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Revisiting the Formation and Radicalisation of Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) through Social Movement Theory

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Abstract

This paper uses social movement theory to examine the rise and development of Boko Haram and AQIM into radical groups. Boko Haram and AQIM were initially established as moderate and conservative Islamist groups in Nigeria and Algeria respectively. AQIM was originally a political party – the FIS but changed names to the GIA, the GSPC, and AQIM each with a different modus operandi. Boko Haram was a local organization that has been espousing an anti-system frame alongside violent tactics since 2009. Relying on secondary data, this paper found that the emergence and eventual transformation of Boko Haram and AQIM into radical movements signify the existence of social movement factors of political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing processes in Nigeria and Algeria. Results from content analysis of the data show that while the two movements emerged in two distinct socio-economic and political environments, they were rational actors who continued to utilize the available political structures opportunity, mobilizing structures and framing processes to mobilize and sustain collective actions. It is evident that government repression only made the two groups change tactics and strategies when what they regarded as free spaces diminished at times they gathered material and non-material resources. That

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coincided with the radical views of some of the groups' members, the presence of mobilizing structures, and a frame resonance that ensured recruitment into the two movements.

Keywords: Social movement theory factors, Boko Haram, AQIM, Nigeria, Algeria

Introduction

Collective actions that raise the banner of "Islam" to challenge the status quo or the West have become omnipresent in many societies. In Western societies, however, movements under liberal democracy are also prevalent. Collective actions are all over places and are basic components of contemporary societies (Giugni et al., 1999, p. xv). One can hardly read a newspaper, log in to a social media account, or turn on a radio or TV station without encountering news on acts of organized movement somewhere in the world.

In both religious and secular collective actions, factors accounting for why people resort to both violent and non-violent activisms vary from one country to another. Some factors are however similar across countries. Although various Islamist groups may have different motives, methods, goals, and strategies, they all believe in one core assumption about factors responsible for the problems facing Muslims that require collective actions. They also have an assumption that the problems facing Muslims can be resolved through a return to "pure Islam' which is defined according to different convictions and schools of thought. Thus, they are united on the conviction that "*Al-Islam huwa al-hall* – Islam is the solution" (Wickham, 2002, pp. 1-2).

In a quest to solve the perceived and/or actual problems, some Islamists organize collective actions to change the status quo and create what they believe is an ideal 'Islamic' society. Some Islamists prefer to change their society through formal political participation. They formed political parties, which did not necessarily include their will to establish Islamic societies in the manifestos. Others may restrict their activism to preaching and proselytization. More often than not, the latter complements the former's political activism. And more importantly, both can espouse violent tactics.

Although some Islamist movements may espouse violence at the embryonic stage, it is often when changes in political structures occur that some of them become radicals and militants. Radical/militant Islamists openly indict government policies in their countries, some attack government agencies, the West directly, or whatever they label Western "proxies". This may be an attempt by some Islamist groups to resist and to balance against the West. Accordingly, international institutions, media outlets, the marketplace,

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and secular modernization projects are all framed and targeted as vehicles for the strategic infusion of alien value systems created to undermine the strength of Islam. They think that their targets whether near or far enemies have been conspiring and fraternizing with the West to undermine, weaken, and eventually dominate the Muslims. Jean Rosenfeld (2011) thus argued that targets and victims of militant groups are often associated with modern states. Today, both peaceful and violent Islamist movements exist and the use of violence by Islamist groups has been receiving more attention, especially after 9/11, (Perry & Negrin, 2008). Scholars, pundits, policymakers, and the general public have been struggling to fathom the rationale and motivation for the use of violence by some Islamists. These have led to different interpretations since many believe that such occurrences tend to affirm the worst stereotype about Islamic contention and Islam in general.

Interestingly, a cross-national study in West and North Africa shows that there is a tendency for Islamists to change their strategy especially when political structures that allowed their emergence changed. This paper argues that Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) emergence and transformation were influenced by social movement factors of political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing process.

Method and Materials

The research method used in this paper is qualitative research based on data initially collected for the Master's Thesis (Danguguwa, 2014). Thus, the data used for this paper are the results of the content analysis used in the thesis. The thesis gathered and analyzed available literature on the formation and eventual radicalization of Boko Haram and AQIM which resulted in a novel comparative analysis of the two movements. The analysis was based on the data obtained from the secondary sources to describe, explain, and analyze whether the tripartite social movement factors of political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing process have influenced the formation and eventual radicalization of Boko Haram and AQIM in Nigeria and Algeria, respectively. Although the choice of secondary data might have some limitations such as lack of first-hand information, members of Boko Haram and AQIM could not be reached to gather first-hand information about their formation and eventual radicalization as both movements became radicals and clandestine. In this situation, qualitative analysis of secondary data would be the best method to explain the phenomenon. The results of the thesis and this paper are limited to how the tripartite social movement factors influenced the formation and radicalization of Boko Haram and AQIM. These factors might however not necessarily be seen by members and leaders of the two movements as the reasons for their activisms. Thus, the major limitation

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of this paper is relying on secondary data which cannot explain the opinions of the radical members in the two movements.

Islamist Groups and Organized Violence: A Social Movement Theory Approach

Islamist groups are often labeled as mainly terrorists, extremists, and/or Islamic fundamentalists who emerge under the banner of Islam to challenge modernization and the West. These are sources written by "Self-proclaimed experts on Islamic terrorism" (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 20) that rely on misleading sources to address specific audiences. They draw causal relations between Islam and terrorism. The militant Islamists are viewed as "irrational" actors who engaged in a holy war with the ultimate aim of the destruction of Western civilization, the reestablishment of Muslim power, and the imposing of religious law, wherever Muslims hold sway. Perry and Negrin (2008), argued that some Islamists engage in selective reading of Islamic texts to justify their actions of "Islamofascism" (pp. 2-4).

Similarly, others relate the emergence of radical Islamists with either economic grievances or religious extremism. This is true with many studies that assume a causal linkage between grievances or frustration to collective actions (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Wiktorowicz, 2004; Baylouny, 2004; Dede, 2008; Adenrele, 2012). The proponents of these socio-psychological understandings emphasize what the Islamists themselves often present as the cause of their collective actions – alleviating psychological, economic, and political discomforts occasioned by structures. The advocates of the above maxims trivialize and/or ignore the fact that grievances and what causes them are themselves subject to interpretation. Those interpretations explain why grievances are ubiquitous and movements are rare. This means although "there is always enough discontent in any society to supply the grass-roots support for movements" (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1215) and the populations that have these grievances are very large, a very small number of them organize collective action.

Gurr (1970) and Borum (2003), have an assumption that the gap between an individual's expected and achieved welfare results in collective discontent which eventually leads to collective actions. More generally, explanations based on the socio-psychological model underestimate the role of human agency. Contextual factors matter. They may create grievances and opportunities for violence; but the grievances and opportunities in question may not lead to violence in the absence of political entrepreneurs, ideologues, and/or organizations that can frame and channel the relevant grievances in a particular direction.

Social movement theorists and scholars underscore the roles of three sets of factors in analyzing the emergence, development, and even decline of

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social movements/collective actions. These triads of factors are referred to as, in conventional shorthand, political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing processes. The structure of political opportunities and constraints confronting the movement; the availability of organizational structure (both formal and informal) through which people mobilize collective actions; and collective processes of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and actions are inseparable for activism because the presence of only two might not account for a viable collective action" (MacAdam et al., 1996). Though dominated by the study of movements in America and Europe (MacAdam et al., 1996; Wiktorowicz, 2004), studying non-Western movements from social movement perspectives has been growing in social sciences. Today, social movement theory is extended to include non-Western movements such as Islamists and the theory has been yielding fruitful results in providing unified frameworks for studying Islamist groups.

Political Opportunity Structures

This factor suggests that mobilization can take place under favorable political conditions and it focuses on the relationship between social movement, political institutions, and movement mobilization. MacAdam et.al (1996), argued that the movement's actors have at the onset of their collective actions some grievances and optimism that they can sooner or later address the problem collectively.

In social movement theory, Islamists (irrespective of their types, goals, and tactics), act rationally by engaging in cost/benefit analysis to bypass and escape obstacles to mobilization occasioned by structure. Various studies (Hafez, 2004; Hafez & Wiktorowicz, 2004; Lawson, 2004; Robinson, 2004) concurred that even radical Islamists respond rationally and strategically to opportunities they find in the political structures. Thus, Islamist groups, Beck (2008) argued, are not accidental or unplanned. They operate in an environment with a political structure that empowers and often limits collective actions.

Vital variables in political opportunity structures vis-à-vis Islamist actions are the nature of state repression; the state institutional capacity; the level of formal and informal access to political institutions; and the level of state receptivity to movements (MacAdam et al., 1996; Wiktorowicz, 2004; Olesen, 2001; Munson, 2009). All these factors will affect Islamist collective actions in particular and social movements in general. Thus, the processes some Islamists follow to embrace violence are not only peculiar to Islamic actors. The dynamics of other movements are relevant for understanding their actions. It is maintained that radical militancy can be one of the outcomes of contention (Della Porta, 1995). For instance, while state repression – which

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signifies the closeness of the system – can suppress mobilization, it can also make militancy more likely. A study of leftwing radicals in Germany and Italy inferred that state repressions suppress moderate alternatives, radicalize remaining supporters, and increase radical actions (Della Porta, 1995, pp. 139, 143).

Violent collective actions in general, depend on the external environment in which the group operates rather than exclusively internal dimension. For instance, in an insecure environment without an effective central authority, militants can seek a given place, attract recruits, get resources, and carry out attacks. Al-Qaeda fighters in Iraq and other militant organizations emerged not just from grievances or the mobilization of resources but because the American invasion demolished centralized authority, creating the opportunity for new mobilization and a threat to established power arrangements (Beck, 2008). It is therefore likely that political violence can be dependent on specific event-based opportunities.

Mobilizing Structures

The mobilizing structures perspectives in social movement theory have also dismissed the causal importance of grievances in explaining the emergence of political contention. For a successful movement, there is a need for intermediary variables that "translate individualized discontent into organized contention" (Wiktorowic, 2004, p. 10). McCarthy and Zald (1977), submitted that grievances alone are not enough to explain contention as most individuals at most times and in most places have complaints. Grievances are thus necessary but insufficient to explain why some events become organized into sustained contentions and movements and others do not. For sustained collective action, movements depend on material resources and a base of supporters. Therefore, major factors for collective action are the resources available for mobilization and the methods by which they are organized (Beck, 2008). There is a need for resources for the establishment of an organizational capacity that can rally supporters, seek material contributions, and formalize collective action into a movement. These processes make us see actors not as irrational outbursts intended to alleviate psychological distress, but rather as organized contention structured through mechanisms of mobilization that provide strategic resources for sustained collective action. These types of mobilization take place whenever movement is formal.

In the case of formal Islamist groups that are akin to social movement organizations, formal mobilizing structures are used (Wiktorowicz, 2004). Legal Islamists frequently make use of existing mosques, and missionary and study centers to mobilize followers. Political parties and Islamic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) like clinics, hospitals, schools charity societies, and cultural centers offer some basic incentives in the form of goods

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and services. They, therefore, exploit their donations to promote Islamic messages without confrontations.

Mobilizing structures also known as 'recruitment magnets' for radical religious activists, on the other hand, include prisons and religious institutions such as churches and mosques. These are informal mobilizing structures that are commonly used by radical activists. In the case of Islamists, they often concentrate their mobilizing activities in mosques, preaching, and study circles, which serve as an alternative to other formal mobilizing structures (Wiktorowicz, 2004; Rogers & Neumann, 2007). Interestingly, mobilizing recruits through religious institutions is not only peculiar to Islamists or radical Islamists in particular. MacAdam's study of Afro-American Civil Rights Movements examines how activists in the movements were often recruited through black churches (McAdam, 1999).

Scholars of social movements have it that networks of friends, family, and colleagues assist mobilizations in high-risk activism (Della Porta, 1995; McAdam, 1999; Rogers & Neumann, 2007; Wiktorowicz, 2004; Olesen, 2009). As the name indicates, high-risk activism may result in risking freedom, health, and life. Della Porta (1995) found similar trends in non-Islamic high-risk activism in Germany and Italy. In his study of terrorist recruitment and radicalization in Saudi Arabia, Hegghammer (2006) made a similar inference. While many Jihadists in Saudi Arabia were motivated by religious duty, "some referred to the fact that they had sworn an oath [of allegiance] together with their friends...to liberate the Arabian Peninsula" (Hegghammer, 2006, p. 52). They opted to keep the promise they made to their friends by participating in radical activism.

Framing Processes

In social movement theory, the term framing is used to describe the process of meaning construction that resonates with potential participants and the general public (Benford & Snow, 2000; Wiktorowicz, 2004). Thus, analyzing how individual participants ideate themselves as a collectivity; how potential participants and bystander publics are convinced to partake in movements; and how meaning is produced, articulated, and disseminated by movement actors through interactive processes is done through the study of the framing process. Strategic calculations by social movement actors to link their interests and interpretive frames with those of prospective constituents and actual or prospective resource providers are conceptualized as "frame alignment processes" (Snow et al., 1986, p. 464; Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 624).

Snow and Byrd (2007) identify three core framing tasks for social movements. These framing tasks are imperative in studying Islamist groups. *Diagnostic framing* involves diagnosing some events and aspects of social

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structure and system of government and society as problematic and requiring redress. Attribution of blame and responsibilities also occur in the process thereby asking basic questions of "what is wrong or went wrong" and "who or what to blame". Accordingly, actors view some features of political and social life that might be previously viewed as misfortunes now as an injustice perpetrated by someone or something. *Prognostic framing* offers solutions to the problem including pinpointing tactics and strategies, designated to serve as antidotes. Prognostic framing therefore addresses the question of "what to be done". Those subscribed to diagnostic and prognostic framing might remain in the "balcony" of activism without motivational framing. *Motivational framing* entails elaborating rationale and constructing vocabularies of motive, providing stimuli to action, and overcoming fear and risk that are often associated with collective actions (Snow & Byrd, 2007).

Fundamentally, the essential feature of framing processes for movements' mobilization is frame resonance (Snow et al., 1986; Snow & Byrd, 2007). The key determinant of the differential success of framing efforts is variation in the degree of frame resonance, such that the higher the degree of frame resonance, the greater the probability that the framing efforts will be relatively successful. The credibility and relative salience determine the success of framings. Islamists frame "sacred values" which "surpass economic thinking or considerations of *realpolitik* (Altran & Axelrod, 2008, p. 226). A similar process is conceptualized as "transvaluation of values" (Wiktorowicz, 2004, p. 25). For example, in a social milieu in which people desire to have a secular university degree as both a status symbol and an instrument of career advancement, the Islamists may diminish the relative value attached to secular knowledge gained through formal education. Instead, greater priority and status may be given to religious knowledge gained informally through self-study and group lessons at mosques and other study centers. In their deliberate rejection of values widely held within their communities, young Islamists frequently confronted intense opposition from authority (Wickham, 2002). This reordering or "transvaluation" of values indicates that Islamic movements lessen graduate frustration not by providing the means to satisfy their aspirations for middle-class status, jobs, and lifestyles but by promoting goals more readily fulfilled within existing resource constraints.

The success of framing processes increases when its articulators can use publicly recognized symbols and languages that connect social and cultural experiences with collective memories. The mindset of the recruits is reconstructed by a new set of beliefs created by frame articulators. In Islamist groups, participation is framed as a religious duty that is absolute and all-embracing (Rogers & Neumann, 2007). This kind of moral obligation frame encourages participants to embrace an ideology that mandates participation as a moral duty, demands self-sacrifice, and encourages fearless commitment.

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However, Islamists are always bedeviled with both intra and inter-movement framing disputes. While all Islamists may unanimously and mutually agree about responsibility for a problem, there is less or no cohesion over strategies and tactics (Benford & Snow, 2000). Wiktorowicz (2014), thus, argued that prognostic framing puts Islamist activists into different categories.

Emergence, Transformation, and Radicalization of Boko Haram and AQIM

Based on the tripartite social movement theory factors, AQIM and Boko Haram followed a similar path to radicalization. Although emerged in two distinct social and political milieus, both AQIM and Boko Haram went through some processes, that hypothetically turned similar movements from moderate to more radical outlook. The AQIM dates from the 1990s and grew out of an insurrection mounted by an Islamist resistance movement protesting the Algerian regime's decision to end parliamentary elections in 1992, which would have resulted in the Islamic Salvation Front (French: *Front Islamique du Salut,* FIS) gaining a majority (Bowser & Sanders, 2002). Subsequently, the military seized power, outlawed the FIS, and imprisoned its leaders alongside thousands of Islamic activists. These developments began to turn some members of FIS into militants. Coincidentally, by the early 1990s, hundreds of Algerian militants who were trained and, in some cases, fought in Afghanistan began returning to Algeria. Some of these Algerian-Afghans, *Les Afghanis* as they were called joined the militant faction of the FIS which led to the eventual establishment of the Islamic Armed Group (French: *Groupe Islamique Armé,* GIA). The GIA believed in total war by labeling both Algerian regimes, its supporters, and even other FIS members who formed another moderate group called Islamic Salvation Army (French: *Armée Islamique du Salut*, AIS) as infidels. The GIA adopted indiscriminate killing measures, which resulted in massacring civilians. Eventually, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (French: *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat,* GSPC) emerged, growing out of some members of the GIA leadership. These dissidents rejected the GIA's policy of attacking civilians by focusing only on security personnel. The GSPC refused an amnesty in 2000 and decided to continue the struggles against the Algerian state. In September 2002 the government ordered a crackdown on the GSPC, "Algeria's largest anti-Islamist operation in five years" (Harmon, 2010, p. 15). The Group responded with stepped-up raids, including attacks on military bases. While some leaders within the GSPC began to favor global violence, it was the US-led invasion of Iraq that became a major recruiting tool for some global Islamists. Indeed, the war in Iraq brought the GSPC and other groups closer to the Al-Qaeda. Subsequently, in January 2007 the GSPC was formally integrated into Al-Qaeda, adopting the new name Al-Qaeda in the Islamic

Maghreb (AQIM) operating in various countries, especially in the Sahel region (Harmon, 2010; Pham, 2011; Danguguwa, 2014).

Boko Haram is an Islamist movement based primarily in the north-eastern region of Nigeria. The group was primarily in its early years based in the states of Borno and Yobe but has since expanded to virtually all northern and some central states of Nigeria and neighboring countries. The Boko Haram movement is believed to have been founded in 1995 by Abubakar Lawan under the original name *Ahlulsunna Wal'jama'ah Hijra* in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital. Lawan's mission was to organize an Islamic movement that addresses economic hardship and poor living standards for Nigerian Muslims in Maiduguri and to produce personnel who can eventually help create an Islamic government. The movement began to gain popularity in 2003 under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf. In 2003, some of its members migrated from Maiduguri to a village called Kanama, Yobe state, near the Nigerian border with Niger Republic, to set up a separatist community run on "Islamic" principles. They espoused anti-state framings and called on other Muslims to join the group and return to life under "true" Islamic law, to make a more perfect society away from the "corrupt" establishments (Connell, 2012; Onuoha, 2012).

Members of the group gathered in the mosque under Yusuf and have since then adopted several names from *Muhajirun* (migrants), *Yusufiyyah* (adherents of Yusuf Teaching), *Nigerian Taliban, Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad* (people committed to the teachings [of the Prophet], preaching, and holy war) to *Boko Haram* (Western education is forbidden). While the group prefers to be called *Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad,* Boko Haram has become popular.

The clashes between Boko Haram and Nigeria's security started in 2003 and reached its climax in 2009. In the summer of 2009, the clashes between Boko Haram and security intensified and that event made the former popular. The confrontation began on June 11, 2009, in Maiduguri when security personnel killed members of Boko Haram. "Yusuf demanded justice, but the authorities neither seemed to investigate the alleged use of force nor apologized for the shootings" (Human Rights Watch 2012, p. 33).

As tensions escalated, the police on July 21, 2009, raided houses of suspected Boko Haram members in Biu, southern Maiduguri. Subsequently, in the early morning hours of July 26, 2009, Boko Haram members burned down a police station in Dutsen Tanshi, on the outskirts of Bauchi, the Bauchi State capital. A few Boko Haram members died and several police officers were injured. The military and police responded by raiding a mosque and homes in Bauchi where the Boko Haram members had regrouped, killing dozens of the group's members. Yusuf vowed revenge, saying he was ready to avenge the killing of his followers (Human Rights Watch, 2012; Walker,

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2012). On July 28 and 29, the army shelled Yusuf's compound, killing and/or flushing out his followers. In Postiskum, security forces also raided the group's hideout on the outskirts of the town, killing many of Yusuf's disciples. Later that day, the military captured Yusuf who was said to be hiding in his father-in-law's house. Mohammed Yusuf was arrested by the army. The Nigerian army handed him over to the police for interrogation. The police later killed him. Police officials denied that he had been executed, saying that he was shot while trying to escape (Onuoha, 2012; Walker, 2012). Video clips from the interrogation showed him with a bandage on his left arm (Aljazeera, 2010). An eyewitness account, however, disclosed that:

> On Thursday [July 30], about 6:30 p.m., I heard that they [the police] had brought in Mohammed Yusuf…. We went inside the compound of the police headquarters. There were many people watching. I saw him sitting on the ground. He was handcuffed with a bandage on his arm. He was saying they should pray for him. The MOPOL [anti-riot Police Mobile Force] were enraged. They said he killed their leader—who is a 2IC [second-in-command of the Police Mobile Force]. The MOPOL said we must kill him. But the commissioner of police [Christopher Dega] said they should leave him alive. Then three of the MOPOLs started shooting him. They first shot him in the chest and stomach and another came and shot him in the back of his head. I was afraid and started running. When I came back he was dead. There were a lot of people taking pictures [of his body] (Human Rights Watch, 2012, p. 35).

The clashes in 2009 have had many casualties from both sides. The Nigerian police killed Mohammed Yusuf, a hundred of his followers and associates including his father-in-law. Since 2009 Boko Haram has been more militant and has been popularizing the repression of their members 2009 as an excuse to avenge. Meanwhile, Nigeria's security continued to crack down on them, and Boko Haram became an encapsulated movement that continues to recruit and radicalize members. It is argued that when the state crackdown intensified, Boko Haram adopted more violence which they had eschewed in the past (Bello, 2021). Thus, the death of the group's leader many of his disciples and few associates did not end the saga. In less than a year after the first encounter, Abubakar Shekau who was Yusuf's deputy announced that he had taken over leadership of the movement and threatened fresh attacks to avenge the deaths of his colleagues. Boko Haram continues to be a violent Islamist group that recruits and radicalizes its members. The group continues to have implications on Nigeria especially on security (Bello, 2021), trans-border crimes (Fagge et al, 2021), religious divisions (Kabara & Dangugua), and other socio-economic and political sectors (Ibrahim & Hotoro, 2019).

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The Influences of Political Opportunity Structures, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes in the Radicalization of Boko Haram and AQIM

There is much evidence to suggest that all the tripartite social movement theory factors – political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing process or cultural framing – exist in both Algeria and Nigeria. Without those variables, organizing collective action like that of AQIM and Boko Haram at the initial stage could be just a mere protest for a few days or weeks. Out of the three social movements theory factors, the framing process and political opportunities/constraints play major roles in maintaining the collective action by the two movements. Rather than ending their struggles when environments seemed constrained, AQIM and Boko Haram exemplified movements that believe in the power of anti-system framing and exclusive/clandestine approaches to transform individuals' perceptions about their society and prime them into violent activism. It is important to note that when someone's life revolves around a small group of like-minded individuals who, collectively, are cut off or cut off from mainstream society, that person's judgment and behavior become, to a large extent, a function of group dynamics. As the GIA/GSPC and Boko Haram drifted ever further away from mainstream society as a result of their violent activities, the propensity of their members to adopt radical views increased as well. The worldviews of both groups and their members frequently become more and more divorced from reality. In effect, the groups created not only their specific micro-culture, with a distinct set of moral and behavioral standards, but they also built and lived in a universe of their own, delimited by their radical leaders.

Political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing processes still linger in both Nigeria and Algeria as they do in almost every other country. Other groups may exploit them to present collective demands or organize collective actions. For example, in the oil-producing Niger Delta region of Nigeria, insurgent groups utilized similar factors to metamorphose from pre-insurgent stage through incipient stage to full violence using ethnic grievances (Danguguwa, 2018). Therefore, Islam does not bring about violent action, nor does any other religion but usually political and economic grievances are primary causes or catalysts, and religion becomes a means to legitimate and mobilize (Juergensmeyer, 2005). Thus, groups like the GIA/GSPC/AQIM and Boko Haram's decision to turn to violence is usually situational and is not endemic to Islam. Appeals to Islam were only one of the ways of framing or representing a struggle in terms that a potential constituency would understand rather than the determinants of a strategic choice. Groups espousing similar goals often choose different methods, disagreeing over the means more than the ends. This explains why other social

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movements continue to exploit the available opportunities and organizing structures to frame specific events as collective responsibilities to ameliorate. Thus, many ethnic and political movements blossom in Nigeria and Algeria respectively. Boko Haram and AQIM continue to support other movements with similar motives in their respective countries and in the Sahel which is described as "a safe haven for violent Islamists" (Danguguwa, 2014, p. 57). It is inferred that nationals from countries in the Sahel have been linked with religious uprisings in Nigeria which adds another dimension to the challenge of insecurity in the country. Boko Haram sect and other jihadist groups in the Sahel and North Africa are being trained in the Sahel (Fagge et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Despite their differences, both AQIM and Boko Haram claim to offer solutions to some specific problems that bedevil their societies through the slogan of 'Islam' is the solution. Other Muslims and some Islamist groups in both Nigeria and Algeria may still consider the establishment of Islamic society as a panacea to their problems. However, not all Islamists champion violence. While all Islamists (not necessarily all Muslims) give credence to a society that is governed by the *Shari'a* (Islamic Law), there is no cohesion on how to establish it. Islamists are succinctly categorized based on their tactics as *conservatives, moderates, and militants* (Dede, 2008). Conservatives believe in propagation and missionary activities (*da'wa*), which are intended to transform individual beliefs. Those individuals will eventually transform the entire society, hence implementing Islamic laws. Moderates are noticeable in the political scenes. They form political parties and advocate formal political participation. They often engage in da'awa, however. The militants embrace violent measures and attract more attention than the formers (Hafez, 2000; Wiktorowicz, 2004; Perry & Negrin, 2008). Instead of uniting Muslims, intra and inter-movement framing disputes often lead to the creation and widening of religious cleavages among Muslims (Kabara & Danguguwa, 2018).

Even though both AQIM and Boko Haram metamorphosed from moderate and conservative to violent movements respectively, the trajectories followed proved that political constraints affected how their framing and mobilization tactics worked. The way members of those movements consider themselves is more or less parallel to a situation of 'we against them and/or vice versa' which Haberfeld and Hassel (2009) described as anti-system movements. This confirms the notion that all Islamists – conservatives, moderates, and militants – agree over the end than the means. Another similarity between AQIM and Boko Haram is the aligning frames with the issues that resonated with their targeted participants. Due to the nature of the societies in which AQIM and Boko Haram emerged, the social movement

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theory concept of frame alignment has been significant in mobilizing participants. In other words, aligning the struggles with cultural and religious duties means that only movements with such qualities have the highest tendency to organize collective actions for those participants in both Algeria and northern Nigeria, perhaps at that time when AQIM and Boko Haram emerged.

Similarly, the victims of the GIA the GSP, and Boko Haram were initially, in one way or the other, associated with states of Algeria and Nigeria. The degree to which their targets are associated with nation-states is however strictly based on their interpretations. According to them any non-targeted individual who loses his/her life as a result of their actions is considered a martyr. Nevertheless, the most affected victims by the GIA, the GSPC/AQIM, and Boko Haram attacks have been Muslims because their strongholds are predominantly Muslims.

Finally, this paper inferred that, until new studies suggest otherwise, movements in Nigeria and Algeria will continue to utilize the tripartite social movement factors to present collective demands and/or organize collective actions. It is recommended thus, that handling such movements before they gather resources should be the priorities of the policy makers. This paper shows that both Boko Haram and AQIM freely gathered resources before governments in Nigeria and Algeria decided to control their activities.

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