

IFRA – Nigeria Watch – University of Ibadan

**MUSLIMS, CHRISTIANS AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE**

**IN NIGERIA: PATTERNS AND MAPPING**

**(JUNE 2006 – MAY 2014)**

**BY**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The notion that religious violence in Nigeria is always characterised by conflicts between religions (Muslims versus Christians) is too simplistic. This study shows that between June 2006 and May 2014 the frequency of violent death incidents involving Islamic groups against Islamic groups is 60; a figure higher than 57, which is the frequency of violent death incidents involving Islamic groups against Christian groups or Churches within the same period. A second major point in this paper is that violence involving religious groups is not always caused by religious issues. This explains why the frequency of violent death incidents involving Islamic groups against Christian groups or Churches due to non-religious issues is as high as 42 between June 2006 and May 2014. Thirdly, it remains inconclusive whether or not more Muslims than Christians (or vice versa) are killed because of violence in general in Nigeria. Finally, the western media frames violence in Nigeria as being mainly inter-religious while lethal incidents involving Islamic groups against Islamic groups are largely underreported.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is an attempt to sketch out and analyse the evolution and diverse patterns of violent deaths involving Muslims and Christians in Nigeria between 1 June 2006 and 31 May 2014<sup>1</sup>. Although this nationwide mapping offers representations of the broad spectrum and character of Muslim-Christian religious violence over the 8-year period in focus, it also includes the dynamics of violent deaths of a non-religious nature albeit involving Muslims and Christians. Our assessment also considers the violent interaction between Muslim and Christian groups in relation to other protagonists associated with religious and non-religious issues. Without doubt, the religious institutions of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria are major rallying points for various social and political groups with disparate and sometimes obscure agendas. In fact, the almost ubiquitous use of religious pretexts in Nigeria has at several periods been appropriated by ‘non-conforming’ groups to instigate violence and inadvertently portray an impression that religion is the most paramount source of violence in the country.

However, this study finds that while the factor of religion cannot be entirely disregarded particularly in light of the character of recurrent crises in (northern) Nigeria, religious issues do not represent the only cause of violent deaths involving Muslims and Christians in the country. Religion as a causal factor must be put in perspective and nuanced with other pertinent sources of violent deaths such as issues bordering on land and territorial claims, ethnicity, politics and elections as well as community violence and crimes involving Muslims and Christians. In addition, this study finds that in cases where religion appears to be an underlying cause of violent deaths, such incidents can also be reflected in clashes between just one of the religious faiths and a non-religious protagonist or in fact occurring within the same religious faith.

This study thus explores the aforementioned dimensions and causes of Muslim-Christian violent deaths and our analyses is corroborated by the illustration of maps and graphs replete with data drawn from the statistical records of Nigeria Watch<sup>2</sup>. Our focus raises a few important questions among others for this study and three main ones are considered: First, what factors

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<sup>1</sup> This period is chosen because the Nigeria Watch database started in June 2006 and this study seeks to analyse the available data over an 8-year period.

<sup>2</sup> Nigeria Watch is a database and research project that monitors lethal violence, conflicts, and human security in Nigeria. It aims to set up a GIS (Geographic Information System) to localise dangerous spots and to assess the rise, decline or stabilisation of violence in the country. Collated data is used to provide statistics, draw maps and analyse trends and it relies on a thorough reading of reports from at least 10 Nigerian press corporations as well as human rights organisations.

explain why the dynamics of Muslim-Christian religious violence appear to gain more local and international traction in academic and media circles in contrast with the attention accorded to the narratives of intra-religious violence for instance? This is a question which the annex of this paper also draws attention to by applying a unique perspective in the analysis of global media reports on violence in Nigeria. Second, if religious issues are not the only cause of violent deaths between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, which other factor(s) also merit deeper investigation based on available data? Third, in connection with other key protagonists such as security forces, to what extent are the Islamic and Christian faith blocs involved or implicated in incidences of violent deaths in Nigeria? We expound on these questions in line with the three main sections of this paper. Following this summary, a description of the general context of religion and violence in Nigeria will be provided and accompanied by brief reference to one of the major theoretical discourses —the ‘clash of civilisations’— that continues to frame academic (and media) debates on inter-religious tensions in countries such as Nigeria. Bearing in mind the second question in this study, we then move on swiftly to the second part of this paper to characterise the distribution of data related to violent deaths between June 2006 and May 2014. This is done in an attempt to reveal in a statistical way the main causes of violent deaths and their correlation with both religious and non-religious issues involving Muslims and Christians.

From this point, the third part of this study guides our focus in line with our third question. Based on the data presented, our statistical narrative here enables an understanding of the extent to which Islamic and Christian actors and groups are involved in the phenomenon of violent deaths. This is also examined in association with the role of other protagonist variables implicated in incidences of violent deaths where Muslims and Christians are involved. The concluding section will highlight our findings and underscore what is instructive for further research based on the overall empirical content analysed in this study. In this paper, the reference to violent deaths does not exclusively denote the act of perpetration of violence on the part of Muslims or Christians. Rather, the context of our interpretation of violent deaths refers to the involvement of Muslims and Christians also as victims. It should also be noted that the period under examination starts from 1 June 2006 and ends on 31 May 2014. Therefore, apart from the years in between (2007-2013), data analysed in relation to either 2006 or 2014 should be considered in light of the stipulated period when data collation and analysis started and ended.

## 2. RELIGION AND VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

Violence in Nigeria has taken various forms over the decades and the data in this study depicts its wide-ranging character expressed through the interaction between Muslims and Christians. Political issues especially those associated with the struggle for elective offices and power allocation remain a potent source of violence. This state of affairs is often catalysed by a lethal infusion of interests rooted in deep socioeconomic and ethnic concerns, some of which may be legitimate and others spuriously held by different actors and groups. In addition, the overall frequency of violent deaths in Nigeria owes much to a combination of other causes such as car accidents and crime. And certainly not in the least, religious issues appear to also reinforce the collective expression of fatalities particularly in terms of recurrence rates in regions such as northern Nigeria.

Scholarly interpretations of this religious angle hold significance because of the added perspective they bring to our assessment of Muslim and Christian involvement in the trends of violent deaths. However, in instances where violent deaths are not underscored by religious issues between Muslims and Christians, or in cases where violent deaths transpire between groups of the same religious faith, it raises questions regarding the limits of certain theoretical paradigms and how effectively their frameworks capture the violent interaction between adherents of religious faiths in Nigeria. One such paradigm pertains to the 'clash of civilisations' and it suggests that civilisation identity, of which religion is a core component, will be increasingly important in the post-Cold War period. Samuel Huntington, the main proponent of this acclaimed yet widely criticised civilisational thesis went further to assert that the fundamental source of conflict and great divisions will be cultural and that the fault lines between civilisations, being the broadest level of cultural identity, will be the battle lines of the future (Huntington 1996).

To a certain degree, some of the fundamental conflicts evident in the era Huntington prognosticated about have indeed found some expression along religious fault lines, and particularly in relation to Islam in countries such as Nigeria. In fact, further scholarly import from the academic literature is instructive in the way it guides our thoughts on the central role of religion. Ellis and Haar (2007) describe religion as an emerging political language whose pattern of interaction cannot be ignored in the study of African politics. For Matthew Kukah (1993), the process of political bargaining in Nigeria appears to increasingly embody the factor of religion. Toyin Falola (1998), in

his part pushes this further by underscoring the profundity of religious attachment expressed by both Muslims and Christians and its instrumentality in political life and leadership in Nigeria.

In the overall estimation of various scholars writing on religion and politics in Nigeria, there appears to be an almost seamless connection between several violent incidents from the 1960s through the decades up to the current period. And at different phases in this historical trajectory, the controversy between Muslims and Christians over the definition and interpretation of 'secularity' for instance has offered opportunities for analysts to gauge what they see as diametrically-opposed platforms of Muslims against Christians in Nigeria. A typical instance appeared in 1976 during the drafting of Nigeria's constitution and then again in 1986 on the occasion of Nigeria's admittance into the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), which sparked off intense debates between Muslims and Christians. The common thread of 'fundamentalism' that also runs through these decades has often given way to militant expressions on both sides of the religious divide in Nigeria. On the one hand for instance, northern Nigerian Christians arguing self-defence, have in the past justified the use of militancy to protect their lives and defend their faith through the use of physical violence. On the other hand however, Islam appears to have gained wider reputation for militancy than Christianity, as clearly more cases of religious violence involving Islamist groups are reported (Falola 1998).

The cumulative reality of these events appears to mirror the classical model of a religious clash involving Muslims and Christians in the country. Thus, when a superficial reading of the prevailing Boko Haram crisis is carried out, the penchant to anchor analysis exclusively on Huntington's discourse and assume the reflection of a clash between a 'Muslim North' and 'Christian South' is reinforced. Besides, Boko Haram itself purportedly calls for a Sharia state and the several incidences of violence instigated against Christians or representations of Western civilisation in Nigeria tend to receive a considerable amount of media interest and hype both locally and internationally. The analytical lens adopted by global media entities constitutes a vital subject expounded and debated further in the annex of this paper. The overall impression of a civilisational clash involving Muslims and Christians is also aided in some way by the phenomenon of the 'youth bulge' in Africa and particularly in the case of Nigeria where the demographic structure is characterised by nearly three-quarters of the population under the age of 30 (Leahy et. al. 2007). The portrayal of such a population trend in a country where there is an exceedingly large and mismanaged youth population invokes the notion of how easily violent deaths can be a consequence

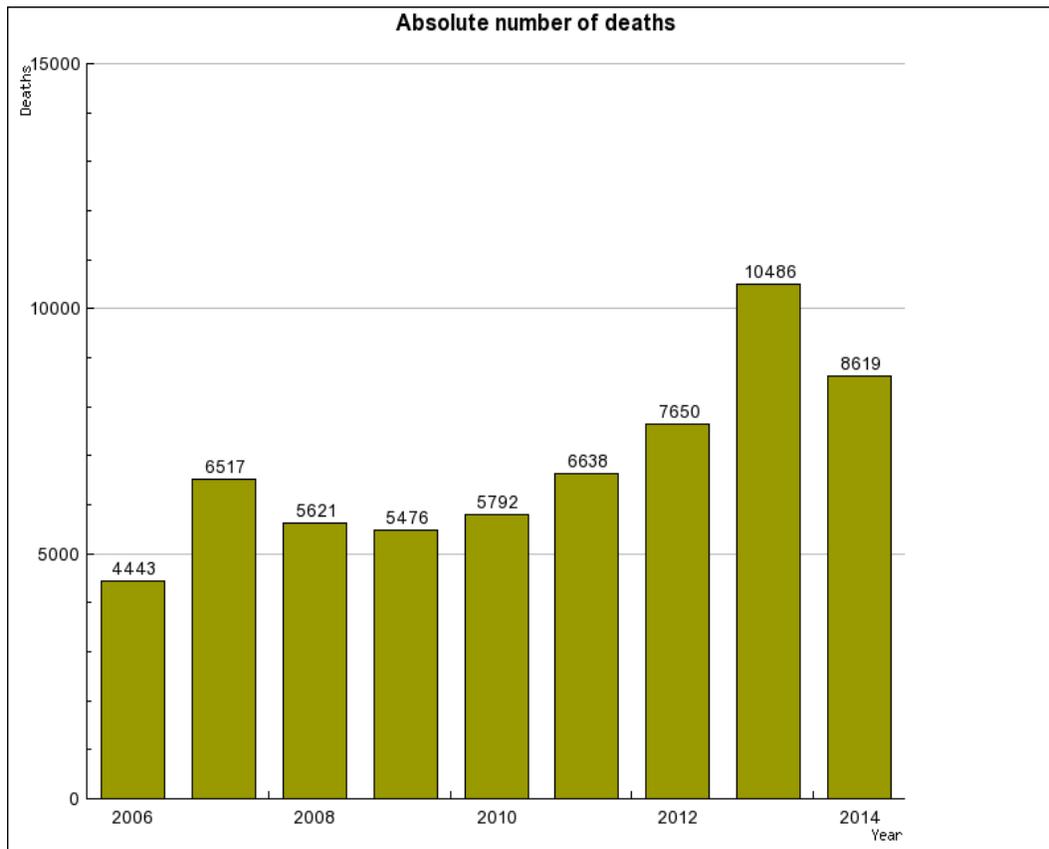
of youth vulnerability in the hands of radicalised (religious) groups. By extension, it also becomes easy to understand how a lot of analysis of the violence involving Muslims and Christians in Nigeria maintains intellectual currency within academic debates, policy circles as well as sensational projection through the global media.

Beyond this however, the connections between the aforementioned variables are far more complex than what fits perfectly into a single theoretical paradigm about a clash between religions. The religious divide between Muslims and Christians should not be overstated because the monolithic perception held by many observers of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria should be balanced with the sense of caution expressed by scholars such as Pérouse de Montclos. He draws attention to the need to recognise the divisions within Islam as well as disruptive factors within the Muslim *Ummah*, which crises such as that related to Boko Haram underscore (Pérouse de Montclos 2014). This kind of perspective holds merit as a guard against speculative counter-arguments about an inter-religious clash and also as a guide for other aspects of our study which will permit a fuller understanding of the idea of divisions or schisms within religions such as Islam in Nigeria. Particularly in the third part of this paper, an appreciation of this will emerge through our statistical presentation of violent trends between rival groups aligned to the same religion. However, before a reflection on that, we will proceed to present and analyse the distribution of data related to the causes of violent deaths and its relationship with religious and non-religious issues involving Muslims and Christians.

### 3.1 FREQUENCY OF VIOLENT DEATHS AND THEIR CAUSES

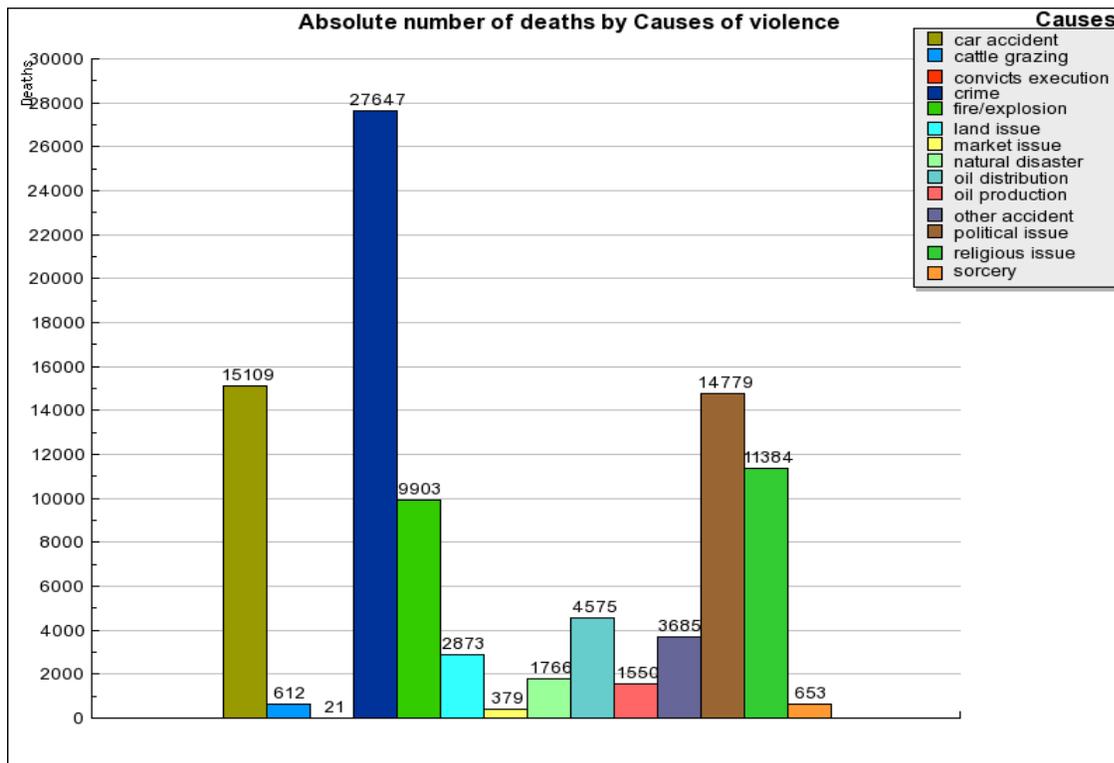
Between 1 June 2006 and 31 May 2014, the absolute number of violent deaths recorded by the Nigeria Watch database was 61 241. This staggering number indicated in figure 1 is spread out on a yearly basis over the period examined in this study. Although an observable feature of this graph indicates a steady rise in the absolute yearly frequency of deaths from 2009 to 2013, a critical look at 2014 reveals a sharp increase in the measure of absolute frequency just within a period of five months. Furthermore, in less than a year's span, the aggregation of violent deaths for the first five months of 2014 exceeds the absolute frequency of violent deaths for each of the preceding years with the exception of 2013.

Figure 1 Absolute number of violent deaths per year: June 2006 to May 2014



While this alarming record of fatalities in 2014 holds the potential to intensify as the year progresses, it still does not provide a clear enough impression of which factors act as instigators of violent deaths. Figure 2 takes us a little closer by fine-tuning our focus on the causal factors of violent deaths. We are thus able to recognise them better in relation to either religious or non-religious issues.

Figure 2 Absolute number of violent deaths (causes of violence): June 2006 to May 2014



Between June 2006 and May 2014, religious causes of violent deaths accounted for 11 384. Some other factors registered higher frequencies and two major variables included crime and car accidents with absolute figures of 27 647 and 15 109 respectively. The data suggests that religious issues did not constitute the overarching cause of violent deaths over the past 8 years taken in absolute terms. However, if we single out the same data on absolute fatalities caused by religion and disperse it over the 8-year period as reflected in figure 3, it will permit us to gauge the proportion of violent deaths attributable to religious issues on a yearly basis. This of course is possible when we compare the yearly data on religious causes of violent deaths in figure 3 with the yearly data on absolute number of violent deaths in figure 1. In the process, even though we are still unable to view proportions of Muslim and Christian involvement in violent deaths, we are capable of detecting the relative influence of religious issues especially during years such as 2013 and 2014. If we consider 2014 for instance, not only did violent deaths rise rapidly, religious issues accounted for nearly half of the number of violent deaths following the passage of just five months. The reason for this high proportion is not far-fetched as it is closely associated with the dynamics of violent deaths caused by the Boko Haram crisis in northern Nigerian. We shall shed a bit of light here because the spike in

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violent deaths for 2013 and 2014 are also linked to the involvement of Muslims and Christians in violence either as perpetrators or victims.

Figure 3 Violent deaths caused by religious issues per year: June 2006 to May 2014

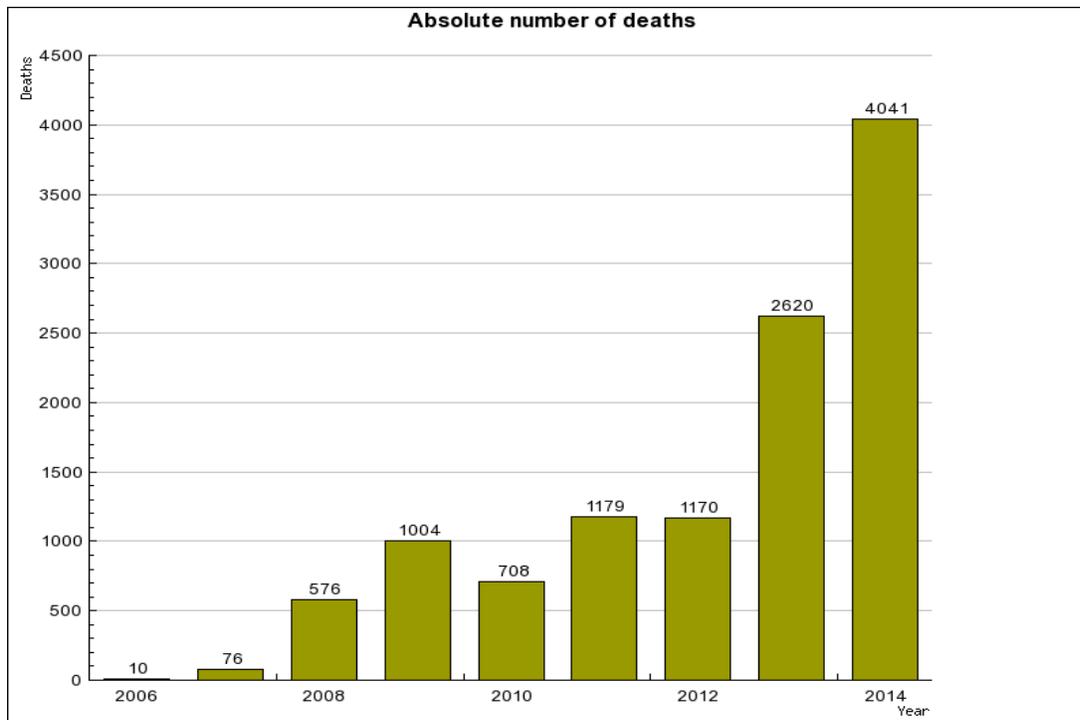
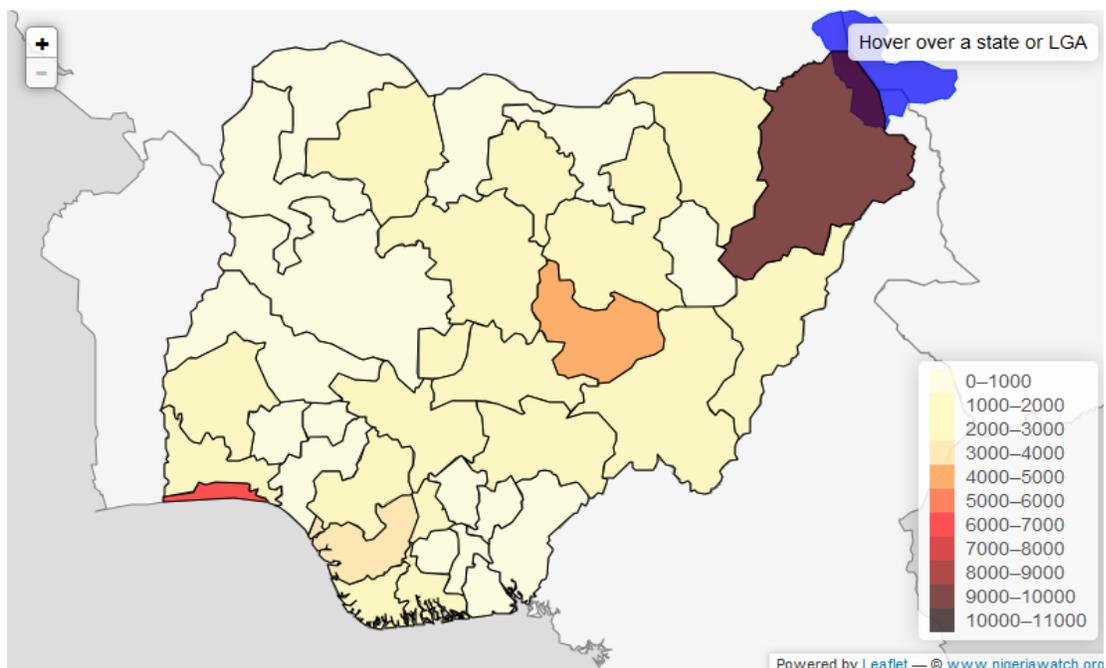


Figure 4 Violent deaths caused by religious issues in all states: June 2006 to May 2014



### 3.2 VIOLENT DEATHS IN 2013 AND 2014

The year 2013 had the highest frequency of violent deaths in the country with an absolute figure of 10 486 while 2014 followed with a similar trend. Although still in agreement with the fact that factors such as crime is a foremost cause of violent deaths across the entire 8-year period, issues located within the context of religion were the underlying reasons for the escalation of violent deaths in 2013 and 2014. The religious issues in question here are of course attributable to the Boko Haram crisis, which at the same time explains the spike in violent death rates in places such as Borno state in 2013 and 2014. These were particularly violent years as the group calling itself the *Jama'atu Ablis Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad* (widely known as Boko Haram) was responsible for numerous attacks against security forces and civilians, Muslims and Christians alike. It should however be acknowledged that the death timeline as a result of Boko Haram attacks can be traced back to periods before 2013. In fact, in December 2003, members of the sect reportedly launched a series of deadly attacks on police stations in northern cities such as Kanama in Yobe state. However, such instances in the past pale in comparison with the sequence of violent onslaughts by the group in 2013 and 2014. While the generation of an entire list of these attacks is not the main focus of this section, some major incidents involving the fatalities of both Muslims and Christians stand out due to the sheer loss of lives involved. These events were obtained from the Nigeria Watch database.

In September 2013, about 50 students of the School of Agriculture, Guijba were reportedly killed in Yobe state. This event was preceded by the massacre of about 49 people in August following an attack on a Mosque and several villages including Konduga and Malari in Borno state. The degree to which lives have been lost so far in single attacks in 2014 has been unprecedented based on the fatality records in the Nigeria Watch database. In February 2014, gunmen suspected to be Boko Haram members killed at least 47 people in Bama and Buratai, Borno state. Within the same state (and month), Boko Haram insurgents attacked Izghe village and killed 106 people. If there exist doubts regarding the identity of the perpetrators of some of these attacks, Boko Haram clearly claimed responsibility for the April 2014 bomb blast that claimed the lives of at least 70 people at a mass transport terminal in Nyanya, Abuja.

A final incident is that involving the death of hundreds of individuals during a clash between security operatives and Boko Haram members who launched an attack on Giwa Military Barracks in Borno state in March 2014. There are various casualty accounts rendered by the Nigerian press

community with the Vanguard newspaper suggesting 207 deaths, ThisDay reporting 350 and Daily Trust stating that as many as 500 lives were lost (Nigeria Watch database 2014). It should however be noted that exact figures remain a subject of debate and so also the problematic issue of identifying the precise religious identity of some of the victims of these attacks. As a matter of research, Chouin, Reinert and Aparad (2014) set out this thinking eloquently as they attest to the particular difficulty of ascertaining the religious identities of several victims of Boko Haram attacks with complete accuracy. Notwithstanding, the findings of these scholars suggest that majority of the victims of Boko Haram attacks –around two-thirds– are indeed Muslims. This of course challenges the commonplace temptation to understand the crisis as a war between religions. For our study's focus, what is also not in doubt is the diverse range of actors who comprise the casualty figures. In other words, the fatality profiles consist of victims who are Boko Haram insurgents, members of the Nigerian government's Joint Task Force (JTF) and once again, civilians who are Muslims and Christians.

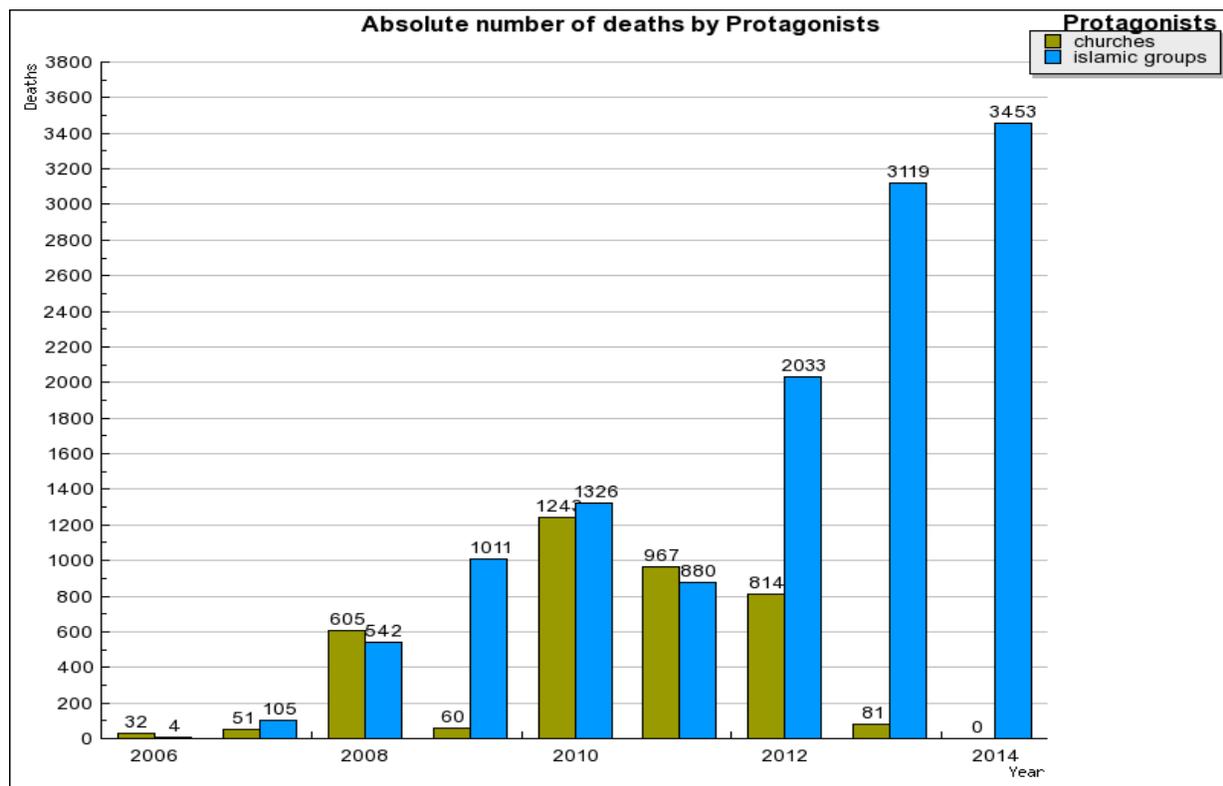
### 4.1 FREQUENCIES OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN VIOLENT DEATHS

We have been able to establish to some degree the impact of religious issues on the escalation of absolute fatalities in certain years such as 2013 and 2014. The added bearing of the Boko Haram crisis on the connection between religious issues and fatalities has also been highlighted. Without disregarding the relevance of this link, we must at the same time keep in mind one of the questions of this study which underscores the interrogation of non-religious causal factors of violent deaths involving Muslims and Christians, as well as the role of other non-religious protagonists that have at certain periods been implicated in the phenomenon of violent deaths involving either Christian or Islamic groups. Once again, we must re-emphasise that the frequency of violent deaths involving Muslims and Christians does not always express a connection with only religious issues. One way to test this is to compare the data in the yearly frequencies of violent deaths linked to religious issues with the yearly frequencies of violent deaths linked to the involvement of Christians. In other words, we are comparing the data presented in figure 3 with figure 4. By doing this, we can identify a year such as 2008 when the frequency of violent deaths involving Christians (605 fatalities) was higher than the frequency of violent deaths linked to religious issues (576 fatalities). This disparity can of course be understood in light of the fact that in November 2008, there were comparably higher numbers of Christian fatalities (protagonists and victims) following ethno-political clashes over local government election results in Plateau state.

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We can also apply this same principle of comparison to the Islamic context. To test this, we can compare the data in the yearly frequencies of violent deaths linked to religious issues with the yearly frequencies of violent deaths linked to the involvement of Muslims. While still drawing upon our comparative data in figures 3 and 4, we can identify years such as 2012 when the frequency of violent deaths involving Muslims (2033 fatalities) was higher than the frequency of violent deaths linked to religious issues (1170 fatalities). Similar to how we explained the case with Christian fatalities, the observed disparity here can also be understood against the background of violent clashes and deaths that involved Muslims or Muslim groups in relation to issues that are not necessarily religious in nature.

Figure 5 Violent deaths involving Islamic groups and Churches per year: June 2006 to May 2014



At the heart of these comparisons is the fact that there are certain fatalities (or violent deaths) which are attributable to entirely non-religious issues involving Muslims and Christians. This to an extent explains why there are certain years reflecting lower frequency bars for religious causes of violent deaths in comparison with higher frequency bars for either Islamic- or Christian-related violent deaths in the country. In other words, there are ‘excess fatalities’ that inform why the

frequency bars for Islamic and Christian groups are at certain periods higher than the frequency bars for religious causes. As already noted, figure 4 displays a graph with frequency bars representing violent deaths involving Muslims and Christians (indicated as Islamic groups and Churches) on a yearly basis between June 2006 and May 2014. Thus, the point made here becomes clearer when we compare the data in figure 4 with the data in figure 3 that represents violent deaths linked to religious issues.

There were certainly other years that reflected higher frequencies of violent deaths involving Muslims in comparison with the frequencies of violent deaths linked to religious issues. Some of these periods include 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2013. However, the fatalities that contributed to making these years particularly higher in frequency are of course not only linked to non-religious issues such as politics or land/territorial crisis. They owe part of their frequency content to the role of what we referred to earlier as non-religious protagonists. In this regard, while the issues or causes of violent deaths may indeed be religious, one of the actors involved in the violent encounter can be a Christian or Islamic group and the other a state security entity such as the Police or Joint Task Force.

As it appears in our data and especially when we make reference to figure 4, there are comparably more yearly periods that reflect higher frequency levels of violent deaths involving Muslims or Islamic groups. Typical cases include 2012 and 2013 which far outweigh the frequency of violent deaths involving Christians or Christian groups. Although as we have noted all along, this high frequency on the Muslim side entails a combination of both perpetrators and victims of violence, it is the kind of disparity which has led scholars such as Falola (1998) to suggest that Islam has gained a wider reputation for militancy than Christianity. It is also the kind of disparity which in a metaphoric sense is a reminder of Huntington's (1996, 254) analysis of the phenomenon he describes as 'Islam's bloody borders'.

### **4.2 BEYOND FREQUENCIES: DIMENSIONS OF VIOLENT DEATH INCIDENTS**

As we return to our data, we shall try to expound further on those 'excess fatalities' involving Christian and Islamic groups that appear to fall outside the scope of religious issues. We shall expand our framework to also examine some of those non-religious protagonists implicated in the phenomenon of violent deaths involving Christian and particularly Islamic groups. In doing this, we shall look beyond the frequency of violent deaths as we have done so far, to examine more critically

the nature of the issues themselves. The frequencies of violent deaths tell us one thing but the frequencies of the violent incidents that produce these violent deaths reveal even more. This in an interesting way opens up another dimension of our study because first, it facilitates our knowledge of the frequency of these incidents involving Christian and Islamic groups in addition to just knowing the frequency of the violent deaths reflected in the graphs so far. Second, we will have more knowledge of the extent to which the non-religious issues involving Christian and Islamic groups occur and recur per year. In a third way, we will further be able to get a clearer sense of the proportions which these non-religious and religious issues hold in relation to each other, as well as the correlational dynamics between the different protagonists between June 2006 and May 2014.

Table 1 is therefore an attempt to capture the aforementioned explanation through the display of various frequencies of violent death incidents of which religious and non-religious issues are casual factors with the involvement of Muslim and Christian groups, as well as their linkages with other key protagonists. The search method used in generating the data in this table employed the use of the key words 'Islamic groups' and 'Churches' in the Nigeria Watch database. When these specific key words are utilised in a search like this on the database, the data generated includes violent incidents involving Islamic groups, Christian groups, as well as incidents that share a nexus with intra-group violence within either of the religious faiths. Additional data generated through this search method includes incidents of both religious and non-religious character but which have a lethal connection between either of the religious faiths and other non-religious protagonists.

For each year, all the data generated is classified into six main rubrics: Islamic group versus Christian group (religious issues); Islamic group versus Christian group (non-religious issues); Islamic group versus Islamic group (religious issues); Islamic group versus Security forces (Joint Task Force, Police); Islamic group versus Vigilante Group, Civilian Joint Task Force; and Other Violent Death Incidents involving Muslims and Christians (Community Violence). With reference to specific incidents where necessary, we shall analyse the data in each rubric one at a time.

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**Table 1** Frequencies of Violent Death Incidents Involving Muslims and Christians (Religious and Non-Religious Issues)

Year	Islamic Group vs Christian Group (Religious Issues)	Islamic Group vs Christian Group (Non-Religious Issues)	Islamic Group vs Islamic Group (Religious Issues)	Islamic Group vs Security Forces (Joint Task Force, Police)	Islamic Group vs Vigilante Group, Civilian Joint Task Force	Other Violent Death Incidents involving Muslims and Christians (Community Violence)
2006	2	-	1	-	-	18
2007	3	-	5	1	-	19
2008	2	1	-	-	-	25
2009	-	2	4	10	-	18
2010	8	4	9	11	-	35
2011	5	33	20	66	-	52
2012	27	1	15	161	-	59
2013	6	1	4	138	5	38
2014	4	-	2	31	2	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>332</b>

### **Islamic group versus Christian group (religious issues)**

Under this rubric, we take into account the recurrence rate of violent incidents with manifestations inspired by religious issues involving Christian and Islamic groups. A total of 57 incidents are identified and 2012 represents the year with the highest prevalence rate of this type of incident between June 2006 and May 2014. In comparison with some other rubrics that possess higher frequency of incidents reflected in table 1, this total figure of 57 is once again a reminder of how religious issues do not represent the only cause or pattern of violent deaths involving Muslims and Christians in the country. These religious incidents are nonetheless significant and are mainly comprised of three forms of violent encounters: first, attacks instigated by the Islamist group Boko Haram against Christian groups with Churches being a prime target; second, attacks through series of assassinations targeted at Christian clerics; and third, although to a lesser extent, reprisal attacks by Christians against Muslims.

The geographical locations of majority of these incidents include Niger, Kaduna, Yobe and Borno states all in the northern region of the country. Regarding the first form of violent encounter, instances include the bomb attacks on Churches notably Saint Theresa's Catholic Church in Madalla, Niger State on 25 December 2011. Other events include the attack on Saint Rita's Catholic Church, Kaduna state in October 2012, as well as numerous attacks on other Church denominations in Borno state. Among several cases of assassinations, three clerical leaders affected include: Reverend David Usman of the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN); Reverend Ilaisha Kabura of the same COCIN; and Reverend Bulus Marwa of Victory Baptist Church. Table 2 provides further insight on the trend of Islamist-motivated (mostly Boko Haram) attacks on Christian clerics between June 2006 and May 2014. Finally, in regard to reprisal attacks by Christians, a typical case transpired in June 2012 in Kaduna state when scores of Muslims were killed by Christians following suicide bomb attacks on Churches a few days earlier in the state.

**Table 2 Violent deaths of some Christian clerics due to Islamist- (mainly Boko Haram) related attacks**

Name of Christian Cleric/Leader	Church Affiliation	Location of Death/State	Period of Death/Year
Reverend George Orji	Good News of Christ Church International	Maiduguri, Borno State	July 2009
Reverend Sylvester Akpan	National Evangelical Mission	Maiduguri, Borno State	July 2009
Reverend Sabo Yakubu	Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN)	Maiduguri, Borno State	July 2009
Reverend Bulus Marwa	Victory Baptist Church	Maiduguri, Borno State	December 2010
Pastor Michael Madugu	Deeper Life Bible Church	Maiduguri, Borno State	January 2011
Reverend David Usman	Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN)	Maiduguri, Borno State	June 2011
Reverend Ilaisha Kabura	Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN)	Maiduguri, Borno State	November 2012
Reverend Yohanna Agom	Saint Joseph's Anglican Church	Nangere, Yobe State	September 2013

**Islamic group versus Christian group (non-religious issues)**

With about 42 incidents between May 2006 and June 2014, the details in this rubric attest to violent death dynamics typified by non-religious causes involving Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. Although the non-religious causes may appear insubstantial in terms of recurrence rates, their profundity can still not be ignored. Based on the data, they represent the manifestation of violent deaths connected with issues such as election into political offices. The years 2008, 2010 and 2011 stand out in relation to these non-religious causes and to various extents, states such as Plateau, Kaduna, Kano and Bauchi bear witness to this. In Plateau state for instance, November 2008 was a critical period for local government elections in Jos North where a tense political struggle for power pitched the People's Democratic Party (PDP) against the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP).

In Jos North, voters were polarised as the PDP was made up of mostly Christian supporters and the ANPP largely comprised of the *Jasawa* who are mainly Muslims of Hausa/Fulani ethnic make-up. Only to this extent did this combination create an entry point for religion in the local government election crisis because the crisis which led to reportedly 350 to 500 deaths (some estimates are higher) in just two days was essentially political in nature. In fact, in the account rendered by Philip Ostien (2009), he explains that although religious difference adds fuel to the fire when things go wrong, it remains a secondary factor. Ostien thus emphasises that the underlying

problem stems from the alleged rights of indigenes, meaning roughly “earliest extant occupiers”, to control particular locations, as opposed to the rights of “settlers” or “strangers” or more generally “non-indigenes”, defined as everybody who came later.

The violent fallout of election results recurred again in April 2011. However this time, clashes between Muslims and Christians were due to presidential elections in which the main opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim from the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) lost to the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the Niger Delta in the south, who was the candidate for the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP). As with previous crisis, the violence that ensued divided opposing parties and their supporters along ethnic and religious lines. However, the underlying cause was largely political and more widespread because violent deaths involved Muslims and Christians in places such as Zangon-Kataf and Kachia in Kaduna state, Alkaleri and Itas/Gadau in Bauchi state, and Kano Municipal in Kano state.

### **Islamic group versus Islamic group (religious issues)**

Our mapping study will not be complete without delving into the dimension that discusses the violent interplay between and among Islamic groups. With a total of 60 incidents of intra-Islamic violent deaths, it is vital to consider the expressions which these events bear. They are divided into two broad categories: violent deaths due to clashes between Sufi brotherhoods such as the *Tijaniyya* and groups such as the *’Yan Izala*; and in a second case, violent deaths due to clashes involving either of these Islamic brotherhoods (and sects) and Boko Haram. The incidents involved in both cases are underpinned by religious issues and usually stem from differences in the interpretation of Islamic doctrines. However, the violent outcomes of these divergent interpretations of Islamic tenets are more pronounced in regard to the second case involving clashes between Islamic groups and Boko Haram. This is evident not only in the frequency of incidents but also in the frequency of fatalities as a result of the incidents. These incidents also entail in some cases attacks on mosques by the rival Islamist sect Boko Haram. More significantly in the second case is the nature of fatalities involved which includes a rising number of Islamic clerics. Table 3 is a list of some of them reportedly attacked and killed by Boko Haram between June 2006 and May 2014.

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**Table 3 Violent deaths of some Islamic clerics due to Islamist- (mainly Boko Haram) related attacks.**

Name of Islamic Cleric/Leader	Islamic Affiliation	Location of Death/State	Period of Death/Year
Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam	Jama't Izalat al Bid'a Wa Iqamat as Sunna or 'Yan Izala	Kano State	April 2007
Sheikh Bashir Mustafa	Not indicated	Maiduguri, Borno State	October 2010
Ustaz Ibrahim Ahmed Abdullahi Gomari	Not indicated	Maiduguri, Borno State	March 2011
Sheikh Goni Tijjani	Not indicated	Maiduguri, Borno State	May 2011
Mallam Alhaji Abur	Not indicated	Maiduguri, Borno State	May 2011
Sheikh Ibrahim Birkuti	Wahabbi	Biu, Borno State	June 2011
Liman Bana	Not indicated	Maiduguri, Borno State	August 2011
Mallam Dala	Not indicated	Maiduguri, Borno State	September 2011
Sheikh Ali Jana'a	Not indicated	Maiduguri, Borno State	October 2011
Malam Mai Tatabara	Not indicated	Damaturu, Yobe State	February 2012
Modu Goroma (Arabic teacher)	Not indicated	Damaturu, Yobe State	February 2012
Sheikh Saina Alhaji Ajiya	Not indicated	Konduga, Borno State	February 2012
Mohammed Alhaji Bukar	Not indicated	Maiduguri, Borno State	March 2012
Goni Mustapha	Not indicated	Maiduguri, Borno State	April 2012
Mohammed Alli	Shiite	Kano State	May 2012
Usman Muhammed	Not indicated	Potiskum, Yobe State	May 2012
Sheikh Ibrahim Majimi	Not indicated	Maiduguri, Borno State	July 2012
Alarama Dan Gobobirawa	Not indicated	Potiskum, Yobe State	December 2012
Mallam Sheriff	Not indicated	Ngamdu, Yobe State	May 2013
Alhaji Liman Bukar (Chief Imam)	Not indicated	Fune, Yobe State	August 2013
Sheikh Muhammad Auwal Adam Albani	Salafiyah	Zaria, Kaduna State	February 2014

There are however a few of these assassination cases whose source of perpetration are still shrouded in controversy. An example is that related to the death of Sheik Ja'afar Mahmud Adam. Hence, in such cases a direct link to Boko Haram remains inconclusive.

The locations of most of these intra-Islamic violent death incidents include states such as Kaduna, Yobe and Borno. Some of the inter-group clashes observed from the data tend to often involve the Shi'ite Islamic movement. There are three notable occurrences in regard to this. The first in January 2009 when Shi'ite adherents in Zaria, Kaduna state clashed with a rival Islamic group following accusations by this group against the Shi'ites of attacking the convoy of the Emir of Zaria. In January 2011, violent encounters ensued again between the Shi'ites and members of the *Tijaniyya* Sufi brotherhood in Kaduna state. A third instance was in October 2013 when Shi'ite members clashed with Sunni youths in Sokoto state. These events implicating the Shia movement led by Sheikh Ibrahim El Zakzaky does not in any way downplay the violent complicity of groups such as the *Yan Izala*, which indeed clashed with members of the *Tijaniyya* Sufi brotherhood in October 2013 in Zamfara state.

It was noted earlier that the second category of violent deaths caused by intra-Islamic clashes refers specifically to attacks instigated by Boko Haram against the entire cross-section of Islamic groups in Nigeria. Similar to the desire of several of these Islamic movements in the country, Boko Haram advocates for a nationwide application of Sharia. However, the line of disparity between these Islamic groups and Boko Haram is drawn based on the aggressive modus operandi which Boko Haram adopts. As a result, it is indeed the case that majority of these Islamic groups are in fundamental disagreement with Boko Haram, and it is this point of divergence that contributes to the provocation of violence. Consequently, while 2011 reflected the highest frequency of Boko Haram attacks against several members of these Islamic groups and their mosques, 2012 was replete with a record number of assassinations targeted at Islamic clerics perceived as 'opponents'. Table 3 as already noted draws attention to some of these casualties among several others which have perhaps passed unreported.

### **Islamic group versus Security Forces (Joint Task Force, Police)**

Security forces constitute what this study has so far described as non-religious protagonists. Although not the prime concern of this study, their role assumes some measure of significance due to their violent interaction with one of the major variables (Islamic actors) examined in this paper. Thus on the one hand, we have the Islamist group Boko Haram and on the other, we have security forces comprised of members of the Joint Task Force (JTF), the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and the State Security Service (SSS) among others. Additionally, this rubric represents the highest number of

violent death incidents (418) with which one of our major variables (Islamic actors) is connected. However, the run-up to this high frequency of incidents appeared inconsequential until 2009 when figures (fatalities and incidents) began to accumulate.

It would be recalled that among the several deaths that occurred in 2009, that of the former leader of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf marked a turning point in the levels of violent encounters involving the Islamist group and security forces. Consequently, more clashes ensued in 2010 and particularly in (August) 2011 which of course was the year when the United Nations building was attacked. Events reached such a violent crescendo in 2012 when as many as 161 incidents transpired in places such as Damaturu and Potiskum in Yobe state, Zaria in Kaduna state, Tarauni in Kano state and of course Dikwa and Maiduguri in Borno state. As at May 2014, there have been about 31 violent death incidents involving members of Boko Haram and security forces since the start of the year. Although this may not reflect a high frequency in comparison with the two preceding years, the incidents in 2014 reveal well over 3, 000 deaths as already indicated in figure 4.

### **Islamic group versus Vigilante Group/Civilian Joint Task Force**

By mid-2013 when the Nigerian government imposed a state of emergency in northeastern states such as Borno, the formation of what is now regarded as the 'Civilian Joint Task Force' (CJTF) became very visible amidst the violence instigated by the Islamist group Boko Haram. Since 2013 the Civilian JTF, comprised of mainly youths whose families and communities have been ravaged by the state of unrest in the northeast, has engaged Boko Haram in a number of violent encounters. By way of counter-reaction, Boko Haram insurgents have extended their scope of attacks beyond battles waged against the state, religious clerics and the government's JTF to now engage members of the Civilian JTF in several clashes. Although the Civilian JTF does not constitute one of the leading variables of this study, their contribution to the overall frequency of violent deaths resulting from clashes with an Islamist group creates an entry point for them into the framework of our mapping study.

Our data reflects a total of seven lethal incidents involving the Civilian JTF, five of which occurred in 2013 and two as at May 2014. In spite of the presence of the Civilian JTF in states within the troubled northeast, these incidents all transpired in Borno state. The incidents have largely manifested in three forms. The first entails situations whereby members clash with Boko Haram insurgents resulting in casualties on both sides as well as affecting the civilian population as

reflected in July 2013 in Kaga, Borno state. The second type of instance is when members are attacked/ambushed by Boko Haram insurgents as reported in January 2014 when four Civilian JTF members were killed in Mafa, Borno state. The final scenario is when efforts by Civilian JTF members and the government's JTF are jointly coordinated against Boko Haram insurgents. A positive case in point was in May 2014 when a Boko Haram attack was repelled and a reported 15 insurgents were killed in Konduga, Borno state.

### **Other violent death incidents involving Muslims and Christians (community violence)**

The final aspect of our discussion on the patterns of Muslim-Christian violence deals with what we refer to as 'other violent death incidents involving Muslims and Christians'. The process of data generation for this rubric however raises a slight methodological challenge because it lends itself to the potential risk of including data from almost the entire spectrum of violent death incidents in the Nigeria Watch database. This is the case because nearly every individual (perpetrators and victims) connected with violent death incidents in the database most likely bears the identity of one of the two major religions in Nigeria—Islam and Christianity. Therefore, an effective definition of 'other violent death incidents involving Muslims and Christians' is accompanied by some level of difficulty and risk for meaningful analysis.

Hence, in order to mitigate the chances of collating an unwieldy set of data under this rubric, this study still maintained the approach of searching through the database using the key words 'Islamic groups' and 'Churches'. Thereafter, the violent death incidents which remained after data selection and classification into the earlier discussed five rubrics became defined as 'other violent death incidents involving Muslims and Christians'. However, to further qualify and give meaning to the leftover data that fell into this last rubric, each incident was analysed based on the complicity of Muslims and Christians in issues described as community violence. In other words, these 'other violent death incidents' are not consequential to direct conflict between Muslims and Christians or between groups within either of the religions. A total of 332 incidents are identified as shown in table 1 and a few cases are briefly cited to substantiate exactly what we label as community violence.

In August 2006, the followers of a Church known as Christian Praying Assembly whose overseer was popularly known as Reverend King, clashed with a group of youths (Area Boys) in the Ebute-Metta area of Lagos state. Although this was a single incident, community violence can however take other forms and also involve other religious actors as well as more casualties. An

instance of this was in February 2008 when 60 individuals were reported to have been tortured to death in illegal detention camps described as ‘spiritual rehabilitation centres’ which were run by ‘Islamic clerics’ in Ibadan, Oyo state. A third form of community violence involved a town called Gobi in Adamawa state. It was the scene of two bank robbery attacks leading to the death of seven individuals and carried out by the Islamist group Boko Haram in August 2011. Indeed, while this type of bank raid may be linked to other sinister groups in the state, Boko Haram has attempted to justify such robberies in light of their accusation against Western banks being owned by ‘big men’ who siphon public funds and charge usury (Pérouse de Montclos 2014). The group has also claimed responsibility for attacks on public spaces such as the Baga fish market where dozens of innocent people were killed in February 2012 in Borno state. And in spite of a similarity with its style of attacks against Islamic clerics, religious motives do not often seem to factor into Boko Haram’s targeting of communities and district heads in several parts of Borno state. The sheer increase in the number of violent death incidents in 2013 and 2014 reveal more and more non-religious community targets aimed at by the group, some of which have included the killing of district heads in Dala Alamderi in Maiduguri and Lawanti in Damboa, and the invasion of villages in Gwoza, Konduga and Bama in Borno state.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Understanding the true character of Muslim-Christian violent deaths between June 2006 and May 2014 requires knowledge of not just the religious dimension of this linkage. Intellectual inquiries must appreciate the representations of violent deaths inspired by issues connected with ethnicity, crime, land and of course politics. We have established in this study that the essence of the violent interaction between Muslims and Christians is not devoid of the non-religious factors highlighted. The statistics presented in this paper have also illustrated that even in cases where religious issues are underlying causes of violent deaths, the associated incidents can also reflect the involvement of non-religious actors in the country. Our mapping further demonstrates that religious causes of violent deaths can indeed manifest between groups belonging to the same religious faith. Within the context of geography, this paper finds that beyond any other region of Nigeria, the northern part embodies a preponderance of the violent interaction between Muslims and Christians. Finally, beyond local dynamics, the annex of this paper establishes among other findings that global media perspectives consistently frame violence in Nigeria as largely religious and between Muslims and Christians, rather than adopting a more nuanced approach that enables balanced interpretation of events.

ANNEX

**GAPS IN GLOBAL MEDIA REPORTING ON VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA**

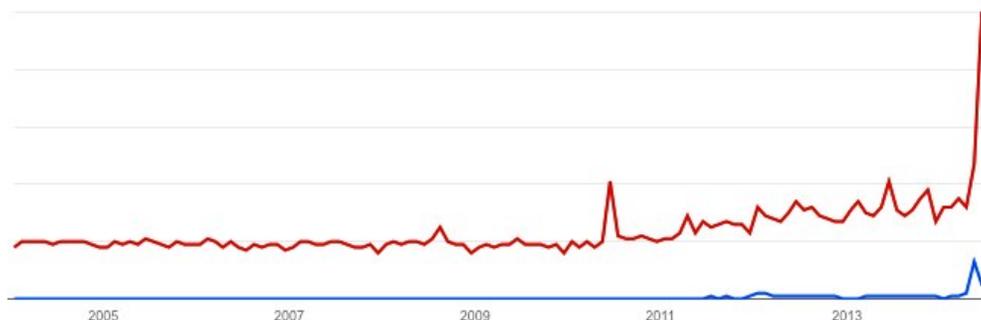
**Corentin Cohen- PhD Candidate in Political Science and International Relations, Sciences Po/CERI**

Enriching the outlook of this paper, the present contribution seeks to explore the global media's treatment of violence in Nigeria between June 2006 and May 2014. In the first six months of 2014, Nigeria attracted a high level of attention from the Western media. Based on the recent volume of articles inspired by increasing interest in ongoing events in the country, there are a variety of reports and explanations unveiling the complexity of the phenomenon particularly in regard to the Boko Haram crisis. This section draws upon information in the Nigeria Watch database and it challenges the global media's perception of violence through two questions. First, how is the Boko Haram violence framed, how is it accounted for and what are the reasons or causes cited in media articles? Secondly, how are the conflict dynamics of Islamic group versus Islamic group framed and characterised? We analyse articles related to selected events published in three Western-based newspapers as follows: Two articles from the 'International New York Times' (hereafter referred to as INYT); five articles from the UK's 'The Guardian'; and three articles from the French 'Le Monde'.

The principal findings of this research is that most of the violent incidents examined were not reported at all by Western media until the abduction of schoolgirls from Chibok in Borno state on the 14th of April 2014. In other words, the Chibok incident marked a turning point and attracted record attention to the violent situation in the country. Despite this level of interest, the articles largely accounted for the violence in religious terms with no regard accorded to the political, economic or social dimensions. Other explanations of violence were rendered following President Goodluck Jonathan's declarations which ascribed craziness and irrationality to Boko Haram's actions. Only opinion and comment articles provided alternate explanations of the violence. In addition, this limited Muslim-Christian religious framework has thus led Western media to completely ignore events that reflect opposition forces between Muslim communities or leadership.

### Western media’s ‘discovery’ of religious violence in Nigeria in the wake of the Chibok incident in May 2014

Following the first six months of 2014, Nigeria and Boko Haram have been the object of unprecedented attention in Western media. This is illustrated by the number of articles and reports in the newspapers studied, as well as by the frequency of Google requests generated online. Information obtained from the Factiva database<sup>3</sup> are presented here reflecting the trend over the past 5 years. The number of articles we selected on Nigeria excludes the ones falling under the ‘Sport and Leisure’, ‘Football’ and ‘Art and Shows’ categories. As already noted, a similar peak level interest is displayed by the number of searches carried out on the Google platform in the wake of the Chibok incident. In the diagram below, the blue line represents searches on ‘Boko Haram’ while the red one represents ‘Nigeria’. The frequency of articles published in the first 6 months of 2014 already matches the frequencies of articles published in 2013 and 2012.



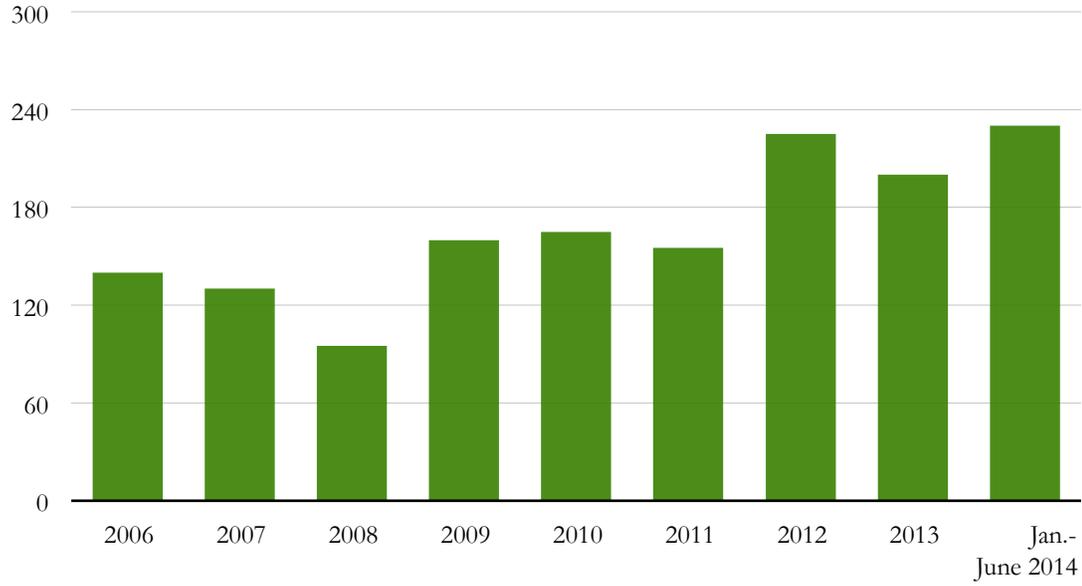
Volume of research on Google for the words ‘Boko Haram’ (blue) and ‘Nigeria’ (red) from mid-2005 to mid-2014.

Source: Google Trends

<sup>3</sup> Factiva is an information and research tool which aggregates content from both licensed and free sources.

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Number of articles relating to Nigeria published in the International New York Times (INYT), The Guardian and Le Monde between 2006 and June 2014 according to the Factiva database

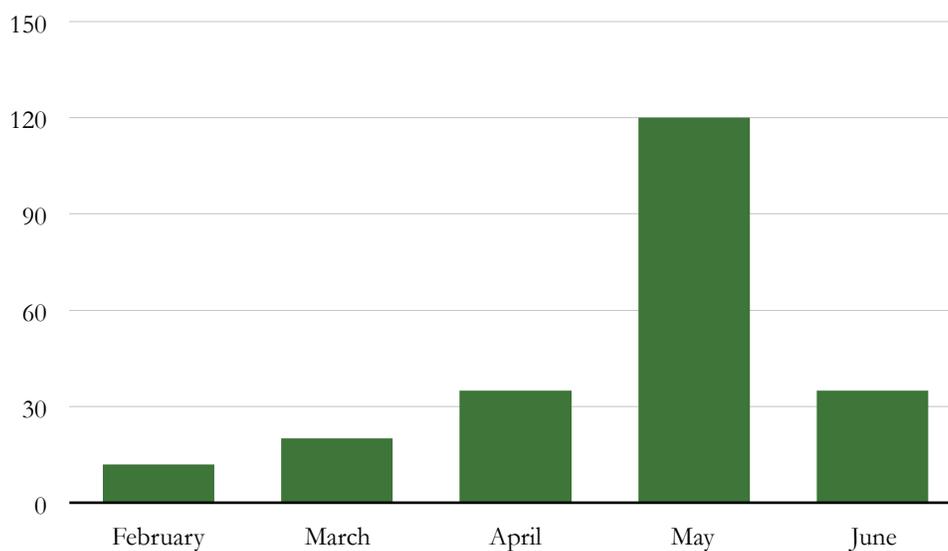


Year	Estimated number of articles
2005	145
2006	140
2007	130
2008	95
2009	160
2010	165
2011	155
2012	225
2013	200
01/01/2014 06/30/2014	230

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For this study we selected four events and studied how they were reported. The first finding is the global medias' generally low interest in reporting violent events occurring in Nigeria before the Chibok incident. The four events were chosen using the Nigeria Watch database (highest levels of violence in the month) combined with the Google research tools. The events selected coincide with peaks levels of attention and searches on Boko Haram. To increase chances of identifying articles, we focused on those issued in the first three days following events/incidents. However, we only searched for articles tagged with the country 'Nigeria' ('Nigéria' in French) and no specific keywords, topics or fields were inserted to ensure that we obtain all the appropriate articles. The Chibok incident seemed to have provoked increased attention and this is clearly indicated by the soaring number of articles in April and particularly May according to the Factiva database. It is observable that the number of articles published in the month of May 2014 relating to Nigeria actually exceeds the number of articles published in the whole of 2008.

Number of articles relating to Nigeria published in the International New York Times (INYT), The Guardian and Le Monde between January and June 2014 according to the Factiva database



2014/Month	Number of articles
January	25
February	12
March	20
April	35
May	120
June	35

The first event selected is the 25 February Boko Haram attack on Federal Government College, Buni Yadi in Yobe state. Yobe is one of the three states placed under a state of emergency by the Nigerian government since May 2013. The group reportedly killed 43 male students after it stormed the student residential building<sup>4</sup>. The only newspaper reporting it was The Guardian in its international pages. Le Monde mentioned the event in an article about Boko Haram on the occasion of the French President’s official visit to Nigeria. The second event considered is a market bombing in the town of Bama in Borno state which transpired on 23 March killing 31 people. It was not reported at all so another set of particularly violent events that occurred on 11 April was selected. On that day as well as the subsequent day, Boko Haram attacked students due to undertake the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination in four towns of Borno state (Dikwa, Kala-Balge, Gambulga and Gwoza)<sup>5</sup>. 210 people were killed and several public buildings destroyed. This incident was also not reported. The fourth event considered in our analysis is a succession of attacks that occurred on 19 and 20 May 2014. Two villages near Chibok were hit and on the same day a market in Jos was bombed killing 118 people. The attacks in the two villages were reported with comments appearing in two Guardian articles. The Jos bombings were reported in three Guardian articles and one INYT article. Le Monde covered the event with an AFP video but no article. Overall, all the articles still made reference to the Chibok incident.

<sup>4</sup> AFP, “43 killed in Nigeria in suspected Boko Haram school attack,” *Khaleejtimes*, February 26, 2014 accessed July 28, 2014, [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/international/2014/February/international\\_February738.xml&section=international](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/international/2014/February/international_February738.xml&section=international)

<sup>5</sup> Kayode Idowu and Fidelis Soriwei, “Boko Haram kills Scores of UTME candidates in Borno,” *Punch*, April 12, 2014, accessed July 28, 2014, <http://www.punchng.com/news/utme-students-killed-in-boko-haram-attacks/>

**In spite of strong interest in Nigeria, Boko Haram violence is not accounted for with contextualisation and the reporting of events only refers to religion**

How are the recent events involving Boko Haram reported during this time of increasing global attention? How is violence accounted for? What are the explanations advanced in regard to the current upheaval? To understand how violence is framed, this study examined the descriptions ascribed to the group and its organisation. We also went further to understand how the situation in northern Nigeria was described, as well as what historical or contextual elements the readers of articles were provided with. Despite the international focus, most of the articles examined in reference to Boko Haram attacks fall short of providing any explanation of violence even though they implicitly define the group's actions with an 'Islamic' identity. Indeed, most articles only offer a context of interpretation which recalls the violent actions of Boko Haram in the past and still in reference to the term 'Islamism'. The articles insist on the details of violence and on the modus operandi of the group. It is mostly in opinion articles or more analytic individual comments that alternate explanations and contextualisation of violence is provided, namely the shortcomings of the state, lack of regional cooperation, violent repression of protests and army brutality. The socioeconomic conditions of the affected states or northern region is also not mentioned at all.

In the three newspapers the events examined are mostly described in religious terms. In the article reporting the attack on the Federal Government College of Buni Yadi, Yobe State, the only adjective used to describe Boko Haram is 'Islamist' and in fact, it is repeated twice. The article details 'the Islamists' (...) want an Islamic state in Northern Nigeria'. In all the Guardian's articles reporting the Jos bombings, Boko Haram is referred to as 'Islamic militant' or as a sect. Le Monde uses 'groupe islamiste' ('Islamic group') or 'secte sunnite' ('sunni sect'). The only rationale proposed to readers trying to understand the violence is one that describes a group desiring to 'carve out a caliphate in northern Nigeria'. The INYT article reporting the same event refers to Boko Haram with the tautology of 'Islamist extremist group' that emphasises the religious aspect of the violence. One other article of The Guardian also employs the term 'Islamist sect Boko Haram'. This religious dimension can be found in one of Le Monde's description of the conflict that further situates the Islamic group in opposition to President Jonathan (a Christian from the southern part of Nigeria).

Violence is not comprehensively accounted for and no historical context is given. In majority of the articles, the 'presentation' of the group or its contextualisation is depicted by reference to past bombings and once again the Chibok incident. The only other description of the group that serves

as an explanation for its violence stem from the official declarations of President Goodluck Jonathan stating that the government should not be ‘cowed by the atrocities of enemies of human progress’<sup>6</sup>. In relation to the Buni Yadi event, the claim that Boko Haram members are ‘deranged terrorist and fanatics who have clearly lost all human morality and descended to bestiality’ constitutes the only other additional information the reader is given. Le Monde reports the official communiqué regarding the same attack mentioning ‘des terroristes fous et des fanatiques’ (‘crazy terrorists and fanatics’<sup>7</sup>) as the only element offering understanding. After the Chibok incident the renewed interest in Nigeria paved way for longer articles with more analytic frames. Some exceptions to the pattern we found can be observed even though they do not directly concern the reporting of the events we had chosen to study.

One Guardian opinion article carried the title ‘Coups and terror are the fruit of NATO’s war in Libya: The dire consequences of the West’s intervention are being felt today in Tripoli and across Africa, from Mali to Nigeria’<sup>8</sup>. It expresses the Boko Haram and Nigerian situation in a few words but also considers that the group’s violence can be accounted for by ‘deprivation, drought and brutal state repression in the Muslim North’. Another article in the INYT focuses on Abubakar Shekau’s life and religious radicalisation. It barely mentions the history of the northern region or its socioeconomic conditions. An additional article discusses the Nigerian state’s action and explains violence through the state’s failure and inefficiency, while finishing with an interview with a vigilante group’s representative. A much broader article that was examined deals with the conference organised in Paris in May 2014 in relation to the Boko Haram crisis. It explains that the porous frontiers and the little cooperation among the countries of the West African subregion allowed the attacks and the development of the group. Finally, one Le Monde article, though capitalising on a religious frame, gives voice to different individuals who underscore the absence of trust in the government or the lack of resources to fight the group, as well as the army’s failure.

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<sup>6</sup> Presidential statement released by Reuben Abati “ ‘We will not be cowed by the enemy’ - President Jonathan condemns Jos Bomb Blast,” *Talk of Naija*, May 20, 2014, accessed July 28, 2014 <http://www.talkofnaija.com/politics/we-will-not-be-cowed-by-the-enemy-president-jonathan-condemns-jos-bomb-blast-read-statement>

<sup>7</sup> AFP, “43 killed in Nigeria in suspected Boko Haram school attack,” *Standard Digital*, February 26, 2014, accessed July 28, 2014, [http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/mobile/?articleID=2000105562&story\\_title=43-killed-in-nigeria-in-suspected-boko-haram-school-attack](http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/mobile/?articleID=2000105562&story_title=43-killed-in-nigeria-in-suspected-boko-haram-school-attack)

<sup>8</sup> Seumas Milne, “Coups and terror are the fruit of Nato’s war in Libya, The dire consequences of the west's intervention are being felt today in Tripoli and across Africa, from Mali to Nigeria,” *The Guardian*, May 22, 2014, accessed July 28, 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/22/coups-terror-nato-war-in-libya-west-intervention-boko-haram-nigeria>

### **Absence of reporting on Islamic versus Islamic group clashes**

Although we acknowledge that religion as well as other issues bordering on socioeconomics are central factors accounting for violence, we also want to briefly shed some light on how the attacks by Boko Haram against Muslim groups or communities has been reported. In regard to this, the religious explanation of violence is often never nuanced with the dimension that deals with intra-group violence within religion itself. We searched within three newspapers with a view to identifying articles related to Nigeria and a focus on violent incidents involving different Muslim communities. The following three incidents were thus identified in the Nigeria Watch database: The first relates to the assassination of Sheikh Muhammad Auwal Albani, a major Salafi leader in Nigeria who had openly criticised Boko Haram. He was ambushed with his family on 1 February 2014 in Zaria, Kaduna State<sup>9</sup>. The second incident involves a violent encounter reported as a clash between the Izala and the *Tijaniyya* Sufi brotherhood in Bauchi state in March 2014<sup>10</sup>. A third and final violent event transpired on 30 May 2014 involving the assassination of Idrisa Timta, Emir of Gwoza who was arguably a representative of religious and political power in the community<sup>11</sup>. Using the Factiva database and confirming data with the websites of the selected newspapers, this study set out to inquire exactly how these aforementioned incidents were reported and to compare the frames used. In the end, the findings were unequivocal: there was indeed no report of the events in any of the selected Western-based newspapers.

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<sup>9</sup> Isaiah Benjamin, Midat Joseph, “How Sheikh Albani, Wife, Son Were Killed – Eyewitnesses,” *Leadership*, February 3, 2014, accessed July 28, 2014 <http://leadership.ng/news/342760/how-sheikh-albani-wife-son-were-killed-eyewitnesses>

<sup>10</sup> Ahmed Mohammed, “Nigeria: Bauchi - Man Killed in Clash Between Darika, Izala Sects,” *Daily Trust*, March 29, 2014, accessed July 28, 2014 <http://allafrica.com/stories/201403311789.html>

<sup>11</sup> Ola’ Audu, “Emir of Gwoza killed after abduction by Boko Haram,” *Premium Times*, May 30, 2014, accessed July 28, 2014 <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/?p=161738>

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