
SOFT POWER AS A MEANS OF FIGHTING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA'S "BOKO HARAM"

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The recent rise in global terrorism is alarming, but it also reaffirms the failure of our purely hard military approach to counter the phenomenon. This paper analyzes soft power as a means to combating terrorism, with the role of education, religion and international cooperation. The case of Boko Haram, the militant Islamist group operating in Northern Nigeria, is analyzed. This group has been attracting increasing levels of attention. The group is becoming ever more daring and violent. It is unlikely that Boko Haram will be defeated totally through military means. "Soft Power" will play a crucial role in our ability to attract the moderates and deny the extremists new recruits. Islamic education is viewed as a key instrument of these "soft power" counter-terrorism strategy. Islamic education refers to the totality of the upbringing of an individual within the content and context of Islam. The Almajiri system of education in Nigeria is analyzed in the article. Besides education, international cooperation is analyzed with the special focus on Moroccan experience of learning of Sunni Maliki jurisprudence and Achaari theology. The author underlines that many African countries requested Morocco to share its experiences in the education of Imams and signed several cooperation agreements.

Key words: Soft power, terrorism, religion, Islamic education, Boko Haram, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The recent rise of international terrorism (Boko Haram) is alarming, but it also reaffirms the failure of our purely hard military approach to counter the phenomenon. The United States Department of Defense saw terrorism as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or intimidate governments or society in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological" [Owolade 2013]. Boko Haram activities in Nigeria fits into this definition of terrorism [Omoluwa Olusegun 2014]. From 2011 to 2014 series of deadly attacks were carried out by Boko Haram. And preliminary data from 2015 suggest that the unusual frequency of mass casualty of terrorist attacks in 2014 has continued. Between January and June 2015 there were 11 occasions in which terrorist attacks killed more than 100 people in a single country on a single day, e.g. Nigeria [Start 2015].

Boko Haram activities are multinational in nature as they extend to Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. The phenomenon has recently assumed a new and cruel phase of brutality, decapitations, assassinations, kidnapping, suicide operations, and even burning the "enemy" alive have all become the landmark of a gruesome thought that adopts extreme brutality and violence as a tactic.

Several analysts have advanced the view that poverty, longstanding economic disparities within Nigeria [Adesoji 2010], lack of education and structural violence [Walker 2012]¹, are key factors underlying the crisis [Akinola Olojo 2013]. The US Institute

³ Anayika Chopra Structural Violence. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/3615773/Structural_Violence?auto=download (date of access: 02.02.2016).

of Peace in her 2014 report stated that the above factor proved one of the critical reasons behind young people joining Boko Haram. A lack of education not only hinders a country's youth in pursuing a successful career path, but it also makes young people more inclined to radicalisation [Kruglova 2015]. Usable economic knowledge will economically engage youths, and thus provide alternative endeavours to terrorism [Omoluwa Olu-segun 2014].

There is no military solution to terrorism¹. As David Miliband, a former British Foreign Minister said, "the war on terror was wrong", and it brought "more harm than good". It has also undermined the search for alternative, more successful approaches to countering violent extremism by giving the impression that only a military solution exists to counter violent extremism². Hence, Soft Power as a means to fight International Terrorism through education and other means is also addressed in this paper.

BRIEF HISTORY OF BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA

The sect that became known as Boko Haram was founded by Mohammed Yusuf, whose thinking was heavily influenced by Wahhabi theology³ in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital of the north-eastern state of Borno. He established a religious complex and school that attracted poor Muslim families from across Nigeria and neighboring countries. Yusuf attracted followers from unemployed youths by denouncing the police and state corruption [Sergie, Johnson 2011]⁴. It has been speculated that the reason Boko Haram was founded by Yusuf appears to be that he saw an opportunity to exploit public outrage at government corruption by linking it to Western influence in governance [Owolade 2014] and warnings fell on deaf ear [Cook 2011]⁵. Stephen Davis, a former Anglican clergyman blames local Nigerian politicians who support local bandits like Boko Haram in order for them to make life difficult for their political opponents⁶.

¹ Moroccan soft power in the fight against radicalization. JTW Interview with Hassan Amillat by Büşra Nur Özgüler & Mehmet Hecan, 2015. Available at: <http://www.turkishweekly.net/2015/09/14/news/moroccan-soft-power-in-the-fight-against-radicalization> (date of access: 10.03.2016).

² Hamed El-Said In defence of soft power: why a "war" on terror will never win. Available at: <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/02/defence-soft-power-why-war-terror-will-never-win> (date of access: 02.02.2016).

³ Ford J. How a fanatical militant group grew to terrorize Africa's most-populated country, 2014. Available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-origins-boko-haram-10609?page=show> (date of access: 02.02.2016).

⁴ Chothia F. Who are Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists? BBC News. Retrieved January 2016. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501> (date of access: 10.05.2016); Whose faith, whose girls? *The Economist*. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2014/05/islam-west-and-nigeria> (date of access: 10.05.2016).

⁵ Nigeria accused of ignoring sect warnings before wave of killings. *The Guardian*, August 2, 2009. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/aug/02/nigeria-boko-haram-islamist-sect> (date of access: 13.05.2016).

⁶ Lamb Ch. A fight for the soul of the world. Sunday Times. Available at: <http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/public/magazine/article1680538.ece> (date of access: 13.05.2016).

Boko Haram emergence is a direct result of rising fundamentalism in the country. The threat it poses to the region today has existed for long. Unfortunately, it has taken the alleged connection with al-Qaeda¹ and the kidnapping of nearly 300 schoolgirls to get outsiders to take notice².

SOFT POWER AS A MEANS OF FIGHTING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Soft power lies in the ability to attract and persuade rather than coerce. Soft power is about influence, example, credibility, and reputation. Hard power, the ability to coerce, grows out of a country's military and economic might³. Soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies [Nye 2004].

On terrorism Harvard Kennedy School Professor Joseph Nye in an interview on "Bloomberg Surveillance, defined Soft Power as the ability to attract and persuade revolutionary group and to prevent them from recruiting. One might ask what factors would make the Nigerian government want to pursue a policy of soft power, and what elements will constitute its soft power strategy. The answers are based on an analysis of the Nigerian environment. Such an examination requires a thorough look at what effects other factors such as Islamic education, religion and the role of international cooperation has to play in the fight against terrorism [Abdulahdi Alshehri 2010]. Power in counter-terrorism is either hard power or the soft power. But prioritizing them depends on the terrorism situation and a government's available capability [Abdulahdi Alshehri 2010: 16].

The strategy of the soft power approach should be composed of ends, ways and means. It may exist in many ways and means; such as rehabilitation programs [Kruglova 2015], financial aid, educational reform, and public information Campaigns. This strategy to be used can be in dimensions: short term and long term. The short term example is strategic communication, including discourse and the media, while the example of the long term is educational reform and the international cooperation [Abdulahdi Alshehri 2010].

The area of education should be with full participation of the Nigerian government, religious institutions, the private sector, and civil society groups in promoting peace education including reorientation programs, which should be integrated in the educational curriculum of schools, and the international collaboration for educational purpose of the imams. And the government partnering with Nigeria's film industry to produce movies and support radio and television programs in the three major languages (Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba) designed to specifically counter narratives and messages promoting youth radicalization [Freedom C. Onuoha 2014].

¹ Nigeria: Borno State Residents Not Yet Recovered From Boko Haram Violence. Wikileaks. Available at: https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09ABUJA2014_a.html (date of access: 13.05.2016)

² Ford J. How a fanatical militant group grew to terrorize Africa's most-populated country, 2014. Available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-origins-boko-haram-10609?page=show>. (date of access: 02.02.2016)

³ U.S. Terror Strategy: Hard and Soft Power. CBS NEWS, May 11th, 2014. Available at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-terror-strategy-hard-and-soft-power> (date of access: 02.02.2016).

THE ROLE OF RELIGION

Religion as a factor plays a defining role in the fault and features line of the Nigerian state, these has played a major role in underlining sectarian consciousness, tensions and radicalization [Alao 2010: 12]. More significantly, nearly every decade of Nigeria's contemporary history is replete with violence and conflicts that have religious undertones.

Religion in some cases thus appears to be the language of politics exploited by both state and non-state actors towards [Akinola Olojo 2013] a political or religious end that are essentially parochial.

However, in the assertion of Jeffrey Seul [Seul 1999] about the role of religion he posits that "religion is not the cause of 'religious conflict'". The aforementioned occurs and has a major impact in the Nigerian Boko Haram case: while religion is essentially a force for good, Boko Haram employs it as a machination to express high levels of negativity. It has thus been stage-managed by the group as an instrument for stereotyping and demonizing opponents, such that exhortations to violence in northern Nigeria have acquired great potency once framed in religious terms [Akinola Olojo 2013].

ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Education is viewed as a process by which individuals are assisted formally through proper direction and guidance to develop their capacities for their own benefit and that of the society. The quality of Education of a nation determines the quality of the people and the quality of the people determines the development level of the nation [Olugbeko, Odunayo, Asagha, Nkoro 2014].

The importance of education is repeatedly emphasized in the Koran with frequent injunctions, such as "God will exalt those of you who believe and those who have knowledge to high degrees" (58:11), "O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge" (20:114), and "As God has taught him, so let him write" (2:282). Such verses provide a forceful stimulus for the Islamic community to strive for education and learning [Cook].

Therefore, long term strategy of "Soft Power" involving socio-economic¹ [Adebawale 2015] and education reforms is essential if the government is hoping to win over the population of northern Nigeria, and correct the legacy of state neglect of the Northern region [Iro Aghedo, Oarhe Osumah 2012]. Improper education and misrepresentation in ideology and transfer of twister tenet of Islamic knowledge and education has led to radicalizing, which is the breeding ground for terrorism in Nigeria and whereas the Nigerian government needs to make a genuine effort to address inequality, retraining of religious leaders. Families can also play an essential role through education in tackling radical efforts by Boko Haram leaders [Hauschildt, Malik 2014]. Hence the need for Government and society to address causes rather than symptoms of terrorism in Nigeria.

Islamic education is not confined to ensuring the practice of the five pillars of Islam. The pillars only constitute the *Ibadah* aspect of the religion. Islamic education includes

¹ 40 Million Nigerian Youths Unemployed — NECA. Available at: http://www.nigeria70.com/nigerian_news_paper/40_million_nigerian_youths_unemployed_neca/717746 (date of access: 15.05.2016).

the doctrine and pragmatic set-up, which emanate from and premised on the ideological framework [Ajidagba 1998].

In Nigeria today, there are some people who adopt a confused approach to defining Islamic education. These people deliberately refer to Islamic education as being synonymous with Islamic studies, which is just a subject in the Nigerian western-oriented educational system". The basic discernible difference is that Islamic studies is an academic subject offered in a formal school setting, whereas, Islamic education refers to the totality of the upbringing of an individual within the content and context of Islam [Hauschildt, Malik 2014], [Kazeem, Balogun 2013].

The Holy Prophet Mohammed was reported to have said that, if Allah wants to do good to a person, he makes him to understand the religion [Kazeem, Balogun 2013]. Therefore, there is no pretense or cover-up about the objective of Islamic education¹.

A research carried out by Omoluwa Olusegun shows that "most Almajiris did not appreciate living outside their parents' home. The findings of the study also reveal that most Almajiris lacked natural affection 74% of them disagreed that they have feeling for family ties and affection for their parents. This corroborated the position expressed by Kumolu (2010) cited in Omoluwa (2014) that children were forced by their parents to leave home for the Almajirihood. 66% of the respondents agreed that they would have preferred to be raised by their parent [Omoluwa Olusegun 2014].

In the same vein the research shows that, 85% of Almajiris aspires for economic prosperity as they desired economic freedom. This buttress the position of Aljharem (2010) that most of them desire to become great men in the future, but that their poverty status inhibits their ability to achieve their aims. While 76% of the respondents agreed that monetary inducement (due to their poverty status) could make them join violent groups. As 92% of them agreed that, they scavenge for survival, and 67% agreed that the Almajiris were vulnerable to joining terrorist organizations. The position of Idris (2013) and Gabriel (2013) cited in Omoluwa (2014) that the Almajiris were vulnerable for recruitment into terrorist organizations was confirmed [Omoluwa Olusegun 2014].

The same research also pointed out that, the Aljamiris overwhelmingly supported Islamic system of education, 92% of the respondents agreed that they prefer Islamic education. In contrast, 48% of them agreed with the Boko Haram ideology that Western Education is evil. This showed that this category of street kid can easily be conscripted to carry out terrorist activities against educational institutions and Christian places of worship. This is in agreement with the report of Farouk (2014) cited in Omoluwa (2014) that the Boko Haram terrorists recruit the vulnerable youths, promote their ideology that western education is evil and corruptive. Alechenu (2013) reported that these vulnerable kids were offered N5000 (about \$20) to burn educational institutions, and to spy on soldiers. 86% of the kids agreed to learn trade/vocations, while 98% want to be prosperous and 79% of them did not want to scavenge for food and clothing or survival [Omoluwa Olusegun 2014].

¹ Sakariyau Alabi Aliyu. Transmission of Learning in Ilorin: A History of Islamic Education 1897—2012. Available at: <https://ies.hypotheses.org/252> (date of access: 15.05.2016).

From the aforementioned we can see the lack of natural affection and aspiration for economic prosperity [Hoechner 2015] as they desired economic freedom, monetary inducement etc. which supports the claims that the persons being recruited for radical activities are vulnerable to inducements of various forms.

EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA

Educational development in Nigeria is guided by the National Policy on Education, which provides for both formal and non-formal education. The formal system prescribes enrollment in primary school at the age of six years and stipulates a 6-3-3-4 structure offering six years of primary, three years of junior secondary, three years of senior secondary and four years of higher education [Adamu 2010]. The structure of system as it operates in 2008 is presented in Fig. 1.

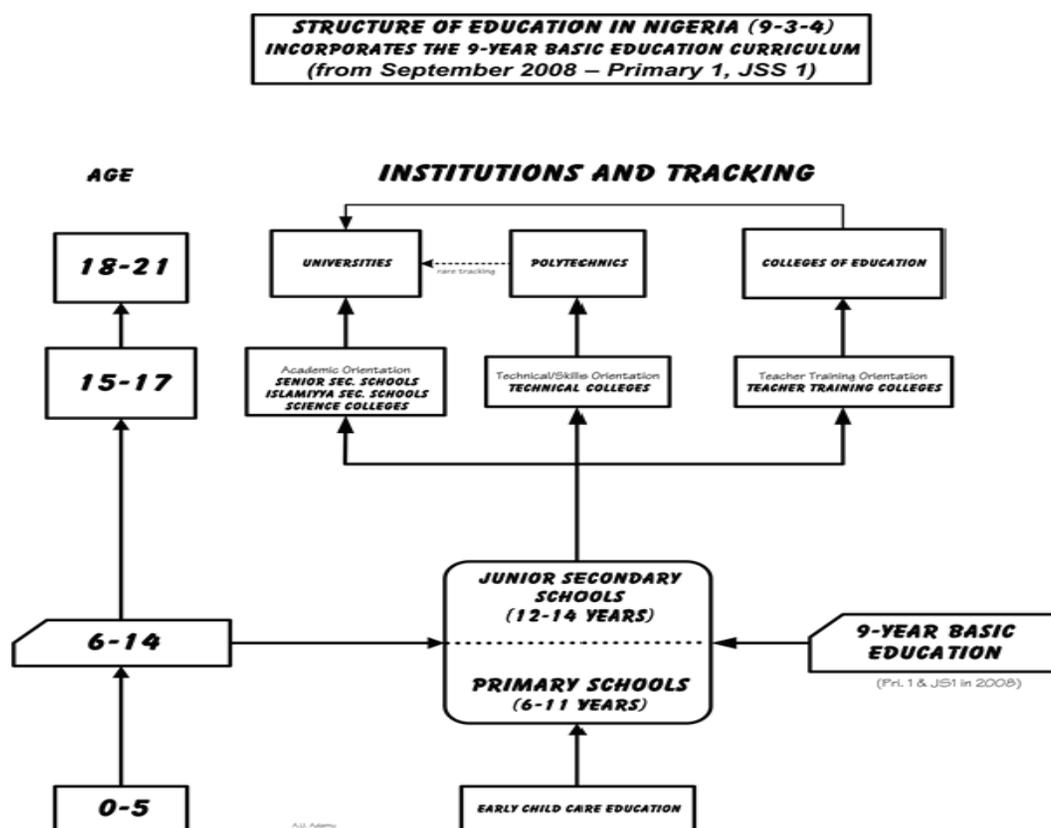


Figure 1. Schematic presentation of Nigeria's education system [Adamu 2010]

Within this structure of formal education for children are included specific curricular provisions for Islamic religious education. The National Commission for Colleges of Education took over the task of preparing and regulating the syllabus for religious education at the Colleges of Education; while the National Universities Commission performed the same task for Universities [Adamu 2010].

The syllabus covers three sections as follows [Adamu 2010]:

1 Hidayah (Guidance): Section [A]: The Qur'an, Section [B]: The Hadith, Section [C]: Tahdhib (Moral Education)

2 Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence): Section [A]: Tawhid (Belief, Section [B]: Ibadah (Worship), Section [C]: Mu'amalat (Human Transactions) This includes Shari'ah, Marriage, Divorce, Custody of Children, Inheritance etc.

3 Tarikh (Historical Development of Islam): Section [A]: Sirah (The Life of the Prophet Muhammad) plus the leadership of the four, righteous Caliphs, Section [B]: The Spread of Islam to Western Africa, Section [C]: Contributions of Muslims to World Civilization.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Religious extremism is responsible for terrorist activities in Nigeria and in other parts of the world. States like the United States of America, China, Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Israel just to mention a few had suffered from terrorist attack. Thus no nation could ensure the safety of her citizens without collaboration with the international community [Omoluwa Olusegun 2014]. Hence, we will be using Morocco as a case for International Cooperation in respect to Nigeria.

Morocco has a special approach in the fight against terrorism which work to drain terrorist networks' resources and reduce all non-physical impetuses that might motivate young people to adopt the doctrines of terrorist violence. These efforts in the religious field have been held in high esteem in countries in North and West Africa, and several bilateral agreements have been concluded¹.

The Moroccan authorities arranged the occasion for Imams to learn Sunni Maliki jurisprudence and Achaari theology, and also promoted a program arranging literacy classes in mosques nationwide in order to raise the general educational levels of the her people².

There are African and European countries calling on Morocco to export its experience attained throughout its fight against terrorism. Among countries that have signed agreement with Morocco are Mali (September 2013) for the education of 500 Malian Imams, Tunisia, Libya, Guinea. Burkina Faso has also requested Morocco to share its experiences in the education of Imams, and consequently, several cooperation agreements have been concluded with these countries. In Senegal, similar terms of cooperation were also initiated with the religious authorities of Morocco. The inter-state cooperation through training programs of Imams was also mentioned when the Moroccan King visited Côte d'Ivoire in March 2013³.

¹ Moroccan soft power in the fight against radicalization. JTW Interview with Hassan Amillat by Büşra Nur Özgüler & Mehmet Hecan, 2015. Available at: <http://www.turkishweekly.net/2015/09/14/news/moroccan-soft-power-in-the-fight-against-radicalization> (date of access: 10.03.2016).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

The objective of this reform and cooperation is to prevent the youth from developing a false “sympathy” toward extremism; if Imams preach moderate Islam in all mosques, then the young will understand that the “sympathy” directed toward the Islam of extremists is wrong and that moderate Islam is the correct path.

RECOMMENDATION

High levels of illiteracy in Nigeria contribute to young people becoming more easily susceptible to manipulation and recruitment into extremist groups. Although the right to education is one of the basic rights of every Nigerian, access to this right is hardly attained. The issue of free and compulsory primary and secondary education in Nigeria should transcend mere statement to practical delivery of this basic entitlement to Nigeria’s children. The Federal Government program aimed at re-modelling the (Quranic) Almajiri educational system is a step in the right direction but needs further overhauling of the curriculum. To reinforce the recommendations above, it must inculcate the training, skills, and scientific knowledge to make children competitive in the modern economy. Local and state governments need to deliver quality and accessible education to more children in northern Nigeria through enhanced allocation to, and judicious use of funds in, the educational sector [Freedom C. Onuoha 2014].

The Nigerian government, religious institutions, the private sector, and civil society groups should invest more resources in promoting peace education, including reorientation programs that will inculcate the value of peaceful coexistence. Peace education will help youth better appreciate the value of peace, making it more difficult for extremists to use them to foment trouble. Peace education should be integrated in the educational curriculum of schools, from primary to tertiary education. Youth radicalization and insidious ideologies that underpin violent extremism also can be curbed through enlightenment programs delivered through radio, television, jingles, and group discussions. The Nigerian government, civil society groups, and the private sector could partner with Nigeria’s film industry to produce movies and support radio and television programs in the three major languages (Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba) designed to specifically counter narratives and messages promoting youth radicalization [Freedom C. Onuoha 2014].

Finally, the development of infrastructure and creating employment to reduce poverty, increase literacy, and re-engineer socio-economic change.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, from the aforementioned, ignorance of true religious teachings is the most important condition for youth to acquire radical views of religion, often propagated by roaming, independent preachers [Freedom C. Onuoha 2014]. One should conclude that as a result of the successes achieved by Morocco, a nation once bedevilled by terrorist activities, which has facilitated and effected the training and retraining of Imams that preach moderate Islam in all mosques, and in turn has resulted in the successful prevention of the youth from developing a false “sympathy” toward extremism. It is therefore imperative to propose that the Nigerian government, as well as nations that are affected by this heinous terrorists acts of Boko Haram endeavor to look towards this

inter-state/international cooperation to enable government's attention and regulation on what the youth and the public receives.

Finally, Nigeria adopting a multidimensional approach towards counter-terrorism should go beyond the security perspective, to include "Soft Power" through Islamic Education, training and retraining of teachers and guided schools' curriculum, successful religious and spiritual strategy meant to promote a version of Islam that extols the values of tolerance, order, and moderation, as well as a socio-economic aspect aimed at ensuring inclusive development which places the individual at the heart of all concerns, that the end result is the approach to combating extremism and in implementing concrete preventive and proactive measures to halt International Terrorism in Nigeria.

Finally, the cyclic loop of recruitment of members to perpetuate the insurgency will not end unless government and private organizations rise to the challenge of reducing poverty, creating employment, developing infrastructure, and increasing literacy in the country, especially in the north where Boko Haram recruiters have access to the mass of jobless youth [Solomon Effiong Udounwa 2013]. The conscious attempt to effectively put to effect the operations and implementation of soft power within the elements of national power and International cooperation would speed the defeat of Boko Haram and return Nigeria to the path of peace and development.

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Дата поступления статьи: 17.01.2016

For citations: Bakare I.A. Soft power as a means of fighting international terrorism: a case study of Nigeria’s “Boko Haram”. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (June 2016), pp. 285—295.

МЯГКАЯ СИЛА КАК ИНСТРУМЕНТ БОРЬБЫ С МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫМ ТЕРРОРИЗМОМ: НА ПРИМЕРЕ БОКО ХАРАМ (НИГЕРИЯ)

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Распространение международного терроризма вызывает возрастающую озабоченность международного сообщества. Вместе с тем все больше проявляется несостоятельность жесткого военного подхода к борьбе с этим глобальным злом. В данной статье анализируется мягкая

сила в качестве инструмента борьбы с терроризмом в контексте образования, религии и международного сотрудничества. Анализируется ситуация с Боко Харам, воинствующей исламистской группировкой, действующей в Северной Нигерии. Данная группировка вызывает все больше опасений и является наиболее серьезным вызовом региональной безопасности. Действия группировки становятся все более дерзкими и жестокими. При этом маловероятно, что Боко Харам можно искоренить исключительно военным путем. «Мягкая сила» будет играть решающую роль в способности привлечь на сторону правительства приверженцев умеренного ислама и остановить приток новых рекрутов для экстремистов. Исламское образование рассматривается в качестве ключевого инструмента стратегии «мягкой силы» для борьбы с терроризмом. Исламское образование подразумевает воспитание личности в духе ислама. В статье анализируется нигерийская система религиозного образования *Almajiri*. Помимо образования, разбираются также механизмы международного сотрудничества с особым акцентом на марокканский опыт обучения маликитской школы исламского права и ашаризма. Авторы подчеркивают, что многие африканские страны обратились с просьбой к Марокко поделиться своим опытом в области подготовки имамов и подписали ряд соглашений о сотрудничестве.

Ключевые слова: мягкая сила, терроризм, религия, исламское образование, Боко Харам, Нигерия

Для цитирования: *Бакаре И.А.* Мягкая сила как инструмент борьбы с международным терроризмом: на примере Боко Харам (Нигерия) // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия «Международные отношения». — 2016. — № 2. — С. 285—295.