which distorted the religious fault lines that has changed the socio-religious climate of Nigeria and indeed of the world. To understand the root of religious crisis in Nigeria from 1980 upward we must understand these two incidents. It is also my purpose to show that the two incidents which provided these elements of radical change are located outside Nigeria.

The Golden Era: The Period of Peaceful Co-existence
The present generation may not know that there was a time when peaceful co-existence and harmony existed between practitioners of different faiths in Nigeria. There was once a period of harmony and togetherness when people saw themselves as Nigerians first and not religious or ethnic champions. I present three stories below to underscore this statement.

- On 24th December 1956 a well-known religious leader from the Southwest arrived Okene with two of his associates.3 This was Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola of the Christ Apostolic Church and two pastors- J.A. Medaiyese and J.O. Adebayo. They were to catch a connecting transport to Warri where they were headed but they missed the transport. It was already getting dark and no member of the church lived in this dominantly Moslem town. But being a famous figure and the instrument of the Great Revival of 1930 which had attracted hundreds of thousands to Ilesha from all across the nation, words quickly got to the Emir that a famous Christian leader was in the town and stranded.

The Emir took them and provided a comfortable accommodation for the group. The next day they proceeded on their journey. Thus a foremost Moslem emir from the North provided accommodation for a foremost religious leader from the South. That was Nigeria in the early days.

- In the morning of 1975 a senior federal civil servant and a Christian who lived and worked in Okene, Kogi State went to the bush to hunt for games.4 Armed with his gun he took his house boy and they left for the thick jungle of surrounding hills to hunt. This was his pastime every weekend since his family did not live with him. But on this day something untoward happened. After the hunting he could not find his way out of the forest. He tried and tried but to no avail. Until the night drew and they were in the forest.

The second day they tried again to find there way but they were unsuccessful and they passed the second night inside the bush. They were drinking only water and some roasted fowl they had killed.

Meanwhile the entire Okene town became roused and worried. When his neighbours did not see him the second day they became alarmed and alerted the emir that the senior government official in the town has not been sighted for two days after going to the forest to hunt. The emir immediately called for all the young men of the town and a search party was raised to look for
him. *A Moslem emir of a dominant Moslem town raised a search party of Moslem youths to go and search for one Christian public servant in danger.* That was Nigeria.

The search party went to work and on the third day they found him in the forest and rescued him. They had traced him from the point where he parked his car.

These two stories furnished to me by direct participants during my research - and many more that could be found- clearly established the harmony and oneness that existed between religions and their practitioners in the decades before 1980. And even in the early days of the missionaries it was like that. But this is hardly possible today. So what happened?

We shall now look at the two external factors around 1980 which introduced a radical dimension to world Islam and the Nigerian version in particular.

1. **Root of Terror : Iranian Revolution**

First, the Iranian revolution of 1979 was a dramatic event which affected all Moslems around the world and subsequently other faith traditions. That revolution in which a fiery Islamic fundamentalist preacher and his Shiite supporters with their radical and militant ideology rallied an entire nation to overthrow a moderate government that is backed by a superpower was a momentous event in the history of the world.

The Iranian revolution was unique and special in the history of the world because it defied previous theory of revolutionary causation. It was not peasant- based like most Third World revolutions and uprising and did not formulate any modern political system but spawned a new ideology and political direction. The Shah’s government had alienated many of the social and professional elite groups in Iran with his modernization programmes. The laissez-fair capitalism which invested billions of dollars of Iranian fund in the West and maintained open borders for all kinds of importation of goods made many Iranian merchants less competitive and economically-disempowered.

The influence and unrestrained infiltration of Western culture and alien values into Iran also alienated many social and cultural segments of the nation. Islam was a factor in this, Islam being the most important cultural dynamics in the nation. It was the confluence of these ideologies and the convergence of dissatisfied groups and socio-cultural and religious formations headed by the Islamic leadership which spawned the revolution.

Islamic propaganda and literature played a significant role in this revolutionary upheaval and Moslem scribes and mullahs added the religious dimension and colouration which has continued to define the post-revolutionary character of its policies, goals and global agenda. Zabih captured this:

Shiite revolutionary discourse transformed the political, social and economic discontents of the 1970’s into a crisis. A large network of approximately 80,000 mosques and holy shrines served about 180,000 mullahs, facilitating the distribution of revolutionary Islamic propaganda. (Zabih 1979: 20)

But the most dangerous aspect of this both to Christians and Moslems and even to the world is the birth of Shiite radical ideology. It is beyond the scope of this paper to trace the origin and birth of Shiite sect in Islam and of the Islamic model of Islam. It is sufficient however to say that the Shiites do not recognize any sect or tradition of Islam as superior or more sacred to its own. Because it was founded by Ali the son-in-law of Mohammed who was killed in the early Islamic civil war in the early years of Islam.

The success of that revolution and its Islamic rulers in the art of governance using Islamic principles inspired many Muslims around the world and stirred in many the possibility of a revolution based on a radical Islamic ideology like Iran. Every revolution seeks to expand itself and project its ideology beyond its borders. Every conquest creates a new frontier which will require a new conquest. It’s the same story with the Iranian model as it seeks to propagate its fringe belief system and ideology in other Islamic nations like Lebanon (through Hezbollah Movement), Syria, Egypt (through Muslim Brotherhood) and other neutral African nations like Nigeria, Chad etc (through al-Qaeda, Maitatsine, Kala Kato, Boko Haram)
The Iran Links to Nigeria’s Religious Crisis

Many Muslims visited Iran after the revolution in the 1980’s. There is substantial evidence that many youths from Nigeria visited Iran between 1979 and 1987 to learn and be inspired by the Iranian Islamic revolution. The Shiite consciousness was immediately born and a new ideology entered into the bloodstream of Islam in Nigeria. Ibrahim El-Zakzaky the leader of the Shiite Movement in Nigeria has admitted this much in his interview with a newsmagazine. This confirms Phillip Ukanah:

... Between 1979 and 1987 Nigerian youths and undergraduates of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria were among the many youths that allegedly travelled to receive the blessing of Ayatollah, the spiritual leader of Iran during his revolution and took courses in Islamic theology. They returned later with revolutionary ideas and were intent on purifying Islam in Nigeria. (Ukanah 2011: 175)

Another source corroborated this fact and the confession of El-Zakzaky in the said interview:

Many of the youths who were given scholarship (sic) for studies... belonged to the Izala (a Muslim sect) but when they returned they become more militant and said said the Izala faithful were too and less confrontational. They decided to form a new group with no identifiable name.

It was this category of youths who returned and became radicalized with the ideology of violence and revolution and the enthronement of Islamic government based on the Iranian model. The Izalas are particularly different. They don’t recognize any authority other than Islam and, according to Newsweek magazine, they don’t salute the flag nor sing the national anthem.

In 1985 the no-nonsense Major General Tunde Idiagbon alerted the nation about the activities of some Iranian and Lebanese mullahs who were out to corrupt the Nigerian Islamic culture. The important thing about this allegation is that Idiagbon himself was a Moslem.

Shortly thereafter a Lagos newspaper reported the distribution of Islamic literature by the Iranian embassy in Lagos to youths without the knowledge of Nigerian Moslem leaders. The Sultan, Ibrahim Dasuki also alerted of dangerous and inciting literature from one of the Gulf States. He was referring to Iran. Recently in 2010 an Iranian was implicated in the smuggling of arms into Nigeria and was about to be tried before the Iranian embassy claimed he was a diplomat and allowed him to escape from Nigeria. Nigeria has lodged a complaint with the United Nations over this incident against Iran.

Thus Iran represents the first major impetus to the birth of religious intolerance and violence in Nigeria.

Consequences: The Aftermath of Iranian Revolution

Every revolution seeks to expand itself and project its ideology beyond its borders. It’s the same story with Iran as it seeks to propagate its fringe belief system and ideology in other Islamic nations like Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and other neutral African nations like Nigeria, Chad etc From the very beginning Iran was very difficult, intolerant and hostile to other ideologies. The Iranian version of Islam was new to the world because it does not abhor violence. In fact it encourages and propagates it. It was the first to pass a death sentence on Salman Rushdie in 1988, the Indian-born British author of *Satanic Verses*. Khomeini has never hidden his hatred of even fellow Moslems who did not share his authoritarian ideals. It does not recognize International conventions and norms. Iranian leaders have openly called for the destruction of the State of Israel, a sovereign nation like Iran!

The Iranian event led to the birth or radicalization of the Hezbollah Movement in Lebanon, the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt and the several radical sects around the world trying to cause destabilization and overthrow of non-Islamic governments and establishment of Islamic government based on the Iranian model.

The immediate consequence was the religious riots beginning from 1980 and upwards and the thousands of deaths reported thereafter. Some of these have a definite link to Iran even based on security reports like the Bauchi riots of 1985 and the Shiite riot of 1991 where weapons and even foreign doctors treating wounded terrorists were discovered.
2. Root of Terror: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

The second factor was the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1980. This thoughtless gamble against an Islamic nation by a superpower ruptured the delicate balance of the world and due to the Cold War occasioned terrible consequences and disaster which reverberated far and near. The United States seeing their own opportunity to repay Russia with its own ‘Vietnam’ supported Afghanistan both with cash and arms. This is not all. The CIA went on a world campaign to recruit militants from Islamic nations and to incite the Muslim nations to fight for the Jihad in Afghanistan. Many Moslems answered the American call to support the beleaguered nation against the Soviet Union and to fight for Jihad against an empire of godless communism. It was in these circumstances that Osama Bin Laden became an agent of CIA in its recruitment drive and Jihad against Russia; and it was also at this point that Al-Qaeda the dreaded Islamic terrorist group was born supported originally with arms and cash against Russia. Unfortunately with the collapse of the Soviet Union the terrorist cells had no one to fight so it turned against its original benefactor with dire consequences as we saw in New York on 9/11.

The Aftermath

The immediate consequence of these was the Iran- Iraq War, the rise of Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon, the assassination of Anwar Sadat, a moderate Moslem who had signed a historic Peace Treaty with Israel, then regarded by all Arabs as enemy nation; and the formation of radical Islamic terrorist cells across the nations of the world working for the overthrow of governments that were perceived to be unislamic, moderately Islamic or headed by a non-Muslim. Is it a coincidence that it was in 1980, the very year of the birth of this radical Islamic ideology and terrorist cells, was also the year Nigeria witnessed its very first major religious crisis- the Maitatsine religious riots in which over 3000 died as a group of illiterate religious fanatics took on the security apparatus of the state to engage them in open violence, just like in Iran?

From this time forward things changed. Some Moslem students began to think and fantasize an Islamic nation and government based on the Iranian model in a nation where non-Muslims constitute the majority. Their worldviews became changed and radicalized overnight. A stream of subversive and inciting literature began to pour into Nigeria mostly from the Middle East; and also from South Africa by an Islamic pamphleteer Ahmed Deedat, a man of unsound theology, poor sense of history and of doubtful scholarship. This literature has as its chief aims to encourage hate, non-cooperation and distort Christian theology so as to promote disharmony.

Nigeria and Religious Crisis

Apart from the 1978 Sharia crisis in the Constituent Assembly in which some Moslems staged a walkout which is the only crisis not captured within the time period under this review, there were several others after 1980. The University of Ibadan row over the Cross was a serious one in 1985.

these incidents were not directly committed by Christians still the Moslems descended on their Christian neighbours in the North and killed and destroyed churches.

The Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in 1988 confirmed the death sentence passed on Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses* by Khomeini the Iranian leader. It even went beyond Iran by also extending the death sentence to anyone or newspapers who review the book, sells, market or distribute it in Nigeria. Now isn’t it problematic that a religious organ ascribes to prescribe for the reading public what to read or what to buy in a secular state? Where was the government? The confirmation of this obnoxious sentence passed by the Iranian religious hierarchy on an author by Nigerian Islamic leaders conclusively affirmed that an element of Iranian ideology entered Nigerian Islamic culture and has influenced it.

The present state of things may be the logical consequence of this matrix.

**A New Christianity**

The same 1980’s also saw the emergence and dominance of another brand of Christianity and faith tradition which emphasised the material dimension rather than the spiritual element. Its emphasis is this-worldly rather than other-worldly, its focus is in time rather than eternity; and its pursuits are the things of this world- success, financial prosperity, greatness- rather than the imperishable things of heaven as was the case with Early Christianity. Pentecostal Christianity began in America in the early part of the first decade of the twentieth century and was a great blessing emphasizing most of the neglected truths of the Early Church. But as it moves to different nations and owing to erosion of time it appropriated some of the cultural realities of American society- materialism, business, capitalism; which it took to other nations. Along the line these attachments became the pursuits of many Pentecostals rather than the gospel itself and looking good became more important than doing good.

This would also affect Nigeria and compound the moral crisis of the nation because most of the time the salvation promised by the Pentecostals is no salvation at all and the gospel is, in most cases, *another gospel* unknown to the Scriptures and the history of the church.

The pursuit of extrinsic values became uppermost and intrinsic values and qualities became consigned to the background. This has produced in the main a showy religion and materialist ideology and pursuits and half-hearted Christians.

**Conclusion**

The root of religious disaffection lies deeper and it lies beyond Nigeria. The environment and climate which made it possible for the nurture of a subversive and radical theology in Islam which has corrupted the peaceful and accommodating Nigeria Islamic culture were created long ago and by forces from elsewhere. Thus the problem of Boko Haram did not start today but long ago.

As the world gets increasingly globalized and with the internet citizens are liable to exposure to radical ideas from other shores which are dangerous and subversive of authority and power structures. The external roots of the origin of terror must be examined and understood to tackle and combat successfully religious extremism.

**NOTES**

1. See The Punch of....
2. Total Israel casualty figure in Yom Kippur War is 3000 (See Golda Meir. *My Life*) Total American casualties in Afghanistan as at 28 April, 2014 is 2179 (Department of Defence says 2155) based on independent assessment. This deals with soldiers and combatants who died in action inside Afghanistan. [Source: google.com/ American casualty in Afghanistan; http//: www. defense. Gov/news/ casualty.pdf . Accessed on 29-4-2014
3. Private interview with Pastor J. Olu Adebayo at Ilesha, 1997
4. Private interview with Mr. Oyeleye, retired civil servant at Audi Road, G.R.A, Ilorin. 1985
7. Mahmood Mamdani. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America and the Root of Terror*, 2007
8. Ibid
10. Some of his provocative and inciting titles include: *Crucifiction or Crucifixion, Did Jesus Actually Resurrect From the Dead*
11. Phillip Ukanah op.cit

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The US Embassy in Sofia has apologized for an accidental raid conducted by American soldiers at a Bulgarian engineering plant earlier this month. It happened amid a NATO military exercise. The US Embassy in Bulgaria said it learned about the incident only this week and was deeply sorry about it. The incursion was made by soldiers assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade, who strayed outside the designated area of the exercise at the Cheshnegirovo Air Base, where they trained in entering and clearing multiple bunkers and structures across the airfield.

The US Army takes training seriously and prioritizes the safety of our soldiers, our allies, and civilians. We sincerely apologize to the business and its employees, the embassy said. We can understand better the problems with Nigeria's financial institutions in particular, and the global economic meltdown in general, by unmasking the dominant character in contemporary capitalist societies. The marketing character is dominated by the marketing orientation, that is, an attitude based on experiencing oneself as a commodity. A stockbroker, a bank chief executive, a pastor, or a university professor must each present a different kind of personality that, regardless of their differences, has to fulfill one condition: to be in demand. Individuals who are dominated by the market Jacob & Esau are a character pair added in The Binding of Isaac: Repentance. They are unlocked by defeating Mother with any character. Jacob & Esau are controlled as one, move at the same speed, and use the same coins, bombs, and keys. Otherwise, they are completely independent in terms of stats, items, and health. Both characters have collision and can be separated, though the "Drop" button can be held to keep Esau in place while Jacob is free to move around the room.