



A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF TEXTS OF BOKO HARAM LEADER ABUBAKAR SHEKAU

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ABSTRACT

Sheikh Abubakar Shekau, who was killed in May 2021, had been leading the Boko Haram sect since 2010 constantly makes pronouncements that have become of interest to the Nigerian government and the general public, but his idiolect and accompanying linguistic idiosyncrasies have not been studied for the purpose of forensic investigation. Using quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study has examined transcripts of his pronouncements and identified the stylistic devices Shekau uses in the delivery of his sermons and other pronouncements. This work will be of great value to the intelligence and judicial agencies as it would enhance future investigations into the authenticity of pronouncements purportedly made by Shekau.

KEYWORDS

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS, TEXTS OF BOKO HARAM, LEADER ABUBAKAR SHEKAU.



1.1 INTRODUCTION:

Sheikh Abubakar Shekau has been the leader of the Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād, Arabic name translated as "Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad" and commonly known as Boko Haram, since 2010. Shekau has made dozens of pronouncements in audio, video and text forms. These statements have attracted doubts bordering on their authorship. In government and media circles, the authenticity of some of the releases is discussed to the extent that their publication comes along with a common caveat – that the authorship of some had not been verified. This is primarily because the distinctive linguistic features of the sect's leader, to which references could be made in the verification process, are not known. This study is to postulate the stylistic features of Shekau which could be a reference material in the verification of the authenticity of the authorship of texts claimed to emanate from Shekau.

1.2 - Theoretical Framework: Idiolect

Every individual has a peculiar way in which he writes the strokes of the alphabets that make up words; he has a peculiar way in which he chooses his vocabulary, strings words together, pronounces words, uses expressions, and the length of the sentences he uses in expressing his ideas in verbal or written form. Even if two individuals are in the same linguistic or speech community, they cannot use language in exactly the same way. In sociolinguistics, this characteristic of language use is termed "idiolect." Coined by renowned American linguist Bernard Bloch, idiolect is derived from two Greek words, *idio* (personal, private) and *(dia)* and *lect*. Explaining this characteristic of language use, Ilona Bestiu says:

We each speak a language variety made up of a combination of features slightly different from those characteristics of any other speaker of the language, because each of us belongs to different social groups. The variety unique to a single speaker of a language is called an idiolect. Your idiolect includes the vocabulary appropriate to your various interests and activities, pronunciations reflective of the region in which you live or have lived, and variable styles of speaking that shift subtly depending on whom you are addressing (1).

Teresa Turrel states further that idiolect has a way of providing evidence of the 'linguistic traits' of an individual, especially the person's gender, age, profession, educational level, religion, political affiliation, etc (1). Quoting Smith and Shuy (2002), Turrel states that idiolect helps to reveal the origin, ethnicity, race, nativity and bilingual ability of a speaker (1).

Also, Leech and Short describe Style as a 'manner of doing something,' and this is applicable to creative activities including music, painting, architecture, etc. They say the activities mentioned are invariant, but there is always variation in the way different individuals carry out those activities. They further describe linguistic devices as "the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose." (10). It is often used to describe the linguistic habits of writers or speakers, or the way language is used in a particular communicative genre. This is because the stylistic devices of one author are distinct from those of another. Leech and Short say that "an intimate connection has been seen between style and an author's personality", quoting a Latin expression: *Stilus virum arguit* ('the style proclaims the man'). They say:

For that matter, all of us are familiar with the experience of trying, and perhaps managing, to guess the author of a piece of writing simply on the evidence of his language. Sometimes the author's identity is given away by some small detail reflecting a habit of expression or

thought, and this seems to confirm that each writer has a linguistic ‘thumb-print,’ an individual combination of linguistic habits which somehow betrays him in all that he writes.” (12)

To a great extent, stylistic devices portray the thinking pattern of a writer or speaker, their emotions, his degree of commitment to the subject-matter, his objectives, his intellectual capacity as is evident in his sophistication in language use, his world view and even his background. On his part, Richard Ohmann explains style in writing thus:

A style is a way of writing – that is what the word means... In general, [style] applies to human action that is partly invariant and partly variable...To put the problem more concretely, the idea of style implies that the words on the page might have been different, or differently arranged, without a corresponding difference in substance (20).

Ohmann’s description is elaborated by Paul Simpson who defines stylistics as “a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language.” (2). Simpson says language is important to stylisticians because the various forms, patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structure are “an important index of the function of the text.” (2). He, therefore, says:

To do stylistics is to explore language, and, more specifically, to explore creativity in language use. Doing stylistics thereby enriches our ways of thinking about language and, as observed; exploring language offers a substantial purchase on our understanding of texts. With the full array of language models at our disposal, an inherently illuminating method of analytic inquiry presents itself... Interest in language is always at the fore in contemporary stylistic analysis which is why you should never undertake stylistics unless you are interested in language (3).

Though Shekau fails into the bracket of terrorist leaders and chooses his lexemes from related lexical fields, he has his own distinctive style of language use. It has, therefore, become crucial for an analysis of his texts to elicit the features of his style.

1.3 - Data Collection and Method of Analysis:

The source of data for this study is the transcripts of video tapes released by Abubakar Shekau on two different occasions – May 2014 and November 2014. In May 2014, Shekau flaunted the exploits of his sect by parading abducted 200 school girls from Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok in Borno State. The second is a transcript of Shekau’s reaction to a statement by Chadian President Idris Deby who had claimed that Shekau had died and that the sect had a new leadership. The translations were done by two experts in Arabic, Hausa and English: Aminu Abubakar of the *Agence France Presse (AFP)*, an international news agency, and Abubakar Abdulrahman Dodo of *Aminiya* newspaper, a Hausa language publication of the *Daily Trust* stable.

Using a quantitative approach, the lexemes in the two transcripts are classified under word-classes. The taxonomy of the transcript of Shekau’s statement in May 2014 is tagged as S1 while that of his statement in November 2014 is tagged S2. The classification is to compare and contrast the degree of variation in the prominence of the content words in the two texts. Also, this study uses a qualitative approach by examining the rhetorical implications of how Shekau uses the identified stylistic devices.

1.4 The artefacts:

The following are excerpts from the artefacts, marked as S1 and S2, which are used for this study:

S1

BELOW IS AN EXCERPT FROM A TRANSCRIPT OF BOKO HARAM LEADER ABUBAKAR SHEKAU'S VIDEO TAPE ON THE ABDUCTION OF CHIBOK SCHOOLGIRLS ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 2014

My brethren in Islam, I am greeting you in the name of Allah like he instructed we should do among Muslims. Allah is great and has given us privilege and temerity above all people.

If we meet infidels, if we meet those that become infidels, according to Allah, there is no talk except hitting their neck. I hope you, chosen people of Allah, are hearing. This is an instruction from Allah. It is not a distorted interpretation. It is from Allah himself.

This is from Allah on the need for us to break down infidels, practitioners of democracy, and constitutionalism, voodoo and those that are engaged in Western education, which is the practice of paganism.

If you say, "I pledge to Nigeria my country," it is wrong and an act of paganism. For me, I pledge to Allah, my God, to be faithful to my Allah and you to your country. I, to my Allah, I pledge to my Allah. To be faithful, loyal and honest to serve Allah. And you are saying what? To serve Nigeria? To Serve Allah? Loyal and honest to serve Allah? That is what I will say; this is what you are saying in your reading of Western education. With all your strength you said you will worship a land, this is what you people said.

"They are even saying that they would defend indivisibility of the country and its oneness. For me, I will defend only what Allah said and you are only defending country. This is our differences and that is where I detest that Western education is infidel. Allahu Akbar! This is a message to Muslims to wage war against infidels who are not doing what Allah said. Those who are working to ensure that infidels and their acts become our institutions in the world.

"Suddenly you will hear somebody coming and be saying that there are no religious differences. Where did you hear the talk that there are no differences? Who told you that, for the sake of Allah? Who told you there are no differences when Allah said there are differences in religion? What will you say about what Prophet said that the whites and the Jews will not trust you until you turn to their religion? This is what our leader said and you are telling us something useless.

"You are sitting down in the name of clerics with turbans; you are sitting with Christians thinking it is mediation. Saying it is development and progress, what progress after you have deviated from Allah? We will die killing and slaughtering them. If you meet infidels in battle field, brethren, just harvest their necks. Allah said it and not Shekau. Harvest Jonathan's neck, harvest Kashim's neck, Allah said cut out Burabura's neck. Even in Ka'aba, if someone is doing Salat for so long as he is deviating from what Allah said, he is infidel. Cut out their necks until the time that you will get majority over infidels of the world. And you will get it, Allah said it. A time will come that you will form majority over infidels, face-to-face.

S2

BELOW IS AN EXCERPT FROM A TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO CLIP RELEASED BY 'KILLED' BOKO HARAM LEADER, ABUBAKAR SHEKAU IN NOVEMBER 2014

"Without wasting time, we hereby send a message to the tyrants of Nigeria and other infidels as well as the world's tyrants as a whole in Hausa language.

"You people should understand that we only obey Allah. We tread the path of the Prophet. We hope to die on this path and get eternal rest in our graves, rise up in bliss before our Lord and enter Paradise

(Quotes from the Qur'an in Arabic: "O ye who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Penalty? That ye believe in Allah and His Messenger, and that ye strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah, with your property and your persons: That will be best for you, if ye but knew! He will forgive you your sins, and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, and to beautiful mansions in Gardens of Eternity: that is indeed the Supreme Achievement.").

Our goal is the Garden of Eternal Bliss. May Allah protect us.

"Oh ye followers of constitution, have you forgotten your laws? Since the time we were preaching in Maiduguri, in your constitution in Section 8, verse (paragraph) 2 to 3, in your accursed book called Constitution, which became law for those who are not fair to themselves on earth.

[The Section deals with the creation of new states in Nigeria]

"You shamelessly declared in your radio and newspapers that you were fighting those determined to establish an Islamic state.

"Because of that constitution that barred us from preaching in Maiduguri, we moved out and migrated as Allah ordained

(Quoting from the Koran: Those who believed, and adopted exile, and fought for the Faith, with their property and their persons, in the cause of Allah, as well as those who gave (them) asylum and aid,- these are (all) friends and protectors, one of another. As to those who believed but came not into exile, ye owe no duty of protection to them until they come into exile; but if they seek your aid in religion, it is your duty to help them, except against a people with whom ye have a treaty of mutual alliance. And (remember) Allah seeth all that ye do. (Surah Al-Anfal, 72)).

Have you forgotten that?

And it is you today claiming we made truce with you? In what way did we make truce? Which kind of negotiation, with whom? That your Danladi, the infidel like you, who we will not spare and will decapitate if he falls into our hands today?

"Where do we know him, not to talk of him representing us? Who is Danladi on this earth?

"Allah knows everything. Allah is witness (quoting from the Koran).

"Therefore I tell you (that) we have not made ceasefire with anyone. Only battle, hitting, striking and killing with gun which we long for like tasty meal. This what we believe in and fight for...

1.5 - Data Analysis:

The word count in S1 is 1,759, while that of S2 is 1,270 words, with the preponderance of verbs – S1 (575) and S2 (429). This is followed by the noun class 437 and 385 respectively. This shows that in both texts, Shekau uses more words in reference to actions that occur red at the time of the delivery of his speech, at a past time in the context of the speech, or future events related to the discourse event. It also shows that names of persons, objects and institutions related to the theme and discourse of the subject-matter feature prominently in the text. There are a noticeable low number of adjectives and adverbs in both texts. In S1, there are 22 adjectives, representing 1.25% of total word

count and 44 adverbs, which represents 2.50% of the word counts. In S2, this pattern is maintained. There are 13 adjectives, representing 1.02 percent of the word counts, and 23 adverbs, which is 1.81% of the total word count. As a result of the sparing use of adjectives and adverbs, it is observed that in both texts Shekau hardly uses flowery expressions or even engages in a deliberate attempt to embellish his viewpoints. Below is taxonomy of the word classes and their degrees of prominence in the two texts:

Word Classes	S1	% of Total	S2	% of Total
Nouns	437	24.84	385	30.31
Verbs	575	32.68	429	33.77
Pronouns	377	21.43	227	17.87
Adjectives	22	1.25	13	1.02
Adverbs	44	2.50	23	1.81
Connectives/Conjunctions	108	6.14	28	2.24
Prepositions	121	6.87	114	8.97
Determiners	75	4.26	79	6.22
Total Number of Words	1,759	100	1,270	100

Fig.1 - Word Classes in Shekau's statements

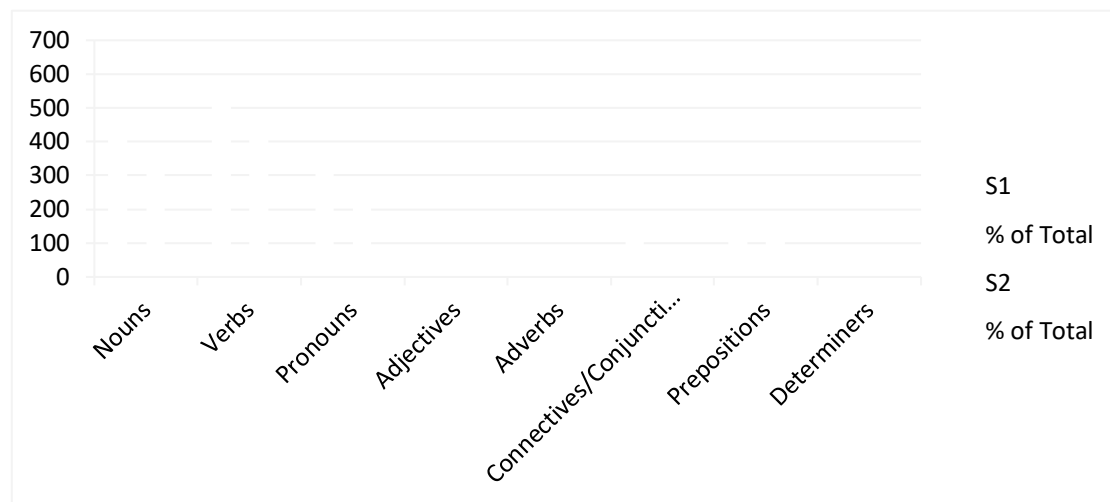


Fig. 2- A bar chart showing the degree of prominence of the word-classes in the texts

i. Use of Nouns

In S1, Shekau uses more common nouns (198 words) than other noun types. Proper nouns closely follow (173 words), while there are 62 abstract nouns. In S2, there are more proper nouns, 156, while there are 92 common nouns and 47 abstract nouns. Here, Shekau uses a lot of religious and political lexemes, so the nouns in S1 follow this pattern. For example the proper noun 'Allah' appears 54 times in S1 while 'Islam' appears 15 times. In the same way Shekau uses the abstract noun 'infidel' 24 times and common noun 'slaves' 12 times. Shekau follows the same pattern in S2, as the nouns are chosen from the semantic fields of religion and politics mainly. For example in S2 he uses the proper nouns 'Allah' 21 times, 'Qur'an' 12 times and 'Constitution' [of the Federal Republic of Nigeria] four times. He does not fail to use the abstract noun 'infidel' in multiple places in the statement.

The degree of complexity of the nouns Shekau uses is not a product of deliberate creative use of language, but of necessity, because the nouns are names of persons, places, things, and ideas which are necessarily rendered the way they are used in societal context. Even his use of abstract nouns is

not spectacular as Shekau chooses them from contemporary discourses, as many of the words are not initiated by him. For instance, in S1 he uses polysyllabic abstract nouns like 'education' four times, 'democracy' seven times and 'mediation' three times. In S2, we find similar polysyllabic abstract nouns like 'negotiation' four times, 'position,' two times, and 'leadership' two times. These nouns are used because they are relevant to the subject-matter Shekau raised in the texts.

ii. Use of Pronouns:

There is a plethora of pronouns in S1 and S2. In S1 there are 377 pronouns, with the second person neutral pronoun 'you' appearing 111 times. It is followed by first person singular pronoun 'I' which appears 58 times, while first person plural pronoun 'we' appears 36 times. There is a significant use of third person plural pronoun 'they', which appears 21 times and the inanimate pronoun 'it' appears 27 times. In S2, the distribution is different, as there are 193 pronouns in the statement. First person singular pronoun 'I' appears 12 times; first person plural pronoun 'we' is used 46 times and second person pronoun 'you' is used 38 times, while third person plural pronoun 'they' is used six times.

Shekau's use of first person singular pronoun 'I' in the statement demonstrates the power relations in the Boko Haram organization. First, it presents Shekau as a domineering and autocratic leader in the group. In his statements, he flexes muscles, declaring what he believes (and does not believe), what he does or would do, rather than what the group believes, does or does not believe, would do or would not do. For instance, he says, "*I will marry off a female at 12; I will do same for a nine year old girl*" (page 2 line 14). In this case, the decision to marry off the underage girl is not that of the group, but that of Shekau, though he is supposed to have spoken on behalf of the entire Boko Haram sect and to be expounding their doctrine. He goes on to emphasize what he would want the world to know, not what the group wants the world to know about slavery. Shekau says, "*What I will want you to know is, there is slavery in Islam, don't be deceive by the United Nations. It is a useless thing and I call them United Nations of absurdity led by Ban Ki-moon*" (page 3 lines 5, 6). It is not the group that is insisting on slavery as an Islamic doctrine. Rather it is Shekau. It is not even the Shura Council of Boko Haram.

Furthermore, he uses 'I' to engage in self-praise as an 'authentic' Muslim, while other Muslims who do not belong to his persuasion are afraid or practice an adulterated faith. He says: "*I am for Allah; you are deceiving people that they are Arabians. No matter what you think, I will not follow anyone except Allah; I will not model anyone except Prophet.*" (page 4 lines 13-15).

Shekau uses the first person plural pronoun 'we' when he wants to demonstrate the exploits of the sect in killing and destructions. On page 2 lines 22 - 26, he says:

I am selling the girls like Allah said until we soak the ground of Nigeria with infidels' blood and so-called Muslims contradicting Islam. After we have killed, killed, killed and are fatigued and wondering on what to do with smelling odour of their corpses, smelling of Obama, Bush, Putin and Jonathan worried us then we will open the prison and lock up the rest. Infidels have no value.

In this excerpt, Shekau presents himself like the 'king' of the jungle. He says he would sell the girls, but 'we' [his followers] would do the killings. Shekau instructs his sect members to kill 'infidels' while he makes money from 'selling' the girls into slavery. From how Shekau uses the first person singular and plural pronouns, it is evident that there is little consensus on whatever is done within

the Boko Haram circle. Power and authority is concentrated on the personality of the leader, irrespective of their doctrinal persuasions, and he exercises it as his emotion directs.

Another pronoun that is significant in S1 is second person plural 'you' which is used in a neutral sense, though the referent could be deduced from who Shekau's perceived audiences are. The pronoun 'you' appears 111 times in a text of 1,759 words, representing 6.31%. It is impactful that one lexical item features so prominently in a single text, but it reflects the temperament of the speaker (Shekau) who has no patience to properly distinguish between one audience and another. Instead of identifying them individually first and later use plural pronoun 'you' to refer to them, Shekau uses 'you' for everyone, among them the leadership of Nigeria, United Nations, Christians, infidels, Muslims who want to negotiate with government and all categories of his target audience. The following are some of the referents in Shekau's use of 'you':

1. Suddenly *you* will hear somebody coming and be saying that there are no religious differences, where did *you* have that talk that there are no differences (page 1 lines 34, 35)

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The 'you' here refers to unidentified persons, the general public. Shekau here is saying that he picks the discourse topic from current debate in the society, though he does not indicate who started the debate and who is listening specifically. Everyone in the country 'hears' the argument while Shekau challenges those who advance the debate.

2. *You* are sitting down in the name of clerics with turbans; *you* are sitting with Christians thinking it is mediation (page 2 lines 2, 3).

In this case, Shekau uses 'you' to address Muslim clerics and condemns them for entertaining talks with Christians, but he does not introduce the clerics specifically before this statement.

3. ...If *you* meet infidels in battle field brethren, just harvest their necks... Cut out their necks until the time that *you* will get majority over infidels of the world. And *you* will get it, Allah said it, time will come that you will form majority over infidels, face to face. (page 2 lines 2-8).

In this excerpt, Shekau uses 'you' to refer to Muslims in general, and his followers in particular. Though he does not mention them by name, it is implied that he is inciting them to go after 'infidels,' and engage in extrajudicial killing of those who do not belong to their persuasion, until 'they form majority over infidels.'

4. We will hold *you* as slaves, who told *you* there is no slave? They said human rights, silly liars, when did *you* know human rights (page 2 lines 10, 11).

Shekau uses the pronoun 'you' here to refer to Chibok girls who are abducted and being held for over two years. He attempts to justify their abduction by saying Islam sanctions slavery. Also, the 'you' as used by Shekau here could refer to all 'infidels' who are now told that they are 'potential slaves' of Shekau, if they are captured by his foot soldiers.

5. *You* infidels of the world, *you* have met trouble. We must follow Allah, and *you* should die with bitterness (page 2 lines 15, 16).

Here Shekau uses 'you' in reference to 'infidels', mocking them because they are in danger of bitter death if they failed to follow his own style of Islam.

6. It is Jonathan's daughter that I will imprison; nothing will stop this until *you* convert. If *you* turn to Islam then *you* will be saved (page 2 lines 28, 29).

Shekau clearly identifies former President Goodluck Jonathan as the 'you'. He threatens to imprison 'Jonathan's daughter' unless the former president converts to Islam.

7. Humorous... people like *you*, promoters of same-sex marriage, animals know rights more than them. Even a sheep doesn't sleep with another sheep, but *you* keep a woman and a woman as husband and wife (page 3 line 12 -14).

In this excerpt, Shekau uses 'you' in reference to Western countries and the emerging culture of same-sex marriage. But he does not mention the names of the countries, though he speaks about Obama in a preceding part of the text. Because it is not only the US that is conceding to the strange type of marriage, Shekau could be referring in general to Western countries where same-sex marriage is being legalized.

8. *You* are placing N50 million to give to any person who catches me. *You* don't know that there are people who were slaughtered in the name of Islam? I am nothing before such persons one (page 3 lines 26- 28).

Again, Shekau does not mention the referent, but 'you' here refers to the Nigerian government which has promised to pay N50 million to anyone who could reveal the whereabouts of Shekau to security agencies.

9. I will sell *you*, Obama, Bush I will sell *you* for peanut (page 3 line 38)

Specifically, Shekau mentions that 'you' here refers to Obama and Bush here.

10. To the people of the world, everybody should know his status, it is either *you* are with us, Mujahedeen, or *you* are with the Christians (page 4 line 39).

Also, the referent here is clear – the people of the world. The noun 'world' here is either a metaphor for those who lust after the wealth and pleasure of this world or literal reference to the seven billion populations on the earth.

11. It is a Jihad war against Christians and Christianity.... Did *you* know me? I have no problem with Jonathan. This is what I know in Qur'an. This is a war against Christians and democracy and their constitution. Allah says we should finish them when we get them (page 5 lines 4 – 8).

Here Shekau makes clear who 'you' refers to – Christians. He makes it clear that he is at war with Christians, as much as he is at war with the democratic and constitutional government.

It is apparent from the foregoing that Shekau has more than ten different groups as his target audience in S1. Therefore, in this statement Shekau threatens 'infidels', presidents, and Christians. He mocks Chibok girls; incites his followers and other Muslims; challenges and condemns other Muslim clerics and declares war against the whole world.

Shekau uses the third persons plural pronoun 'they' in the same manner without clearly providing the referent. He uses 'they' 21 times in S1 in a manner of colloquial transliteration from his Mother Tongue to English. It takes a discerning listener to identify the persons that these 'they' may be referring to. Below are some of the examples:

1. *They* are even saying that *they* would defend indivisibility of the country and its oneness (page 1 line 28).

The referent is not clearly stated, but it is to Muslims who have opposed the division of Nigeria along Muslim-Christian lines by Boko Haram.

2. *They* said human rights, silly liars (page 2 line 5). 'They' here refers to human rights organisations that have condemned Boko Haram for taking Chibok girls as 'slaves'.
3. I said *they* should even desert the school; *they* should go and marry (page 2 line 19). Here Shekau uses 'they' to refer to Chibok schoolgirls.
4. Those that died working for Allah, *they* will not lose their deeds, and *they* will see it in heaven (page 2 line 38). Shekau uses 'they' in reference to his fighters who die in action.

5. Abraham Lincoln, Aminu Kano, Tafawa Balewa are all infidels because it was constitution that *they* promoted (page 4 lines 16, 17). Shekau goes down memory lane to attack past world leaders. He uses 'they' here to recall their memory and how they 'misled' the people from the path of Allah to democracy and constitutionalism.
6. All those with turbans looking for opportunities to smear us, *they* are all infidels (page 4 line 31). He uses 'they' here to refer to Muslims who call for an understanding among religious groups in the country.
7. It was in this land that *they* cleaned faeces with Quran in Maiduguri. In the university they did same. *They* are cheating Islam and deceiving (page 5 lines 10, 11). The referent here is not known, but Shekau may be referring to a popular incident, so popular that his some of his audience - the sect members and Muslims – could easily recall it.

In the second text, S2, Shekau does not betray his characteristic use of personal pronouns, though there is a marked difference in their numbers and frequencies. In S1, he uses 'I' for as many as 111 times, but in S2, he uses 'I' for sparingly for 12 times. However, the manner in which he uses 'I' in S1 is similar to how he applies it in S2. Shekau demonstrates that his position and disposition is synonymous to that of the group, irrespective of the existence of a Shura council which is supposed to take major decisions for the sect.

In the following examples, Shekau shows his autocratic traits: "*I'm only giving this speech for those people who want to convert to Islam. I don't care whatever you say. What is my business with you? Allah is my focus.*" (page 3 lines 10, 11). This statement is supposed to have been the position of Boko Haram on the rumours about behind-the-scene negotiations between government and Boko Haram. Expectedly, the first person plural pronoun 'we' should have been used to introduce the group element in the speech. Instead, Shekau talks about 'I' as the authority of the speech, and he goes on to dismiss the impressions of other people about the group, saying 'Allah is *my* focus,' instead of using the possessive case 'our' which should have been the case if he speaks for the group. Furthermore, Shekau displays his characteristic self-praise in S2 the way he does in S1. He says: "*I thank Allah. I started with knife and today I have seized more than 20 armoured vehicles. They are in my possession.*" (page 3 lines 13, 14). The exploits of the sect is here equivalent to those of Shekau as he personalizes the achievements of the group which started fighting government forces with 'knife' but now has more than '20 armoured vehicles'. Shekau exudes an air of pride as he appropriates the group's achievements to his personal efforts.

Closely related to his attitude of self-adulation is his style-switching from talking to his audiences to self-talk, similar to a stream of consciousness reflection. Shekau demonstrates this on page 2 lines 29, 30, where he says: "*It is the same Shekau whose father is Muhammadu, his son is Muhammadu, his name is Abubakar. It is the same Shekau, he is still the one. Shekau, eat the heart of infidels since infidels don't want to obey Allah.*" This shows Shekau in self-praise, but he mocks victims ('infidels') by talking and encouraging himself to 'eat the heart of infidels', justifying why he should do so. This self-talk actually begins with Shekau introducing himself to himself in the oral discourse with an air of pride similar to that of a man who performs a feat he never thought he could have achieved.

Similar to S1, Shekau uses the first person plural pronoun 'we' 36 times in S2 to rein in the group's support for his stance on issues - from invoking the name of Allah to support their deadly activities to rejecting overtures by government and its agents to negotiate the release of Chibok girls. These two uses of 'we' is captured in page 2 lines 7 and 8, thus:

Therefore I tell you (that) *we* have not made ceasefire with anyone. Only battle, hitting, striking and killing with gun which *we* long for like tasty meal. This what *we* believe in and fight for.

In this quote Shekau introduces himself as a man of absolute power in the group when he uses 'I' as the person who declared the position of the group, instead of 'we' who should do so. The group inclusiveness would necessitate the recasting of the statement's introductory clause thus: 'therefore, 'we' tell you...' However, he quickly adds that 'we' are involved in the killings by creating the savage imagery of 'battle, hitting, striking, and killing with gun...'

Shekau uses the second person plural pronoun 'you' 35 times in S2 to refer to his multiple audiences, the way he uses it in S1. He does not clearly provide the referents, but in the context in which the pronoun is used, those he referred to become apparent. The following are some examples:

- (1) *You* shamelessly declared in your radio and newspapers that *you* were fighting those determined to establish an Islamic state.(Page 1 lines 25, 26).

Here he addresses the Nigerian government and its officials which had made the declaration that Boko Haram was bent on establishing a caliphate.

- (2) Don't *you* know we are still holding your German hostage (page 2 line 11).

Shekau uses 'you' here to refer to Cameroon. Boko Haram had taken hostage a German expatriate in Cameroon and it was reported that a ransom was being negotiated for his release at the time Shekau made this video statement.

- (3) If *you* know the condition your daughters are in today it could lead some to convert to Islam and some to die from grief (page 2 lines 20, 21).

He uses 'you' in reference to the family members of the abducted Chibok schoolgirls.

- (4) Now *you* don't know what to do, *you* want to convince your leaders that are tired of *you* (page 3 line 4).

The referents here are the government panel members who had indicated that Boko Haram leaders were ready to negotiate the release of Chibok schoolgirls.

- (5) Well done to *you* the expert in Psychology, well done *you* expert in Biology, well done *you* believer in 'I pledge to Nigeria my country' (page 3 lines 17, 18).

Shekau, in this sentence, addresses experts who argue that Shekau may have been killed and that the character that appeared in an earlier video is/are impostor(s).

- (6) *You* should repent and turn to Allah and follow the Qur'an. *You* should follow the Qur'an. *You* should follow the Qur'an (page 3 lines 23, 24).

In this concluding paragraph, Shekau speaks to everyone he has addressed in the preceding sections of the text, but he introduces the need for 'repentance' and obedience to the doctrines of the Qur'an as a way of demonstrating to other Muslims that he is a true believer in the Holy Qur'an. By invoking these Islamic doctrines, Shekau tells Muslims that everything he does is derived from the Qur'an, including abductions, taking slaves, killings and attacks on modern democracy.

iii. Use of Vocatives:

Closely related to Shekau's diverse uses of pronouns is the marked deployment of vocatives in both S1 and S2. Though the use of vocatives is popular in religious rhetoric, Shekau has extended its use to all his discourses such that it is now part of his idiosyncrasies or idiolect. For instance, he begins S1 with the vocative "My brethren in Islam" (page 1 line 2), then he goes further and directly speaks to such 'brethren' thus: "You are sitting down in the name of clerics with turbans; you are sitting with Christians thinking it is mediation" (page 2 lines 4, 5). Shekau goes further to terrorize his victims by directly speaking to them thus: "You infidels of the world, you have met trouble, we must follow Allah, and you should die with bitterness" (page 2 lines 14, 15). On page 2 lines 17, 18, he addresses Muslims directly thus: "Brethren, cut out infidels from their necks, brothers you should capture slaves." He turns to individuals and addresses them directly; "Jonathan, if I catch you, I will sell you, Obama, Bush I will sell you for peanut" (page 3 line 37). Apart from his direct statements to Muslims and his victims, Shekau uses vocatives as he 'speaks directly to Allah' in S1. He says: "Oh Allah, make us to work for you. Oh Allah, help us to work for you (page 3 line 1).

In S2, Shekau uses vocatives as well. He says, "Oh ye followers of constitution, have you forgotten your laws?" (Page 1 line 1). Then he quotes the scripture to contrast the constitution thus: ye owe no duty of protection to them until they come into exile; but if they seek your aid in religion, it is your duty to help them, except against a people with whom ye have a treaty of mutual alliance" (page 1 line 32, 33). By using vocatives, Shekau seems to invoke divine authority in his statement so as to give it the force of religion and convince other Muslims to align with his viewpoints.

iv. Use of Adjectives:

In both S1 and S2, Shekau uses adjectives sparingly, but they are significant in conveying his attitude and evaluation of his audience(s). In S1, there are 22 adjectives, while in S2 there are 13 of them. The adjectives in S1 include 'wrong', 'useless,' (used two times), 'silly,' (used three times), 'mad,' (used two times) 'worthless,' and 'great' used once. There is the preponderance of the use of negative adjectives, mainly to humiliate 'infidels' and 'unbelievers'. On page 2 lines 12 and 15, Shekau describes human rights crusaders as "silly liars," while on page 3 line 26 he says: "it is you [Jonathan] that is mad". The positive adjective in S1 is mainly in praise of Allah: "Allah is great" (page 1 line 5).

In S2, Shekau uses negative adjectives 'bad,' 'unfortunate' mainly to insult 'infidels.' On page 1 line 23, he refers to the Constitution of Nigeria as an 'accursed' book, while on page 2 lines 17, 18 he mocks the United States thus: "Allah has proved too *difficult* for the United States, Allah has proved too difficult for a plane called drone, bastard." Referring to some government officials, he uses a derogatory adverb, saying: "You *shamelessly* declared in your radio and newspapers that you were fighting those determined to establish an Islamic state" (line 2 page 25). Shekau's resort to insults and mockery portrays him as uncouth and illogical in his thinking and rhetoric. He lacks the finesse of Yusuf, who uses anecdotes and empirical examples to advance his arguments.

v. Use of Repetition: (a) Anaphora:

In both S1 and S2, Shekau uses parallelism, that is, several parts of sentences, especially subjects and verbs being either repeated or given equal importance for the sake of emphasis. Shekau uses repetition, a characteristic of oral discourse, to achieve this objective. Some of them include anaphora. This is the repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of phrases, clauses or sentences, for the sake of emphasis and desired impact. Shekau uses anaphora in a manner that presses home his

position on his thematic viewpoints. In S1, he repeats the subject and verb of some sentences, though he substitutes the subject with pronouns in some cases. The following are some examples:

1. If we meet infidels, if we meet those that become infidels (page 1 lines 13).

Here Shekau repeats the adverbial clause of condition 'it...' to emphasize that 'infidels' should be hunted and killed.

2. This is an instruction from Allah. It is not a distorted interpretation. It is from Allah himself. This is from Allah, on the need for us to break down infidels (page 1 lines 14 – 16).

Shekau makes a declarative statement, and repeats it, but with the substitution of the subject with non-personal pronoun 'it'. Shekau's intention here is to incite his audience which he wants to incite by impressing it on them that he is a messenger of Allah. But he concludes with a hypophora, in which case he repeats the sentence and provides additional information that it is the will of Allah that 'infidels' should be killed.

3. "*I pledge to Nigeria my country,*" it is wrong and an act of paganism. For me, *I pledge to Allah my God, to be faithful to my Allah and you to your country. I to my Allah, I pledge to my Allah.* To be faithful, loyal and honest to serve Allah (page 1 line 21 – 23).

Shekau repeats the phrase, 'I pledge' four times, first to declare his allegiance to Allah, but also to condemn the majority of Nigerians who make the national pledge, describing them as worshippers of Nigeria, which he claims is synonymous with paganism.

4. ...Just harvest their necks... Harvest Jonathan's neck. Harvest Kashim's neck. Allah said cut out Burabura's neck (page 2 lines 3 – 5).

Here we have the repetition of the agriculture register 'harvest' and the noun used as metonym here 'neck', with the ellipsis of the subject, though in the context of the sentences it should be 'you.' Shekau uses these words in order to incite his followers to indiscriminately attack and kill government officials wherever they may be found.

Similarly, in S2, Shekau uses anaphora to emphasize his points, repeating sentences, clauses, phrases or some parts of the structure of sentences. The following are some examples:

1. Allah has proved too difficult for the infidels. Allah has proved too difficult for the tyrant. Allah has proved too difficult for the United States. Allah has proved too difficult for a plane called drone, bastard. Allah has proved too difficult for everyone. Allah is mightier than everyone (page 2 line 16 – 18).

In this excerpt Shekau repeats a sentence six times, beginning consistently with the name (subject) Allah, but with the use of nouns with negative meanings to describe the object. Shekau praises 'Allah' for his resilience, but describes his enemies as 'infidels,' 'tyrants,' 'United States,' and 'drone.' Shekau uses this device to enable his audience appreciate the 'support' he receives from Allah, perhaps to impress on them that he is an authentic servant of Allah.

2. We did not negotiate with anyone. We did not negotiate with anyone. We did not negotiate with Chad. We did not negotiate with Cameroon. We did not negotiate with Nigeria. We did not negotiate with the Chadian ambassador. We did not negotiate with Africa. We did not negotiate with Asia. We did not negotiate with Europe. We did not negotiate with America. We did not negotiate with the United Nations (page 2 lines 32 – 36).

Shekau repeats the same sentence beginning with the subject 'we' seven times. He repeats also the indefinite pronoun 'anyone' twice, but goes on to replace the object with Chad, Cameroon, Africa, Asia, Europe, America, and the United Nations. Using this approach, Shekau apparently wants to say he has ruled out any form of negotiation with any imaginable mediator, country or institutions.

3. You pledge to Nigeria your country... I, Shekau, I pledge to Allah my God... I pledge to Allah my God... (page 3 lines 19 – 21).

Like in S1, Shekau again condemns Nigerians who recite the National Pledge, using anaphora to mock them. The first sentence begins with the subject “you,” while the two others begin with ‘I’, but the verb ‘pledge’ is constant, while the object varies between noun ‘Nigeria,’ and ‘Allah’. Each of them ends in noun- phrases with possessive pronouns as preface: ‘your country’, ‘my God,’ and ‘my God.’ Shekau uses the possessive pronouns to emphasize the nature ‘idolatry’ that those who ‘pledge to Nigeria’ practised’ – he claims that ‘the country’, instead of ‘Allah’ is the god of those who recite the National Pledge.

4. You should ... follow the Qur’an. You should follow the Qur’an. You should follow the Qur’an (page 3 line 23, 24).

Shekau repeats this sentence three times in order to emphasize that his own ideology is in line with the teachings of the Qur’an and condemns government for ‘preventing those who follow the Qur’an from obeying Allah’ (page 3 line 25). He tries to justify the attacks on security agencies and other Nigerians by saying they were reactions to efforts by security agencies to prevent his followers from obeying God’s injunctions which are contained in the Holy Qur’an.

5. It is a lie. It is a lie (page 3 line 25).

Shekau repeats this simple sentence to emphasize his condemnation of government forces and to create the background for the threat that follows in the next sentence, “whosoever refuses to listen will be dealt with by Allah.” Shekau believes that his gang members are instruments of justice in the hands of Allah, so they kill for Allah.

(b) Amplification:

Shekau uses amplification to emphasize the main ideas in his sentences by listing and repeating phrases and clauses. He then adds nouns as objects at the end of each construction. In S1, there are copious examples of Shekau’s use of amplification to emphasize his viewpoints. Below are examples:

1. Harvest Jonathan’s neck, harvest Kashim’s neck. Allah said cut out Burabura’s neck... Cut out their necks ... (page 2 lines 5 – 8).

Shekau amplifies the need to kill infidels by listing out those whose neck should be cut – Jonathan, Kashim (governor of Borno State), Barubaru (A Borno politician). Here he incites his listeners to kill indiscriminately, especially if the target victims are politicians and government officials.

2. After we have killed, killed, killed and become fatigued and wondering what to do with the odour of smelling corpses - smelling of Obama, Bush, Putin and Jonathan (page 2 lines 24 – 25).

Shekau, in this excerpt, amplifies the ‘need to kill’ by repeating the verb ‘kill’ three times, but goes further to create an imagery of the extent of such killings by saying the killers would be ‘fatigued’ and the corpses would be so numerous that corpses would be smelling everywhere. In addition, he amplifies the category of those to be killed – Obama, Bush, Putin, Jonathan. He tends to say whites and Nigerian leaders who are associated with them should be killed.

3. Prophet Muhammad took slaves himself during Badr war. He killed many and because of this, I will also kill Obama, if I catch him. I will kill Jonathan, if I catch him. Just like you want to catch me and kill me (page 3 line 23 – 25).

Shekau, in the above excerpt, goes on to amplify the need to kill, by alluding to Badr war in the dispensation of the Prophet, and goes on to say he would kill Obama and Jonathan.

In S2, Shekau applies this rhetorical device (amplification) in several sections of his statement. Some are mentioned below:

1. Therefore, I tell you (that) we have not made ceasefire with anyone. Only battle, hitting, striking and killing with gun which we long for like tasty meal. This is what we believe in ... fight (page 2 lines 7 – 8).

Shekau amplifies the idea that Boko Haram has not entered into any truce with government by listing how the sect carries out its acts of violence - 'battle, hitting, striking and killing with gun' - in order to impress it upon his listeners that the sect had not repented from its known penchant for mass murder and shedding of the blood of 'infidels.' He concludes the emphasis by stating that the sect believes in fighting. Therefore, anyone who is deceived by the rumour that the sect was entering into any form of truce with government is ignorant.

2. Allah has proved too difficult for the infidels. Allah has proved too difficult for the tyrants. Allah has proved too difficult for the United States. Allah has proved too difficult for a plane called drone (page 2 lines 16 – 18).

Shekau, in this excerpt, triumphantly tells his audience that Allah is on the side of his fighters, and goes ahead to list the powerful enemies and weapon of war that Allah has prevented from being used against the sect. Such powerful enemies include 'infidels,' 'tyrants,' 'United States,' and 'drone.' Shekau here amplifies how Allah, through divine intervention, has shown that He has power over and above all the enemies of the sect.

3. It is the same Shekau whose father is Muhammadu. His son is Muhammadu. His name is Abubakar. It is the same Shekau, he is still the one (page 2 line 29, 30).

Here Shekau amplifies his invincibility by repeatedly describing his humble background and simplicity. His objective is to say it is 'ordinary' Shekau who has successfully abducted over 200 schoolgirls, defied the Nigerian military and those of American superpower collaborators. He uses amplification to emphasize his exploits.

vi Rhetorical Questions:

Both S1 and S2 are replete with rhetorical questions which do not require answers but are meant to emphasize a position that justifies the evil being perpetrated by the sect. The following are some:

1. Where did you have that talk that there are no [religious] differences? Where did you get this talk because of Allah? Who told you there are no differences when Allah said there are differences in religion? What will you say about what Prophet said that the whites and the Jews will not trust you until you turn to their religion? (page 1 lines 35 – 38).

In this excerpt Shekau uses rhetorical questions to emphasize the doctrine that there is no meeting point between Islam and other religions. Even when he alludes to the scriptures, he uses a rhetorical question to do so. Shekau drums it into the ears of his followers that they should not adhere to any reconciliatory discourse by government on the subject-matter of unity of religions because of the mutual suspicion between Islam and other major religions in the world.

2. ...How can you say there are no slaves? Why are you slaughtering chicken? If someone say there is slave, what is wrong? Are daughters of slaves not slaves? It is Quran that said so, for example can you go into someone's house with his wife and children and say they should leave the house? ...Where is Allah and you? Where is Allah and you Jonathan and Obama? Where is Allah and Ban Ki-moon? (page 3 lines 6 – 11).

The whole of this paragraph is made up of rhetorical questions which are meant to fault the condemnation Boko Haram for taking Chibok girls as slaves. Defying the anti-slavery position taken

by the international community and canvassed in the international media, Shekau uses the above rhetorical questions to argue that Islam approves of slavery.

In the same manner that he uses rhetorical questions in S1, so Shekau does in S2, as shown in the following examples:

1. ...And it is you today claiming we made truce with you? In what way did we make truce? Which kind of negotiation, with whom? That you're Danladi, the infidel like you, who we will not spare and will decapitate if he falls into our hands today? Where do we know him, not to talk of him representing us? Who is Danladi on this earth? (page 2 lines 1 – 5).

Shekau uses five rhetorical questions in this excerpt to disown a Dandali who claims to be a member of Boko Haram and was a link between government and the sect. Using these rhetorical questions, Shekau emphasizes the view that there is no deal between the sect and government.

2. "What is negotiation?What is our business with negotiation? (page 3 lines 1, 2).

In this excerpt, Shekau further uses rhetorical questions to declare, without any doubt, that the sect is not negotiating the release of Chibok girls with government.

vii. Hypophora:

This involves the raising of one or more questions, then proceeding to answer them. Shekau uses this in his statements to put a stamp of finality on his positions. These are found in both S1 and S2:

1. ...To serve Nigeria? To Serve Allah? Loyal and honest to serve Allah? ... With all your strength you said you will worship a land...(page 1 line 5 – 7).

Shekau, in a mocking manner, repeats the question on the National Pledge, then, in a sentence and clauses that follow, explains why he condemns those who make the pledge.

2. You think we will not worship Allah? Allah said his land is vast and only him will be worshipped (page 3 line 18)

Shekau, in this excerpt, uses hypophora to challenge those who oppose the sect's decision to worship Allah as they wish. He begins with a question and explains why they have to rather obey Allah than obey man.

3. You killed Mohammed Yusuf, are you not saying he is even better than Shekau? Even if you kill me, other fighters will rise better than me... (page 3 lines 30, 31).

Shekau uses this hypophora to state that even if he were killed, more Shekaus, vicious Shekaus would emerge from the ranks of the sect.

We find a similar rhetorical device in use in S2, as follows:

1. What is my business with you? Allah is my focus (page 3 line 11).

This is an example of hypophora which Shekau uses to emphasize that he cannot be swayed by any kind of discussions with government because he has set his eyes on Allah, to do only those things that Allah instructed him to do.

2. Don't you know the over 200 Chibok schoolgirls have converted to Islam? They have now memorised two chapters of the Qur'an (page 2 lines 22, 23).

Shekau poses a question on the conversion of Chibok girls to Islam, and provides an explanatory response that the girls have even memorized sections of the Qur'an. He uses this hypophora to emphasize that the girls can no longer return to their parents who are mainly Christians because it is an offence that attracts capital punishment among Jihadists for a Muslim to convert from Islam to another religion.

3. What is negotiation? We did not negotiate with anyone. It is a lie. It is a lie (page 3 line 1).

Shekau uses hypophora to make it clear that the sect is not involved in any negotiation, and he does so in a three-sentence response to the question he poses. They declared that the sect is not negotiating with 'anyone.' In this way Shekau reduces to ashes the hype in the media, powered by government officials, about the hope of having the over 200 Chibok girls released from captivity. The sect's leader smartly uses hypophora to argue away ideas that are contrary to the doctrines of Boko Haram.

viii Imagery and metonymy:

Shekau uses imagery in both S1 and S2, though they may not be as effectively as a skillful orator would do. For instance, in S1 he uses the phrase 'hitting their necks' (page 1 line 14) to create an imagery of slaughtering rams, now seen as the Jihadists' method of eliminating 'infidels.' In addition, he uses the metonyms 'neck,' a part of the human body in place of the persons, seven times. Instead of directly saying that infidels should be killed, Shekau urges his followers to hit their 'necks', to highlight the pains or grievousness of the death. He uses the phrase verb 'break down' (page 1 line 17) to conjure up imagery for the killing of infidels. He creates the imagery of 'land filled with blood' (two times) to drive home his point on the essence of his campaign - mass killing of infidels. He says: "Until the land is soaked with blood, you have never fought me" (page 2 line 30). In S2, Shekau urges his followers kill 'infidels' by using a cannibalistic imagery when he says "eat the heart" of infidels. Here he calls on his followers to kill unbelievers by eating their heart.

1.6 – Summary and Conclusion:

This study has comparatively examined transcripts of pronouncements by Abubakar Shekau and has discovered symmetry in the stylistic devices in both of them. The linguistic fingerprint of the sect's leader is apparent in the choice of polysyllabic nouns and verbs from the fields of religion, politics, education, foreign affairs, and other thematic areas to drive home his rhetoric which are replete with anti-establishment, hate and bigotry messages. Also, Shekau uses pronouns 'I,' you,' and 'they,' in various contexts. First, he uses the first person personal pronoun 'I' to praise himself and emphasize the asymmetrical power relations in which he lords it over other members of the sect. This autocratic and domineering linguistic posture is on display in the texts. But he uses the second person personal pronoun 'they,' and third person plural personal pronoun 'you,' indiscriminately without clearly identifying the pronoun antecedents, in a colloquial manner characteristic of a semi-literate speaker. His use of vocatives is significant as he addresses Allah, invoking His authority to authenticate Shekau's spiritual leadership in the militant Islamic sect. Furthermore, Shekau's use of repetitive devices and rhetorical questions expose his emotive and spontaneous mannerism. His use of repetition is typical of oral speeches rendered extempore which lack the finesse of a deliberate and expert orator.

This study will be of use to security agencies, judicial officials and journalists who, at one point or another, are challenged with the task of authenticating texts that claim to have been authored by Abubakar Shekau. Also, scholars in the fields of stylistics, forensic linguistics and other textual analysis who intend to compare the stylistic devices of Shekau with those of other Jihadist sects' leaders will find this work as an essential reference material. Furthermore, government officials charged with the task of devising counter-terrorism measures will find this work useful in their desire to understand or counter the rhetoric of terrorists in general and Abubakar Shekau especially.

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