
THE ARAB SPRING AND THE ASCENDANCE OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN THE MIDDLE EAST: AN ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

We found out in the course of this paper that the Arab Spring and the ascendance of Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle-East was due to a reaction to the modernizing instincts of post-colonial leaders of the Muslim dominated Arab countries. After independence the modernizing elites of virtually all predominantly Muslim countries undertook radical reforms of family law, notably to empower women. They targeted inter-alia the aspects of Islamic family law relating to polyandry, unilateral repudiation distribution of inheritance. A host of new laws were adopted to promote women's right including the criminalization of polygamy. This however, did not go on without some level of opposition and resistance. To achieve the goal of re-Islamizing post-colonial Muslim societies, they adopted diverse strategies, from peaceful proselyzation to armed opposition. Their ultimate ambition is to capture political power. It is true that the Islamists ascendance through the ballot box is the most visible outcome of the Arab Spring. There is however, more to it than what meets the eye. Of particular importance is their strong opposition to secular ethos in favour of fundamentalist Muslim ethos that would not be in the interest of non Muslims and other secular minded Muslims. It is against the background of the above scenario that one have to appreciate the ascendance of Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle-East and the contemporary challenges in Nigeria being made visible by a Muslim Sect the Boko Haram. It would therefore not be out of place for one to say that Boko Haram sect and its heinous crimes against the people and nation was more of a dangerous diversion of real issues that impinges on the national project. It is the fuel subsidy crises that one could say tend to strike a code with the Arab Spring in the Middle-East and North Africa. A popular disenchantment and demonstrations against the Nigerian government on removal of fuel subsidy with the subsequent revelation of the rot that has engulfed the entire fabric of the Nigerian state structures at all level, have unfortunately ended whatever legitimacy the Nigerian project might be said to have had in the past. In actual sense the Boko Haram's major preoccupation is to Islamize the entire northern region and make its states to be governed in accordance with Islamic laws and injunctions which is very much in line with the fundamentalist struggle in the Middle East and North Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The Arab spring is a recent development which is attributable to the meterdom of a Tunisian Youth who set himself on fire and latter died in the Hospital. Even though it is said to be a recent development, the way and manner in which it spread like a wildfire into different parts of the Arab World shows that, there is more to it than what meets the eye. Its impact is felt in Egypt, Libya, Cyria and Yemen. What seems to buggle the minds of most scholars is the extent to which the spring has given rise to the ascendance of the Muslim brotherhood in almost all parts of the Arab World. The Islamist ascendance through the ballot box is the

most visible outcome of the Arab spring. This is a group that exists in different parts of the Arab World with different approaches adopted in the respective countries for the capture of political power. The question is does this Muslim brotherhood just sprang up to occupy its current pre-eminence or was operating in a low key form prior to this time. Again, though it is said to have tremendous influence in the Arab World ie Middle East and North Africa; does its influence spread to other parts of world particularly sub-Saharan Africa where recent events tend to show some level of linkage with other Muslim fundamentalist groups. It is our position in this paper, that answers to questions of this nature world go a long way in making us to understand the linkages that exist among the Muslim brotherhood network not just in the Arab-World but also in sub-Saharan Africa, that are experiencing fundamentalist activities such as Northern Nigeria's Boko Haram Sect. It is in this context that we need to appreciate the contemporary challenges in Nigeria. The basic trust of this paper therefore is to examine the extent to which the Muslim brotherhood in the Middle-East and North Africa has influenced recent Muslim fundamentalist violence in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular. The paper is divide into five parts. The first is the introduction, which is followed by a discussion of the origin and growth of Muslim brotherhood, thirdly we talked about its sudden re-appearance within the period of the Arab Spring and the fourth is on the contemporary challenges in Nigeria while the fifth is the conclusion.

The Origin and Growth

The term Muslim brotherhood has a lot to do with the concept Islamism which is shown in most studies carried out by western scholars. It is a twentieth century phenomenon starting with the rise of Egyptian society of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and reaching its peak in the 1970s after the decline of Arab nationalism, in the after math of the defeat of the Arab armies in their war with Israel. (Usuman Kane P. 158) The views expressed by Oliver Roy is a pointer to this fact; he said, "Beginning in the 1930s Hassan-al-Banna, the founder in Egypt of the Muslim brotherhood, and Abdul-Ala-Mawdudi the creator of the Indo-Pakistan Jamat -i-Islami party introduced a new movement of thought that endeavoured to define Islam primarily, as a political system in keeping with the major ideologies of the twentieth century. (Usuman Kane P. 158). This kind of revivalist thinking is really not peculiar to the Arab-World or Islam perse. It was a predominant way of thinking on the nationalists of various parts of the world fighting for the liberation of their people from the hands of the colonial authorities. A typical example is the Hindu revivalist thinking among the members of the Indian National Congress, that were fighting for the liberation of India from the British. The likes of Orobindo Ghosh, Lukman Tilak, Ghokhole, Ranade were among the very strong advocates of Hindu revivalism at the time. This is also why Ali Jinah the father of Pakistan who himself was a member of the Indian National Congress had to disagree with the other members of the congress, giving rise to the partition of India. Even Mahatina Ghandi who returned from South Africa to join the congress was a strong advocate of the rivalist movement. The contention of most Muslims scholars and thinkers was why were the miserable infidels previously always vanquished by the victorious armies of Islam, now winning the day, and why were the armies of Islam suffering defeat. It was also a reaction to the modernizing instincts of post colonial leaders of the Muslim dominated and predominant Arab countries.

After independence, the modernizing elites of virtually all predominantly Muslim countries undertook radical reforms of family law, notably to empower women. They targeted inter-alia the aspects of Islamic family law relating to polyandry, unilateral repudiation and unequal gender distribution of inheritance. Tunisia for example, went further than other countries in its efforts at legal reform. A host of new law were adopted to promote women's rights including the criminalization of polygamy and unilateral repudiation. (Bernard Lewis P. 277) This however, did not go on without some level of opposition and resistance by Islamic clerics and their radical supporters. But the Arab rulers have prevented secular opposition from operating. This again is made possible by virtue of the fact that those in powers were dictators. In spite of the fact that the dictatorial rulership of the Arab Monarchs and the sit tight one party oligarchies did not give them breathing space, there is also the absence of a reliable transparent institutional framework for political opposition to work within, not only hampers the realization of opposition of all kinds but magnifies the profile and broadens the constituency of rejectionist or disloyal parties. This development instead of pacifying the situation by way of being less draconian in their handling of the affairs of the nation and the entire citizenry, they became more brutal using state resources exclusively for their families and cronies particularly the military. They therefore resort to go underground in their activities.

What this gave rise to was that the radical clerics and their supporters were driven underground and continued their activities of sensitising the people underground in low key manner. To achieve the goal of re-Islamising post-colonial Muslim societies, militant Muslims have adopted diverse strategies, from peaceful proselytization to armed oppositions. Other groups such as the Muslim brothers of Egypt, combined charity work to gain and retain members with military operations in the 1960s. To a very great extent, their perspective was purely religious. Their contention was that they Worship God to receive salvation in the hereafter. (Usuman Kane, P. 161) However, this perspective is not isolated from the political aspect. Their ultimate ambition is to capture political power. To them the post colonial development project which is being driven by corrupt elites has given rise to poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. They emphasized the acquisition of knowledge to the Maliki school of law. Thus no particular doctrinal persuasion is more prone than others to political mobilization. Rather, it is the specific political context of struggle for influence and resources which determine the political agenda of Muslim groups. As such, there is really nothing new in terms of the perspective as well as the reason detern of the old Muslim cleric's thinking and that of the new. To them true Muslims must withdraw from such a society in the same way as the Prophet Muhammad, who left Mecca in 622 to seek refuge in Medina. Furthermore, Muslims must make it a priority to bring down those illegitimate rulers and have them replaced by real Muslims who would establish the rule of God. This thinking which is both old and new spread wildfire into all the nooks and crannies of the Muslim World. (Usuman Kane P.166). On the other hand, another group of youths began to think and also propagated the idea that the developmental failure of and decline of Muslim societies is the adoption of Western civil and commercial codes and institutions and suggested that the dismantling of such codes would be the panacea. For most of them, the Islamic revolution of

Iran became the tangible corroboration that greater self-reliance and Islam could provide an alternative. The view of Usuman tend to support the above analysis when he said that,

“To repute the notion of the newness of Islamism; I have argued that the rhetoric of leaders of West Africa Jihads in the eighteen and nineteenth centuries shows a striking similarity to so-called Islamist movements of the twentieth century, a strong opposition to European hegemony, a denunciation of exploitation and a commitment to festering a political system governed by Islamic laws. The anticolonial dimensions of their actions paralleled very much the opposition to westernization by many contemporary Islamist nineteenth century Islamic militants in West-Africa aimed at replacing the dominant forms of mixed Islam in West Africa with a legal system based on the Sharia. Similarly, contemporary Islamists have their principal aim the dismantling of modern European inspired legal codes and constitutions and replacing them with Sharia law.” (Usuman Kane, P.179)

In pursuit of this goal, while the radical clerics and other Muslim network were busy using their sermons during the Friday Jumat prayers to sensitize their followers, the youths being impatient resorted to violent methods in different parts of the Muslim world. To them anything that symbolize western influence and infiltration into either their society or way of life has to be resisted with if need be violence. These violent activities that started in early 1980s, spread to every part of the world. To achieve this objective, any means available was used. Even past enemies who seem to have similar interest were co-opted into achieving this objective. For example, the collaboration between America, Pakistan, a Pan movement of Jihadists across the Muslim World in support of the Talabans against the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan is a case in point. A movement of this nature needed a symbolic charismatic leader to inspire followers hence Osama Bin Laden made possible by his family back ground and other attractive traits became the rallying point and the symbol of this struggle. However, prior to his ascendance their were other methods used by the radical fundamentalist groups to advance this course. What was in vogue within this period was the hijacking of American Airlines which were forced to land in territories that are friendly and also in support of such activities. Berute the capital of Lebanon where Ishulan has a strong hold or Kampala in Uganda during Idi Amin’s regime are favourable spots to land hijacked planes of Americans or Israel or airlines in which Americans or Israeli’s constitutes a significant percentage of the passengers. Apart from the clan distant support they receive from Muslims all over world tacitly and overtly, some Muslim leaders or Heads of governments that are notorious in their acts of State terrorism often gives support and are major source of inspiration to members of such groups. Notable among such Presidents are Gaddafi of Libya and Saddam Horsein of Iraq. Infact, Ghaddifi’s involvement in the Luckabie plane crash is a case in point.

The Post Cold War Era, and the aftermath of the 9/11 episode in the US

Developments within the post cold war era with the demise of the Soviet Union tend to create a fluid atmosphere. Of particular importance was the ascendance of America as the

only super power. This made her to attain the status of pre-eminence in World affairs. It may well seem that, the cold war era tend to drive most issues underground essentially due to the competition for influence between the two super powers. However, the emergence of America in the centre stage of World affairs came along with it the emergence of different Arab groups and nations to resist this ascendance. In Iran the replacement of a moderate President Rafthasajani to Ahmadenjada radical Islamist fundamentalist who had a tremendous amount of influence in the radical Muslim youths in the entire Muslim World. The gaining of political power and the ascendance to a pre-eminence position by Hamas in Palestine a radical Islamist sect and growing influence of Hisbulah in Lebanese politics are clear indications of the capture of political power by radical Islamic groups following the model of Irain. This era witnessed different forms of radical militant Islamist violence in different parts of the world carrying out suicide bombing activities. Prior to this time, it was hijacking but now it is suicide bombing starting with the members of Hamas over Israeli target areas. This was followed by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait which was condemned by the international community. A follow up to that was UN sponsored operation desert shield and storm which drove away Saddam from Kuwait. The operation of the UN was more of the Biblical story of "Esau and Jacob. While the hands were like the UN the voice and smell was that of the US. What this implies is that, though it was sponsored in actual sense by the UN it was the US that was carrying out the real operations. This operation not only gave America the opportunity to be based in Kuwait but also in Saudi Arabia the Muslim Holy land at the invitation of the King of Saudi Arabia.

This again flared up anger against the US in the entire Arab World. This was followed by a spate of sporadic suicide bombings in different parts of the Middle East. A very glaring case was the bombing of the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that were linked to the militant Muslim Sect the Al Qaeda under the leadership of Osama bin laden. The US under the presidency of Bill Clinton resorted to reprisals by bombing the Talaban and Al Qaeda strong holds in Afghanistan and a suspected chemical weapons factory in Khartoum Sudan. Thus began a declaration of a Jihad by Al Qaeda on America and her interests both at home and abroad. This is shown through an interview granted to Aljazera by Osa bin Ladin. At this point in time, the United States is seen as the intrusive, out side power. Close identification of the ruling families with the United States means that the unpopularity of a regime can easily be translated into anti-American or anti-western feeling. A reaction has developed against what is seen as excessive westernization and the Islamic resurgence, which is in part an exercise in cultural self-assertion, reinforces anti-western tendency. Besides, the US support for Israel makes military co-operation with America difficult for Gulf regimes. (Bakhash, Shaub, P. 135). This gave rise to a resurgence of Arab nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic radicalism liberalism, socialism. The Islamic Republic in Iran, with its emphasis on revolutionary military Islamic law, economic justice and intransigence toward the United States is seen by radical Arab youths as a model of revolutionary Middle East regimes that challenge the legitimacy of traditional Persian Gulf rulers. (Bakharh Shaub, P. 137) Iran therefore resorted to a deliberate exportation of her brand of Islamic ideology to every nook and crannies of the Islamic world through the agency of the annual hajj

pilgrimage to the Holy Places in Saudi Arabia. This is in addition to the annual conference in Tehran of Friday prayer leaders from various Islamic states. The excessive radical and militant Islamic ideology spread like wildfire into different parts of world and was imbibed by Muslim youths regardless of country of origin. It cuts across race, colour or creed, in its activities in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. The height of it however was the hijacking of the American Airlines and the crashing into the twin towers of WTO and the Pentagon building in September 11 2001. While this tend to cow the Americans with disbelief, it sent shock waves across the world. At the same time making radical Muslims all over the world in a celebration mood. American reaction under the presidency of George W. Bush Jr. Was the deceleration of operation Desert in Fox collaboration with NATO. Thus began the unilateral NATO invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan at the instance of the US. Though Saddam was smoked out of the hole like a rabbit and the Talabans dislodged from Afghanistan, there was no end on sight to the crisis. The spate of sporadic clandestine sectarian violence of suicide bombing became the order of day in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and other parts of the world particularly Malaysia in South East Asia. However, the fluid post cold war atmosphere made possible by globalization and I.T revolution created yet another dimension to the crisis. It gave rise to the spreading of the militant ideology through the internet into clandestine networks. The exchange of views and happenings across the world through the net and face book it could be said tend to create awareness resulting to diffusion of knowledge over so many events occurring in the world at the time. What really triggered and ignited the situation was the martyrdom of the Tunisian youth who set himself on fire due to lack of employment. The crisis that followed his death in Tunisia which was shown live by CNN, Aljazera, BBC and other internet sources and face book exchanges became the breaking of the Pandora box that gave rise to the spring spreading first to Egypt, to Libya, Yeman and later Cyria.

One of the most significant consequences of the so-called Arab Spring is the forceful emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood as an influential political force and social movement in the Middle East. This rise of the Muslim brotherhood is noticeable through out North Africa and the Middle East. In affect, it is today a very influential social and political movement that is represented in parliament in countries as far a field as Mauritania where the party Tawassoul is one of the major opposition parties. After the fall of the dictatorship of Mubarak, the Muslim Brotherhood uprising turned out to be the most politically and socially organized political force. The triumph of the Islamist party Ennahda in the first free and democratic elections of Tunisia constituent Assembly, in addition to the victory of the Justice and Development Party (PJD) in Morocco and in Egypt is a testimony of its startling emergence. Moreover, the victory of the Libyan rebels, who had close connection at the grass roots as well as the leadership level with the local chapter of the MB, constitutes another indication of what may be a prelude to a new political dimension in the whole Middle East and North Africa. (Muhamed EL Moktar 16/12/2011). It is true that the Islamist ascendance through the ballot box is the most visible outcome of the Arab spring. There is however, more to it than what meets the eye of particular importance is their strong opposition to secular others in favour of fundamentalist Muslim ethos that would not be in

the interest of non Muslims and other secular minded Muslim. For instance, their opposition to the right of women to participate, vote and contest even minimalist elections revealed their conservative ideological orientation. The international community is often preoccupied with the foreign policy implications of an Islamist victory. Attitude towards the West, peace agreements with Israel and contributions to peace in the region dominated its interests and assessment. However, the real impact would be felt internally especially with regards to the socio-political arena and rights of women and minorities. The Islamist victory has few examples. (P.R. Kumaraswamy, P.2). The argument that power has an inherent moderating ability was not indicated in Iran. The Islamic Republic continue to be a in a revolutionary mood and limited moderation introduced by president Mohammed Khatami during 1998-2004 was quickly reversed by his successor Mahmud Ahmad Injad. The same goes to Hamas ruled Gasa strip. The victory of the Islamist military group in 2006 elections not only radicalized the Palestinian society but also contributed to deep internal divisions and schism among Palestinians. The same holds for Lebanon and the electoral victory of Hezbollah has only intensified internal-divisions. Above all, in the early 1990s, open election saw the victory of the FIS in Algeria, plunging the country into a prolonged civil war. (P.R. Kumaraswamy, Pages 1-2). As such, the argument being advanced in some quarters that the justice and Development Party in Turkey could be a model for the Arab Islamists may be missing the point. This can be seen from two angles. We need to take into consideration the fact that the moderation of Akp is relative. While its successes in limiting the power of the military are welcome, its policy concerning the role of religion is not without its share of problems. Besides, we cannot overlook the influence of the modernizing instinct of Kamal Atatuke. As such the problem of the Arab World is not the absence of elections but the nonexistence of pillars of democracy such as vibrant parliament, political parties, autonomous judiciary and proactive civil society. (P.R. Kumaraswamy, P. 2) It is against the background of the above scenario that one have to appreciate the ascendance of such a Muslim Brotherhood and contemporary challenges in Nigeria being made visible by a Muslim Sect the Boko Haram.

Contemporary Challenges in Nigeria

Jihadist activities in Northern Nigeria predates the Boko Haram insurgence. Such activities can be traced to the pre independence era of Honoman da fodio the Fulani Jihadist who invaded and conquered the entire. Housa communities and introduced Islam. This Jihadist spirit has always been there in Northern Nigeria after independence. This is shown in most cases through the statements of some radical Muslim scholars and cleric from time to time. For instance, there is a popular statement that is credited to some Muslim radicals when provoked by one event or the other often say either they would declare a Fatua on the south or they would Islamise the entire Nigerian nation. Though such statements are often waved aside by Christians in the South, which they consider as mere statements or rhetorics. But there are instances that such acts of infiltration had been tried usually, with influence from some of the neighbouring countries such as Niger and Chad. A case in point is the matesene invasion, a Jihadist movement led by a Muslim cleric from Niger aimed at Islamizing the entire country. Ordinarily, Northern Nigeria is not a place where Islamism is predominantly Salafi. Such fundamentalist instincts are usually infiltrations from outside the shoes of the

country, mainly from neighbouring border countries such as Niger and Chad. This is predicated on the fact that, after independence in 1960 Nigerian Muslims adopted a largely secular criminal code. They also accepted the idea of a federation in which no religion would be a state religion. However, from time to time particularly in the 1980s, a tiny minority of Muslim students spoke out against the secular State and advocated that Nigeria should become an Islamic state. (Usuman, Kane, P. 175). As stated earlier, there is no such orientation or background from within the country going by the nation's colonial background and the system that was put in place after independence. It is understandable that as Muslims most of them often go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land from time to time and mixed with Muslim from other parts of the World. As such one could say such activities are the outcome of such influence from outside. Even leaders of some Arab nations particularly North Africa often make statements that agitates the minds of Northern Muslims to think or toe such lines. A case in point is late Col. Ghaddafi's statement that Nigeria should be divided into North and South on religions ground. While such statements may have been treated with levity, they often make fundamentalist radical Muslims to think in such lines. For instance in 1999, the Governor of the tiny Zamfara state reenacted Islamic criminal Law. (Usuman Kane P. 175) Even such an action by a serving Governor was treated with a wave of hand by Nigerians generally and even the President of the country. President Olusengun Obasanjo attributed Yerima and his sharia law as political sharia that would fizzle away with time. Though it did fizzled away, eventually, but it was still in the minds of those who were behind its introduction, biding their time until when it may be considered appropriate to reintroduce it.

Overtime, constant warnings by foreign security agencies such as the American CIA and FBI that there are terrorists infiltrations into Northern Nigeria was often treated with levity by the governments and the security agencies. However, the involvement of a Nigerian Youth in an attempt to detonate an explosive device in a Pan Am flight became an eye opener to the world generally and Nigerians in particular that all the security reports emanating from foreign security agencies are true. Abdul Mantalab a Youngman from a wealthy Northern influential Muslims family's attempt in bombing the PAN Ara Ailine sent shock wavers and disbelieve to most Nigerians. Apparently, the Youngman while studying in London had the opportunity to mixe with other radical fundamentalist Muslim students and was indoctrinated with a fundamentalists instinct. He even traveled to Yemen where he had to undergo Al Qaeda training. The irony of it all is that, even with such a revelation coming out through Mutalab's involvement, Nigerians still behave as if all is well. At a point, the US came to the conclusion that she has to do something to protect her investments in Nigeria and the entire Gulf of Guinea hence her establishment of the African command in the Gulf of Guinea. However, the straw that breaks the camels back and convinced the doubting Thomases as to the level of terrorist infiltration into northern Nigeria was the spate of bomb attacks in the Northern State of Bornu which was attributed to a fundamentalist Muslim Sect with affiliation to Al Qauda called Boko Haram. Book Haram in Hausa language means Western Education is bad. However with its activities and what it stands for there is no doubt that they are working in tandem with other Muslim fundamentalist groups all over the World and the

Middle East in particular. In fact there was a time that security agents in Nigeria intercepted an Iranian shipment of different types of assort raffles. As it is often the case in Nigeria, that case fizzled out without any body hearing any thing about it. As the spate of bombings of Christian Churches and Government establishment particularly security outfits continue unabated, the inept Nigerian security agencies seems to be helpless. The bombing of the UN headquarters in Abuja sent shock wavers across the World as the level of terrorists activities being perpetrated by the Boko Haram sect. This attack seem to confirm an earlier warning given by the a British security Chief cited in This Day Newspaper that, a London based newspaper The Mirror reported that Prime Minister David Cameron had been alerted by the spy Chiefs on the determination by the terrorist group to make Nigeria a base for plotting terror attacks on the West. The report aligned the attention of Al-Qaeda, with the attacks by Boko Haram whom they described as dramatically stepping up their campaign". (This Day, July 4 2011) This is corroborated by Reuters report that, an Al-Qaeda group in North Africa had offered to give Nigerian Muslims training and weapons to fight Christians. We are ready to train our people in weapons and give you whatever support we can in men, arms and munitions to enable you to defend our people in Nigeria". For all practical purposes it must be recognized that religion extremism and/or terrorism has become a mark in many cities in northern Nigeria. It has become obvious by the frequency and systematic occurrence of these events that they are planned to intimidate or cause terror in pursuit of religious, political and other goals. This is certainly the perception of victims of these crimes and majority of Nigerians who sometime are passers byes or friends and relatives of victims of such crimes. (Nigerian Tribune, Thisday 4 Feb. 2010)

The generality of Nigerians out of either confusion or disbelief of the events unfolding due to the atrocities being perpetrated by the Boko Haram keep asking how did all these events started and what has caused it?. People were actually bewildered as to how it all started. Though there were spates of violent protests in some parts of northern Nigeria during the April 2011 elections, nobody knew that they would escalate to the magnitude of a full blown terrorist activities on innocent Nigerians. It need to be pointed out that, political players and institutions embrace the principles of true democracy and allow open, free and fair competition, which are essential in the process of aggregation of national opinions and development choice. In a normal liberal democratic atmosphere what should be of utmost concern to the players is to play the game by the rules. (The Nation, Friday, Jan. 7. 2011) In an issue and value based politics the idea of winner takes it all that often agitates the mind of the loser does not arise. This is what we see in the advanced democracies. In fact, the struggle and acquisition of political power is seen as a way of bettering the lives of the people in a party's own perspective as different from that of the other. As such, one of the challenges facing the Nigerian democratic process is how to make this happen, so that the idea of winner takes it all will be a thing of the past. Looking at issues in this perspective makes one to wonder as to the vituperations that are coming from some quarters, which obviously seem to be completely off the mark. This can be seen within the context of how some powerful northern elites are making up stories with a view to confuse and the deceive the World particularly United States of America as to what Boko Haram is or is not. The

United States had long standing relationship with key military and intelligence leaders from the northern part of the country, who had reportedly submitted briefings to Washington on the security situation. While most of these northern security Chiefs are against violence and actions of the sect, they had reportedly, nonetheless, identified national injustices, poverty and southern near monopoly of national revenue as the fuel for the insurgency and widening violence across the north. Aside the above, such intelligence chiefs, most of whom are retired now, are said to have also convinced the Americans that the reported link between Nigerian Islamist and foreign Jihadist groups is exaggerated as the nation had in the past witnessed similar Islamic uprising with solution handled with diplomacy and developments. The alleged briefings from these old friends of America was married with the arguments of northern political leaders, who cited subsisting inequality in national developmental focus as well as political frustration among northerners, following the 2011 elections. (The Nigerian Tribune 19, April 2012, P. 42). The blame for the economic rationalization is however not being appropriately apportioned. The existing narration tends to blame federal neglect of the north as behind its backwardness. No attempt is made to trace who controlled that federal machinery since independence and how the north came to find itself in the subsisting status quo. The known facts of history of northern control of federal machine for close to two thirds of the nation's independence existence was swept under the carpet and the gross culpability of northern leaders for the parlous state of affairs was overlooked. Worse still, while the past was forgotten, no thought is given to the continuous responsibility for ongoing unseriousness about developmental focus. As recently noted, present conduct of some elected officials in the North is worsening rather than alleviating the terrible economic state of the North. Reports from the north indicated that the violence in the area is exacerbated by the stoppage of a long-time practice of funds sharing of local government funds at secretariats on monthly basis.

This practice was said to involve sharing among elected officials and local leaders who in tune move to the villages to reach other lower strata. (The Nigerian Tribune 19, April 2012, P. 42). In a situation of this nature wherein lies the essence of comparing Boko Haram Sect with militant activities in the Niger Delta as being advocated by some sympathizers of the sect. Even the argument that government should have dialogue with the sect does not hold water. There can be no correlation between the two. The Niger Delta militants were fighting against a long period of neglect of an area that has been the main source of the nation's economic sustenance. The Boko Haram who are of the view that western education is bad used that as a bases of letting mayhem on innocent hapless citizens of the country. Besides, this people are faceless and not identifiable. Even if the government decided to dialogue, who is to represent them is a problem. It would therefore not be out of place for one to say that the Boko Haram sect and its heinous crimes against the people and nation was more of a dangerous diversion of real issues that impinges on the national project. An issue within the period that really posed a threat to the survival of the nation is the fuel subsidy crises. In as much as one could not say that the government may have good intentions in the actions but the way and manner it was introduced tend to trigger a wide spread opposition from the organized labour human, right activists and the generality of the people. This is the issue that

one could say the influence of the Arab spring seem to have a lot of influence on and not that of the Boko Haram which was an after thought. That the unified position of the people against government neglect and injustices as shown by the Arab Spring was a big sources of inspiration for the fuel subsidy up rising within the period. The government's action was vehemently condemned and rejected by members of civil society including non-governmental organizations, trade unions, and political parties in opposition to the ruling party at the centre. Protests rallies and demonstrations were organized in various cities and towns all over the country. The demand was uniform – a reversal of the pump price of petrol to N65 per litre from the high jum price of N141 officially announced. (Ogunsawo Alaba, P.5). The popular mobilization against the subsidy removal was organized by civil society and movements. Within a few days however, the central labour congress and trade unions congress – had taken the central stage announcing an all out indefinite national strike which would commence on January, 9 2012 and continue indefinitely until the Federal Government reverted the pump price to N65 per litre. By far the most frightening of the three levels or categories of action against the government of President Goodluck Jonathan, was the second categories – civil society organizations mobilizing tens of thousand in urban areas for rallies and protests. Through an effective networking of several groups across the country, the popular anger against the government was clearly demonstrated in the presence of international media which carried live interviews with all and sundry. (Ogunsaw Alaba, P.5)

This is an aspect one could say that tend to strike a code with the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa. A popular disenchantment and demonstrations against the Nigerian government on removal of fuel subsidy with the subsequent revelation of the rot that has engulfed the entire fabric of the Nigerian state structures at all levels, have unfortunately ended what ever legitimacy the Nigerian project might be said to have had in the past. Even though some sympathizers of Boko Haram seem to argue that their violent activities were due to a perceived neglect and poverty it is doubtful going by the meaning of their name, what they stand For and their atrocities. As such it could be said that such statements are more after thoughts geared towards deceiving members of the international community. In actual sense, the Boko Haram Sects major preoccupation is to Islamize the entire northern region and make its states to be governed in accordance with Islamic laws and injunction which is very much in line with the fundamentalist struggle in the Middle East and North Africa. This is an aspect that tallies remarkable with the Muslim brotherhood across the Muslim world. As events unfolding in the countries being ruled by members of the brotherhood indicates, the secular ethos of the nation would give way for the introduction of a theocratic Muslim state. This is the more reason why President Morsi of Egypt is being criticized by the minorities and secular minded Muslim in Egypt. This is the more reason why Nigerians are highly skeptical of the intensions of the Boko Haram. Thus making most Nigerians to ask as to whether by acts of commission or omission we are not already, lenning like inexorably moving towards the brink of the precipiece in a dogged determination to prove our detractors right that the entity called Nigeria may implode from within or self destruction before 2015 a prediction that our political class had condemned a years ago when it came out of the United States. (Ogunsawo Alaba, P.10) Be that as it may, the truth

of the matter is that Government has a lot to do to assuage the apprehensions of the people by providing their basic needs. Corruption has to be tackled head on. Again the attitude and opulent life style being displayed by occupant of political offices helps to infuriate the people thereby using the slightest opportunity to vent their anger as shown in the fuel subsidy crisis that engulfed the entire nation. What is vividly shown as the influence of the Arab Spring on contemporary challenges in Nigeria is that people have come to realize that a popular uprising on the part of the people against an injustice by Government perceived to be common to the generality of the people can be resisted at all cost. This is a development that has a lot of influence from the Arab spring considering the strong will of the people through their level of resistance. This was vividly shown during the fuel subsidy uprising indicating an inspiration from the Arab Spring. On the other hand, the challenge emanating from the Boko Haram which was equally inspired by Muslim fundamentalist in the Middle East, North Africa and other parts of the Muslim World is antithetical to the secular ethos of the country, and should be resisted and fought by all Nigerians in support of the Government. It is therefore, interesting to note that, majority of Nigerians are unified on protecting the secular ethos as well as the one indivisible entity of Nigeria. That is what the government should continue to encourage and foster among the people. In other words it should be a conscious government effort towards the achievement of that goal. Government should not leave any stone unturned towards the achievement of that goal. Both media, and institutions responsible for the dissemination of information such as NOA, NTA etc should be mobilized for the achievement of this objective. Slogans such as to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done used by the Gowon regime during the civil war helped to unite the people doing the civil war hence the saying that there was no victor no vanquish.

CONCLUSION

We found out in the course of this paper that the Arab Spring and the ascendance of Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East was due to a reaction to the modernizing instinct of post colonial leaders of the Muslim dominated Arab countries. After independence, the modernizing elites of virtually all predominantly Muslim countries undertook radical reforms of family law, notably to empower women. They targeted inter-alia the aspects of Islamic family law relating to polyandry unilateral repudiation and unequal gender distribution of inheritance. A host of new laws were adopted to promote women's rights including the criminalization of polygamy and unilateral repudiation. This however, did not go on without some level of opposition from operating. This again is made possible by virtue of the fact that those in power were dictators. They became more brutal using state resources exclusively for their families and cronies-particularly the military. The people therefore resorted to go underground in their activities. To achieve the goal of re-Islamizing post-colonial Muslim societies, they adopted diverse strategies, from peaceful proselyzation to aimed oppositions. Their ultimate ambition is to capture political power. A movement of this nature needed a symbolic charismatic leader to inspire followers, hence Osama Bin Laden made possible by his family background and other attractive traits became the rallying point and the symbol of this struggle. It is true that the Islamists ascendance through the ballot box is the most visible outcome of the Arab spring. There is however, more to it than what meets the

eye. Of particular importance is their strong opposition to secular ethos in favour of fundamentalist Muslim ethos that would not be in the interest of non-Muslims and other secular minded Muslims. Therefore, the argument that power has an inherent moderating ability was not indicated in Iran. The same goes to Hamas ruled Gasa strip and for Lebanon and the electoral victory of Hezbollah. It is against the background of the above scererior that one have to appreciate the ascendance of Muslim Brotherhood and contemporary challenges in Nigeria being made visible by a Muslim sect the Boko Haram. The Jihadist spirit has always been there in Northern Nigeria before and after independence. However, Northern Nigeria is not a place where Islamism is predominantly Salafi. After independence in 1960 Nigerian Muslim adapted a largely secular criminal code. They also accepted the idea of a federation in which no religion would be a state religion. For all practical purposes, it must be recognized that religious extremism and/or terrorism has become a mark in many cities in northern Nigeria. It has become obviously by the frequency and systematic occurrence of these events that they are planned to intimidate or cause terror in pursuit of religious, political and other goals. It would therefore not be out of place for one to say that the Boko Haram sect and its heinous crimes against the people and nation was more of a dangerous diversion of real issues that impinges on the national project.

It is the fuel subsidy issue that one could say tend to strike a code with the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa. A popular disenchantment and demonstrations against the Nigerian government on removal of fuel subsidy with the subsequent revelation of the rot that has engulfed the entire fabric of the Nigerian state structures at all levels, have unfortunately ended whatever legitimacy the Nigerian project might be said to have had in the past. Even though some sympathizers of Boko Haram seem to argue that their violent activities were due to a perceived neglect and poverty, it is doubtful going by the meaning of their name, what they stand for and their atrocities. As such it could be said that such statements are more of after thoughts geared towards deceiving members of the international community. In actual sense, the Boko Haram sect's major preoccupation is to Islamize the entire northern region and make its states to be governed in accordance with Islamic laws and injunction which is very much in live with the fundamentalist struggle in the Middle East and North Africa. This is an aspect that tallies remarkably with the Muslim brotherhood across the Muslim World. As events unfolding in the countries being ruled by members of the brotherhood indicates, the secular ethos of the nation would give way for the introduction of theocratic Muslim States. This is the more reason why President Most of Egypt is being criticized by the minorities and secular minded Muslims in Egypt. The truth of the matter is that Government has a lot to do to assuage the apprehensions of the people by providing their basic needs. Corruption has to be tackled head on. What is vividly shown as the influence of the Arab Spring on contemporary challenges in Nigeria is that people have come to realize that a popular uprising on the part of the people against an injustice by Government perceived to the common to the generality of the people can be resisted at all cost. This is a development that has a lot of influence from the Arab Spring considering the strong will of the people through their level of resistance. On the other hand, the challenge emanating from the Boko Haram sect which was equally inspired by Muslim fundamentalist in

the Middle East, North Africa and other parts of the Muslim world is antithetical to the secular ethos of the country, and should be resisted and fought by all Nigerians in support of the Government. It is therefore interesting to note that, majority of Nigerians are unified on protecting the secular ethos as well as the one indivisible entity of Nigeria.

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