

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES OF RELIGION AND THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

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ABSTRACT: *Religion, just like culture, is a way of life, which is built upon faith in a given factor, attribute or being. It is the faith that builds up how the individual who is entangled to the religion would conduct himself in any given circumstance. The concept of religion is a way or mode of faith or belief which a person has taken for a given period. It requires a complete emotional, physical, spiritual and psychological being of any follower. Religion is faith in anything in expectation of a reward or aid; either in the present life and world or in another. The teachings of various religious groups operate in a way and manner wherein the people of a given religion see themselves only as worthy of the expected reward and others as not being worthy of any reward and thus, infidels. This, in line with other factors; to some extent, create a form of radicalism and indoctrination amongst the followers. Religion has a way of compelling its followers to abide by any directive and prescription given in line with the doctrines and beliefs of the religion. Terrorism, on the other hand, has to do with any form of violence or conduct which is at the expense of the peaceful co-existence of the people of a given area at any given time; which tend to be seen as internal aggression or external insurrection against the state. Arguments have it that the issues relating to religion do in one way or the other relates to terrorism; while others say that the role of religion is not to provoke but to quell terrorism. In whatever dimension; this paper is meant to make a discourse on the issues of religion and the fight against terrorism. The paper will have a global view of the major concepts, with close instances of the issues of religion and terrorism as it enclosed on the Sub-Saharan countries; most especially Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: religion, terrorism, radicalism, indoctrination, internal aggression, external insurrection

INTRODUCTION

Within the past two decades, one of the apparent observations is the increase in the numbers of groups who may be termed as carrying out terrorist attacks who have deepened the motivation or rationale for their crusade and attacks to religious beliefs and doctrines. These persons tend to borrow the legitimacy of their actions to religious faith or purposes. The religious sect that has been the most used as an asylum for terrorism is Islam (Cilliers, 2015). Some scholars have stated that following the events of September 11, 2001, at the World Trade Center in the USA, more and more Islamic related radical movements have been formed. In line with the opinions of these scholars, Islam is one, if not the major source of religiously inspired terrorism. However, another group of scholars have argued vehemently against the position relating terrorism to majorly on a

religious basis or relating terrorism to Islamism; their points of arguments being that behind every terrorism, there are sorts of socio-cultural, socio-political or socio-economic reasons. Furthermore, where religion is fronted as the motivation, it is usually a subterfuge to gather sympathy or common attention from other members of the same religious group (Tan, 2006). In a plenary session at Ottawa in October 2001; one of the major international organizations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, (NATO) during their Parliamentary assembly made statement and declaration in line that they understood the operational plans of the terrorists whose agenda is geared towards causing a fluke and discord between the state actors and religions and cultures. They declared that in the fight against terrorism, there would not be any war against any religion or culture, as they would defend culture and religion in the fight against terrorism (Friedman, 2015).

The act of terrorism has eaten deep into the fabrics that hold the society together. No place is safe. Security is no longer guaranteed in many countries. The conditions in so many developing countries are depicted as blow. In some countries, “the bloodshed in them can make an ocean”. The political union is losing its grips. The citizens are disenchanted with the state of things in society. The economic balance in the society is at an abysmal state. The rich get more productive, and the poor die poorer. The state of health facilities is at the porous condition. Elites cannot hope in the health sector for their health (Keith, 2011). Talk of the education sector, things have fallen apart. The machinery of the state which is supposed to aid the building of a fortified state is in one or the other contributing to the drained state of things in the society. The infrastructural composition of the state is leaking and irritating. Standard of living is orchestrated in a manner that it could only fit for the higher class in the society, and the cost of living seems unaffordable. The citizens no longer enjoy the true dividend of political governance. Political participation has fallen to its lowest ebb. What become the consequences of these circumstances? (Keith, 2011).

1. Dehumanized citizens
2. Disenchanted youths
3. Malnourished Nationalism
4. Starved patriotism

Circumstances that brought sets of persons into situations like the ones mentioned above are capable of creating societal monsters, traitors of peace and harmony. It creates youths who did not fancy their childhood sufferings and any atom of brainwashing could make them the worst of humans.

In a society like Nigeria, where there are –diverse ethnics, multi-religious sects, and variant languages, the sermon about unity in diversity is said into one ear and leaving from the other ear. Reasons not being far from the fact that some ethnics feel so cheated out and manipulated by the socio-political and socio-economic structures of the society. These fellows would see nothing good about the union which they are like the union is more favourable to a given religious sect, ethnic and language group (Wilks, Pendergas, Leggat, 2006). To them, there is no equity or equality in

the union; thus, the union ought to be melted by all available means. The results of such situations would end up being (Thomas, 2009):

1. Ethnic chauvinism
2. Religious bigotry
3. Tribal superiority
4. Cultural inferiority
5. Egocentric leaders

Just like an adage says “There is no smoke without fire”, one would agree with me that situations as these would create a form of discontentment which may result in an act or acts of terrorism. The problem is that the situation is in existence and the results are the series of terrorist attacks which are hovering in the news daily. The big question is, does religion has a hand in the build-up or the fight against terrorism?

The question above is based on the fact that religion has a universal value. The universal value which religion has is on its ability to shape one’s opinion and influence the behavioural responses and patterns of one at any given time. Studies that have been carried appear to agree that religion and education are agents of socialization that have the greatest level of influence on its followers’ behaviours, with religion being the first amongst equals. If the findings are assumed to be true; it follows that religion may have a hand in the build-up of terrorism or the fight against terrorism. Thus, this paper aims to make a discourse on the issues of terrorism and the fights against terrorism.

Statement of the Problem

Over the years, the act of terrorism has turned to be a nightmarish incident, and a means to instil fear and carry out violence against the people. The experience some countries like Nigeria is passing through now wears a novel look as the violent acts terrorism are carried out in distinct forms, times, strategies, means and locations. These violent acts often include killing, suicide bombing and mass bombing with their targets usually a certain category of persons, definite centres of attraction like worshipping centres, residential buildings, non-residential or commercial buildings, telecommunication masts, government installations and infrastructure, kidnapping and abduction; as well as depriving people of their legitimate entitlements (Thomas, 2009).

Arguments have it that the terrorist activities though perpetrated by non-state actors; it does not wholly exclude politicians; government functionaries and security agencies which ought to help to protect the lives and properties of the citizens. Although the terrorists and their allied forces have caused and laid on the people an irreparable loss, their activities have red-coloured the pathways of Nigeria with blood, and the clouds get darkened by the smoke emitting from burnt and destroyed property; the terrorists do not see anything wrong with their actions or any reason to feel remorseful about their activities.

Since the terrorist activities have caused unnecessary panic and fear in the society; which led to the vast majority of the people seeing the people involved in terrorist acts as being evil persons; the terrorists do not consider themselves as evil. Observations in a study posit that they have a strong belief system wherein they believe that they are legitimate combatants fighting for righteousness and cleansing of the corrupt world full of infidels; see themselves as freedom fighters and not criminals or rebels, and they firmly believe that their mission must be accomplished in whatever possible means (Internet).

Scholars have related this system of belief to the everlasting reward being taught by most religious groups. Moreover, one of the deadliest terrorist groups in the world (BOKO HARAM) has increasingly shown great disaffection to people of other religious sects, and has carried out attacks on them individually and collectively; it calls to the point where one would ponder if religion does not nurture terrorism. The state of events in the society has caused people to develop a form of phobia for certain religious sect since almost all terrorist attacks are directly or indirectly connected to the religious sect (Islam). Notwithstanding, Islamic scholars have proffered that Islam opposes violent attacks on persons who are not armed or violent, and since terrorist attacks are on civil society, it cannot be rooted in Islam (Bockstette, 2008).

Concepts of Terrorism

Keith (2011) emphasized that there is neither a consensus academic nor an accurate legal consensus regarding the definition of terrorism, various government agencies and legal systems use different definitions. Keith also stated that governments have been averse to formulate an agreeable, legally binding definition. According to Keith, the difficulties in summing a definite definition arise from the fact that the term is politically and emotionally motivated. Terrorism is a criminal act that sways an audience afar the immediate victim. The definition of terrorism seems controversial as it depends on how one views it from his perspective.

Eke (2015) in his work stated the provisions of the International Law Commission, which defined terrorism with an expansive application of legal theory, as such it includes:

- (a) Any act causing death or grievous bodily harm or loss of liberty to a Head of state, persons exercising the prerogatives of the Head of state, their hereditary or designated successors, the spouse of such persons, or person charged with public functions or holding public positions when the act is directed against them in their public capacity.
- (b) Act calculated to destroy or damage public property or property devoted to the public purpose
- (c) Any act likely to imperil human lives through the creation of public danger, in particular the seizure of aircraft, the taking of hostages and any form of violence directed against persons who enjoy international protection or diplomatic immunity.
- (d) The manufacture, obtaining, possession or supplying of arms, ammunition, explosives or harmful substances with a view to the commission of a terrorist act.

Whittaker (1995), in his book, analyzed the definitions given by the United Nations General Assembly 1994, in condemnation of terrorist acts which described terrorism as:

“Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them.”.

This definition by the United Nations did not achieve an Inclusive perspective on International Terrorism that incorporates a single, all-embracing, legally binding definition of terrorism.

Though, Bockstette (2008), proposed a definition, based on psychological and tactical aspects of terrorism; thus

“Terrorism is defined as political violence in an asymmetrical conflict that is designed to induce terror and psychic fear (sometimes indiscriminate) through the violent victimization and destruction of non-combatant targets (sometimes iconic symbols). Such acts are meant to send a message from an illicit clandestine organization. The purpose of terrorism is to exploit the media in order to achieve maximum attainable publicity as an amplifying force multiplier in order to influence the targeted audience(s) in order to reach short- and midterm political goals and or desired long-term end states.”

However, according to Hoffman (2013), even if an all-inclusive definition of terrorism could not be proffered, he identified certain characteristics that terrorism could be viewed. He suggests that; Terrorism could occur from an ineluctably political aims and motives of violence or threat of violence designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target, conducted by an organization with an unrecognizable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure, whose members do not wear a uniform or identifying emblem (Hoffman, 2013). The researcher holds the view that the meaning of terrorism is dependable on the laws of various countries which are in line with international best practices and laws. The reason the laws of the various state are to be hinged on the international best practices and laws is to ensure that no country would employ her law to define terrorism in a manner that suffocates human rights, and activities of civil societies.

M. Smith (Internet)in his work enumerated the categories of terrorism as follows:

1. International and Domestic terrorism
2. Separatist
3. Ethnocentric
4. Nationalistic
5. Revolutionary
6. Religious
7. Political

Whatever category to which a particular terrorist attack is categorized; it is relative to the motivation or reasons for terrorism.

Concept of Religion

The concept of religion may be seen as a way or mode of faith or belief which a person has taken for a given period. Religion requires total emotional, physical, spiritual and psychological being

of any follower (Ezeh; 2019). Lim & Putnam (2010) stated that religion should and must be distinguished from Christianity or Islamism. According to Okoro (2011); religion is a matter of belief, in a place where there is something on *which* the people put their belief on for supernatural aid; there is religion.

In any way and manner in which one decides to define religion, the commonality is that through the history of man and the world itself; religion as a concept has garnered both negative and positive influences overtime. Philosophers and sociologists have argued about the functions of religion and the contribution it has on the failure or success of nationhood. Karl Marx in one of the famous quotes stated that religion is the opium of the masses (people) and he also asserted that religion has to a very great level and extent, a seductive power or influential touch on the followers. To him, the seductive powers or influential touch could make any follower assume as right without questioning or attempting to rationalize any directive or instruction given (Marx, 1844)

Religion is also a way of life. According to some divine theorists, religion is the basis of every known society in the world today. These persons ascribe the contents of the constitutions of various countries to the “Ten Commandments” which was historically presented to Moses for the Jewish people, which are in one way or the other being also upheld by most religious groups in the world today (Lim,& Putnam, 2010).The researcher will proceed to show the major religions in the world, their conception about life and their expectation as to everlasting rewards.

Table 1: Religions of the world and Emphasis about life and Afterlife

Religion	Meaning of Life	Emphasis on an Afterlife
Buddhism	The person escapes the cycle through re-birth. Become a bodhisattva then help others attain enlightenment	Rebirth or nirvana. Nirvana is seen simply as the cessation of suffering by some and as a heavenly paradise by others
Christian Science	“Life, Truth, and Love understood and demonstrated as supreme overall; sin, sickness and death destroyed.	Heaven is “not a locality, but a divine state of Mind in which all the manifestations of Mind are harmonious and immortal.”
Christianity	All have sinned and are thereby separated from God. Salvation is through faith in Christ and, for	The resurrection of body and soul; eternal heaven or hell (most denominations); temporary purgatory)

	some, sacraments and good works.	
Confucianism	To fulfil one's role in society with propriety, honour, and loyalty.	Not addressed: .this world
Hinduism	Humans are in bondage to ignorance and illusion, but are able to escape. Purpose is to gain release from rebirth, or at least a better rebirth	Reincarnation until gain enlightenment.
Islam	Submit (Islam) to the will of God	to gain Paradise after death. eternal Paradise or eternal Hell
Judaism	One is to live by God's commandments live ethically. Focus is more on this life than next	Not emphasized; views vary: no afterlife, shadowy existence, World to Come (similar to heaven), Gehenna (similar to hell), reincarnation

Source: Available at <http://www.religionfacts.com/big-religion-chart>

It is argued, and the researcher verily agrees that most behavioural responses of the followers of any religion are based on the everlasting rewards that come at the afterlife. Thus, the afterlife syndrome could be a major motivation why one could easily give up with the existing life in the present life now in expectation of the rewards of the afterlife (Internet).

Religion and Fight against Terrorism

Religion is a social force which can be utilized to build bridges or manipulated to destroy bridges or forestall the building of any bridge at all, in so far as human relationship and the society at large is concerned. The functionality of religion in any given society is based on certain factors, which may be political, economic, and cultural. It follows that the utilization of the tools made available by religion is dependable on the environment and the people in such an environment in which the particular religion operates. Religion ought to be seen as a complete way and manner of life built upon faith in a supreme being which often cause a certain level of ethical conduct, actions, inactions and reactions at the individual and social levels.

Terrorism, on the other hand, is a condition that ought to be combatted. There is no level of anger or disenchantment that could be used to justify attacks and brutality on innocent non-combatant civilians; which are often the primary targets of the terrorists. There have been lots of loss and massive shock inflicted on the people who have not done anything to deserve the onslaughts being meted by the terrorists against the masses. One will be queried if they are fighting because of being

disenchanted with the economy and political structure, why pulling up attacks against people who are in a similar situation as you are. The activities of terrorists in hijacking aeroplanes carrying civilians, bombing buildings majorly or partially occupied by non-combatant persons, abduction, kidnapping and execution of innocent and harmless children, the execution and video coverage of their victims, the burning and incessant attacks on communities, schools, government amenities and worship centres are all innumerable acts which cause shivers and shocks to the society at large (Internet).

The clandestine truth is that the fight against terrorism would be complete if there is an overreaching mystification of the acts of terrorism, which would result in combatting the consequences instead of the root causes. In the fight against terrorism, there is a need to develop a sound strategy which can effectively and efficiently fight against terrorism. The strategy to begin with maybe to examine the conditions which are responsible for issues of anger, frustration, and desperation and disillusionment, which all combine to ignite terrorist acts. In this regard, it will be so inimical to gear efforts on the individuals and organizations involved in the terrorism, but overlooking the socio-political or socio-economic circumstances which are responsible for the activities of the terrorists would only end up brewing another set of terrorists (Bockstette, 2008). Findings show that the use of devastating force on terrorists have not always yielded positive outcomes, as it ends up being a tool with which new sets of terrorists would be brainwashed to agree that the government cared less about the people and could waste the people at ease without blinking. This is substantiated with the observations that a terrorist attack gets more energized and fearless, each time one of their own is killed. On this note, what should be attacked or fought against is not the individuals who are manipulated into the acts of terrorism but the conditions that made easily accessible to manipulations. Observations in various studies show that acts of terrorism is brewed by the ill-fated actions of the elites regimes which expose the more significant part of the masses to resentment, frustration and disparities, as well as rogues or thugs in the name of government which uses the state political power and security forces to wedge war against peaceful protesters, civil societies and consequently denying the masses the dividends of governance. Fight against terrorism has to do with 'deradicalization' of the radicalized persons who are involved in the terrorist acts(Hoffman, 2013).

To this, scholars have different shapes of opinions about the 'deradicalization'. To them, fight against terrorism has no static rules, it is not a rigid set of strategies; each level and stage of the fight has a purpose and methodology, and it is not ascertainable if what works in one circumstance or locality would work in another. The emphasis here is that there are different categories of terrorism and variant motivation for terrorist attacks, and operation or strategy used to combat one category of terrorism may not be useful in another. For instance, Amnesty program was used for the Niger-Delta militants, and it seems that a relatively positive result was achieved from the strategy applied; but the result may not be the same if directly applied to the Boko Haram (Eke, C. 2015).

This is because, whereas Niger delta militants are motivated basically by economic negations, and whence plans were brought to the forefront to provide the economic needs, the individual dropped arms and embrace peace. Economic and political negations do not only motivate the Boko Haram like ISIS; they are also religiously motivated. The assertion certifies this by Cillers who said that the group known today as Boko Haram may be referenced to be a religious extremist group from the Islamic religion. Cillers posited that the Boko Haram group in their affiliation to Islam had preferred to be referred to as “Jama’atu Ahlissunnahlidda’awatiwal Jihad”. Their preferred name means ‘religious conscious persons who are overtly committed and concerned to the Jihad and the teachings of the great prophet, as well its propagation.’ (Cilliers, 2015).

On several occasions, footage or eye witness of persons who are engaged in terrorist acts, especially in the sub-Saharan countries reveals that the terrorists usually make a known familiar cry, *Allah Akhbar* which is associated to the Islamic sects. The nibbling question is if their love for religion inspires these sets of terrorists; why then do they carry out attacks on pilgrimage to the holy land of mecca and have also be found attacking some mosques (Islamic place of worship). The available answer to these is that these terrorists are fanatics and extremist who see themselves as better than all others and in a situation where they think they assume that their compatriot is not keeping the faith in the manner it ought to be kept; they are justified to eliminate them for infiltrating the faith (Wilks J., Pendergast D., Leggat, 2006).

CONCLUSION

Terrorism has various causes; one of them is when a given ideology attempts to have a monopoly of truth without giving room for any ideological variation or innovations in a given society. Terrorism has been identified as a social virus that has eaten deep into the very social fabric with which the society is woven. Various religious concepts create a soft landing for terrorism, and those doctrines only give credence to itself and cast aspersions on others.

The availability which religion offers as to the influence it could sway on her followers should be maximized to preach Justice, love, and compassion, peace, harmony as core values and virtues of any ardent religious follower. Religions ought to move off from charade of rituals, rites and show of fervency when same is not being reflected in the lifestyles of the followers. If these values are well impacted into the followers of various religions as universal concepts and values, it will help in motivating genuine faiths amongst the people. Teachings of religious groups should be more centred on living life in a meaningful manner in this present life and not more of a utopian happy life ever after.

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