

Religious terrorism in Nigeria as renewed determination to “fight for God”

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Abstract

The current spate of religious terrorism in Nigeria is concealed by the perpetrators as a desire to “fight for God”. It is often argued by the insurgents that they are “fighting for God”. The present level of terrorism in Nigeria, occasioned by the Boko Haram insurgency, is commonly adjudged to be the most devastating in her religious and political history. The act of terrorism has affected economic, political and social development in Nigeria, amidst destruction of lives and property. The objectives of this study include an examination of some common causes of religious terrorism and the attendant panaceas. The study also examined the reinforcement of the perpetrators due to the conviction that they are “fighting for God”. The study applied the historical research design method. The theories of B.F. Skinner and Abraham Maslow which address the principle of reinforcement and motivation respectively underpin the study. Findings from the study revealed that most of the terrorists are reinforced by the conviction that their act would be rewarded through easy opportunity to get to paradise since their actions were perpetrated in favour of God. The study also revealed the common causes of religious terrorism and some immediate panaceas. The recommendations include the education of the religious adherents by the church, mosque, family and other forms of mass enlightenment by the government and non-governmental organizations. The implications of the study include the unwillingness of international investors to come to the nation due to the unsafe state occasioned by the activities of the insurgents. In addition, the law-abiding citizens are faced with constant attacks on their lives and property by the terrorists who claim to be “fighting for God”.

Keywords: “Fight for God”, religious terrorism, terrorism.boko haram, Nigeria

Introduction

Religion has varied definitions. This is mostly due to the fact that several scholars and adherents view religion from their individual prisms or perspectives. This has continually made religion difficult to define. However, Obilor defined religion as “the whole complexes of attitudes, convictions and institutions through which we express our deep fundamental relationship with reality and not excluding the created order” (Obilor 2002: 63). The doubts cast by others with respect to whether religion has to do with man and the Supreme Being is addressed by the definition of Omoregbe (in Omomia 2015:60). He defined religion “as essentially a relationship, a link established by the human person and the divine person believed to exist”. It should be

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emphasized that it is outside the scope of this paper to determine “the physical personality of the divine person” or “Supreme Being”. Suffice it to state that the paper takes due cognizance of the subjective sentiments held by those involved in religious terrorism and their claimed allegiance to the “Supreme Being”. They see him as deserving their ultimate submission, consequently acting in his favour and expecting eternal dividends in paradise and the associated blessings.

There are also different definitions of terrorism. According to Walter Laqueur: “Terrorism is the use or the threat of the use of violence, a method of combat, or a strategy to achieve certain targets ... It aims to induce a state of fear in the victim, that is ruthless and does not conform with humanitarian rules ...” (Laqueur 1987:143). Bruce Hoffman consider terrorism to be “ineluctably political in aims and motives, violent – or, equally important, threatens violence, designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target, conducted by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure (whose members wear no uniform or identifying insignia), and perpetrated by a subnational group or non-state entity” (Hoffman 2006:43). Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman view terrorism as “an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individuals, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators.” (Smith and Jongman 1988:8).

Terrorist actions are directed towards weak and unarmed targets with the aim of achieving an undeserved reputation and publicity. The perpetrators of terrorist acts desire to draw attention to themselves with respect to establishing their religious, political or ideological persuasions. It is often their main objective to make others accept these positions. There is an amazing dimension to the act of terrorism. This has to do with the fact that most terrorists do not see themselves as doing any harm; hence they do not see their actions as evil. According to Muazu and Babagana (2015:11) “they believe that they are legitimate combatants, fighting for what they believe in, by whatever possible means to attain their goal”. The victim of a terrorist act shares a contrary opinion as he sees “the terrorist as a criminal with no regard for human life” (Muazu and Babagana 2015:11).

Contextualization

Individuals, more often than not, respond to religion from a purely emotional disposition due to the fact that most religious phenomena are usually explained through recourse to personally acclaimed spiritual comprehension. This paradigm often “betrays” religion as highly subjective. Most religious expressions are often taken for granted, believing that such religious dispositions may not engender any harm. This may have minimized the interrogation of religious claims made by different perpetrators of crimes leading to blazing display of acts of terrorism. The perpetrators of different religious crimes do not feel any sense of remorse. They are somewhat deluded into believing that such crimes were perpetrated in the interest of their religious beliefs, hence acceptable to God, who sees those involved as “working in his interests”. Those who perpetrate different acts of religious terrorism contend that they are “fighting in favour of God”, therefore obviously working “in his interests”. They are mostly deluded into believing that this should motivate God towards reciprocating their “good gesture” by ultimately granting them some notable eternal dividends and access to “paradise”. That is, they are sure of eternal bliss in paradise (Gwamna 2011; Juergensmeyer 2003).

The spate of religious terrorism has taken on a global dimension. Suffice it to state that the experience of the September 11th, 2001, in the United States of America (popularly referred to as 9/11) could be adjudged as morbid reflection of religious terrorism (Gwamna 2011:2). This

experience, in the opinion of the writer, may have also emboldened the different terrorists groups who became engaged in all forms of atrocities in the name of fighting for God. The climax of the contemporary religious terrorism in Nigeria is exemplified by the Boko Haram insurgency.

The Boko Haram sect which holds the philosophy that the “Western form of education is forbidden” is said to have captured some towns which include “Damboa, Gwoza, Bama, and some of Nigeria’s towns bordering the Cameroons, Borno State and Mubi, Madgaki and Michika in Adamawa State” (Omomia 2015:66). Their activities which has spread to the neighbouring West African countries like Cameroon, Niger and Chad, have left untold devastation as they attack innocent citizens in their bid to be fighting the cause of *Allah*. They carry out their attacks through suicide bombings and outright abduction of the citizens of locations captured by them. On the 14th of April, 2014, a total of 276 girls were abducted by the sect from Government Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria. These girls were alleged to have been taken to the Sambisa Forest, Borno State. On the 2nd of May 2014, 53 of the 276 girls were able to escape from the captivity of these terrorists. They narrated how they were raped severally by their captors (Omomia 2015:67).

There arose both local and international advocacy for the release of the girls abducted from Chibok by the terrorists. Notable among the local groups that mounted this advocacy was the #BringBackOurGirls group, as they remained undaunted in their pursuit. It was in October 2016 that the first set of 21 girls were freed at the instance of the International Red Cross Society that brokered a negotiation between the Nigerian government and the Boko Haram insurgents (Kamouni, 2016). It is commonly believed in Nigeria that the negotiation was based on an exchange of Boko Haram prisoners who were freed in exchange for the girls. Another batch of 82 captured girls were freed in May 2017 (Busari and McCleary 2017). The girls stayed in the Boko Haram enclave for almost five years.

There was yet another scene of horror by these terrorists when at about 5:30 pm, February 19th 2018, they abducted 110 school girls within the age range of 11-19 years from Government Girls’ Science and Technical College, Dapchi, Bulabulin, Yunusari Local Government Area, Yobe State, North East, Nigeria (Aljazeera 2018). However, on the 23rd of March, 2018, 106 were released; three of them died when they were being taken away, and one of the girls, Leah Sharibu, was held back (and is still being held) for refusing to denounce her Christian faith (Olowolagba, 2018). There appears to be a similarity among the various religious terrorist groups with respect to their acts. The Boko Haram group in Nigeria, Al Shabab in Somalia, Taliban in Afghanistan and Abu Sayyaf in Iraq leave their victims with tales of loss and horror as they engage in the wanton destruction of lives and property. This more often than not gives a “bad name to religion”.

SN	Date	Attacks by Boko Haram
1	January 7	At least five soldiers were killed during an attack by Boko Haram fighters on an army base in Buni Yadi, Yobe state.
2	January 8	Two people in Borno were killed in a residential area in the Kaleri area of Gwange after an attack by two female suicide bombers. Hours prior to this, three suicide bombers, all male, attacked a military checkpoint in the area, killing themselves and a civilian self-defense fighter after one of the vests detonated.
3	January 13	When militants attacked the 119 Battalion and 133 Special Forces Battalion of 7 Brigade deployed to Kangarwa, Kukawa Local Government Area, Borno state, three soldiers were killed in the encounter, that also resulted in 10 Boko Haram casualties. On the same day, four suicide bombers had staged an attack in Madagali that killed at least five civilians.

4	January 16	In what was the first attack of many on the premises of the University of Maiduguri (UNIMAID) in 2017, a twin suicide bombing by two teenagers on the school campus resulted in the death of three people, including Professor Aliyu Mani , the director of the university's Veterinary Teaching Hospital.
5	January 23	After invading the Dzaku village of Askira-Uba Local Government Area of Borno state, Boko Haram fighters killed eight people and kidnapped an undetermined number of women and children.
6	January 25	A civilian member of the Joint Task Force (JTF) in the Kaleri district of Maiduguri, Borno lost his life after two suicide bombers detonated their vests upon confrontation while trying to enter a mosque.
7	January 28	A recently secured Maiduguri-Biu highway was attacked by Boko Haram terrorists, leading to the death of seven people. There were reports that claimed that the number of casualties was actually more than 20 civilians, in a convoy that had been travelling under military escort. The Theatre Commander of Operation Lafiya Dole, Major General Lucky Irabor , refuted the figure, claiming that only one person had died.
8	January 31	One person died after a suicide bomber attacked a mosque in Dalori quarters, close to UNIMAID, during morning prayers
9	February 5	Boko Haram terrorists launched an attack on a military base and went on to burn down Sasawa , a town near Damaturu , Yobe state. No official death toll was released
10	February 10	Seven soldiers lost their lives after troops of Operation Lafiya Dole fell into a Boko Haram ambush in Ajiri village of Dikwa Local Government Area, Borno state.
11	February 11	Terrorists invaded Mussa Village of Askira-Uba LGA, Borno state, burning dozens of residential houses with a man suspected to have been trapped in the attack.
12	February 13	About 30 armed Boko Haram terrorists gained access to Mifa community in Chibok LGA, Borno, killing an Islamic scholar and breaking a boy's hand.
13	February 16	An attack by three suicide bombers near Muna Garage , a bus station in Maiduguri, left two civilians dead.
14	March 14	Boko Haram released a video that showed the execution of three people accused of being spies for the Nigerian army
15	March 15	Boko Haram terrorists attacked Magumeri in Borno State, killing seven people
16	March 16	Four soldiers died in another attack on Magumeri after an estimated 300 Boko Haram fighters targeted the military and a local police station.
17	March 25	Militants kidnapped 18 girls and four women from Pulka village in Gwoza
18	March 30	In two separate attacks, Boko Haram successfully abducted 22 girls and women from the village of Pulka and outside the village of Dumba . The abducted victims in Dumba were four women from the family of a herdsman who had refused to pay protection money to the terrorist group.
19	March 31	At least three people were killed by Boko Haram in an attack on Kaye near Gumisiri village in Dambo Local Government Area of Borno, where terrorists burnt down the village and kidnapped dozens of people, including three women.
20	April 5	Boko Haram fighters killed seven men in a farming community outside Maiduguri, and stole an estimated 360 head of livestock
21	April 12	A soldier was killed during a suicide and gun attack on a military checkpoint on the outskirts of Maiduguri
22	May 4	An attack by two female suicide bombers on Mandarari ward in Konduga LGA in Borno resulted in the death of five people

23	May 13	In another attack on UNIMAID, two suicide bombers detonated their vests when they were confronted, killing themselves and one security guard. Nine Boko Haram terrorists also killed 11 farmers in Amarwa , a village in Konduga LGA, 16 kilometers from Maiduguri
24	May 15	A suicide bomb attack by three female bombers resulted in the death of two people in Shuwari Buri village, close to Maiduguri.
25	May 18	In two separate attacks, three suicide bombers were killed when they attacked UNIMAID again, reportedly killing one soldier
26	May 20	Seven people died when Boko Haram fighters stormed remote villages in Mussa and shot at villagers in Askira-Uba LGA, Borno state. An unspecified number of people were also reportedly kidnapped
27	June 7	In multiple attacks that rocked the eastern axis of Maiduguri, at least 10 people were killed.
28	June 8	After the arrest of a Boko Haram commander in a failed attack in the village of Hambagba , near Gwoza , on the Cameroon border, almost a dozen terrorists invaded the community, killing four people and kidnapping six
29	June 9	Two teenage boys were killed in Fadama Rake village in Hong Council, Adamawa state, after unknown people handed them explosives contained in a polythene bag
30	June 11	After simultaneous raids by Boko Haram terrorists on Komdi and Tuyan villages in Borno, at least five people were reportedly killed
31	June 18	12 people were killed by three suicide bombers who detonated explosives in separate attacks on Kofa , a village that's only 8 kilometers from Maiduguri
32	June 20	After an ambush attack by militants on a police convoy on the Maiduguri-Biu highway, three people were killed while 16 women were reportedly kidnapped. Boko Haram later released a video, claiming some of the kidnapped women were police officers
33	June 25	A UNIMAID security guard was killed by a suicide bomber, while eight others died in another attack by four suicide bombers in Zannari community in Maiduguri
34	July 11	12 JTF members and seven civilians were killed in separate attacks on Moloi, Judumeri and Polo-Sabongari areas of Maiduguri
35	July 15	A 12-year-old boy was killed at Muna Delti area of Jere Local Government Council, Borno state after he was strapped with an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) by suspected Boko Haram terrorists
36	July 17	Eight people were killed when a female suicide bomber detonated explosives at a mosque in Maiduguri.
37	July 23	Seven people died when suicide bombers attacked two Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in Maiduguri
38	July 25	In what was Boko Haram's bloodiest attack in 2017, at least 69 people, including soldiers and civilians, died after an ambush of an oil exploration team in the Magumeri area of Borno
39	July 28	At least eight people were killed and 14 others injured in a suicide bomb attack on an IDP camp in Dikwa LGA, Borno
40	August 1	After an attack on Mildu village in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa state, Boko Haram terrorists killed 7 people and injured 10 others
41	August 4	A suicide bomb attack at the Molai General Hospital , Maiduguri led to the death of three people including a hospital assistant
42	August 5	At least 31 fishermen were killed by Boko Haram jihadists in two separate attacks on the islands of Duguri and Dabar Wanzam in Lake Chad

43	August 9	At least one person was confirmed dead from an attack by Boko Haram Islamists in Ghumbili community in the Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa.
44	August 11	Two tractor operators were killed by Boko Haram terrorists in Jere LGA of Borno while they were working on a farm
45	August 12	At least four people were killed in an attack at Wanori-Amarwa community of Konduga LGA of Borno
46	August 15	A suicide bomb attack on a market in Konduga resulted in the death of 16 people, with more than 80 others sustaining injuries
47	August 20	Two people were killed following an ambush by suspected Boko Haram terrorists along Damaturu-Biu road in Yobe State
(Source: Samson Toromade, 2017 (21.08.2017). Pulse.ng).		

Purpose of the study

The purposes of the study include: to undertake an overview of religious terrorism, to examine how the reinforcement of religious terrorists has motivated them in their bid to “fight for God”, to identify some common causes of religious terrorism in Nigeria and to advance some common panaceas to religious terrorism in Nigeria.

The study applied the historical research design method. The writer relied on historical data from both primary and secondary sources. The data/information were relevant to the research purpose/objectives of the study. In this research design the author undertook a historical review of various studies that addressed the aspect of religious terrorism in Nigeria. Different works addressed the aspects of religious intolerance and dialogue, but there is a dearth of literature in respect of what actually motivates and reinforces religious terrorists towards the continuous perpetration of their nefarious activities. It is this gap that this study has addressed.

Theory and conceptualisation

The theories underpinning this study are Burrhus Frederic Skinner’s theory of behaviourism and Abraham Maslow’s theory of motivation. The theory of Skinner has gained popular acceptability in behavioural psychology. This theory was postulated in 1938. It consists of various dynamics with regard to behaviourism, and its major concept according to Skinner is reinforcement (Skinner 1938). It is concerned with the effect of reward and punishment on behaviour. The position of Skinner is that reinforcement is the process that controls the behaviour of organisms; this could be accomplished in two clear ways, either positively or negatively, where the former is the strengthening of behaviour through praise or other rewards, while the latter is the strengthening of behaviour by the removal of what encourages that behaviour originally (Skinner 1938). The relevance of this theory in underpinning the aspect of religious terrorism is contingent on the fact that there is a reward element, assumed by the terrorist as accompanying their behaviour. It is this anticipated reward that reinforces their action. This is positive reinforcement.

The aspect of positive reinforcement was articulated by Flora (2004), who contends that positive reinforcement occurs when a desirable event or stimulus is presented as a consequence of behaviour and the behaviour increases. The religious terrorists, who believe that their actions will attract eternal reward, would continue as this is seen as a form of positive reinforcing. The implication of the above consideration on religious terrorism is the fact that most terrorists view their actions as reinforced by their perceived reward of martyrdom and paradise. They are convinced that the more they defend their ecclesiastical persuasions, the greater their reward.

Abraham Maslow, a professor of Psychology, developed the theory of motivation. In his theory, he postulated that needs often appear in a form of hierarchical order (Maslow 1954). The implication is that as one need is met, another need arises, thus individuals are often motivated to seek the higher needs. As a result of this hierarchical structure, lower needs are met first and immediately; the higher needs are met later. As the individual achieves this hierarchical progression and satisfies each need, a state of equilibrium or homeostasis is achieved (Maslow in Omomia 2016:44).

The different needs identified by Maslow are considered by Oladele (2005) as physiological needs (food, rest, air, water), safety needs (security, freedom from fear or anxiety, protection), belongingness and love needs (acceptance by others and also affiliation with them), esteem needs (self-esteem, self-respect, self-regard and respect from other people). Others include self-actualization needs (desire for self-fulfillment, self-achievement of set out personal goals and ambition), desire to know and to understand (individual's desire to acquire more knowledge and understanding) and aesthetic needs (the highest level of Maslow's theory of needs. It is the need for beautiful things)

The theory addresses the aspect of motivation as the major impetus possessed by the terrorists who feel that they would achieve their eternal goal by "fighting for God". The aspect of incentive motivation which propels one towards reward is quite instructive to this discourse. This agrees with the position of Omomia (2016:43) who surmised that this form of motivation involves reward. Consequently, "people who believe that they will receive rewards for doing something are motivated to do everything possible in order to reach a certain goal. Incentive motivation is driven by the fact that the goal will give people benefits" (Omomia 2016:43). Maslow's fifth hierarchy of needs, which is self-actualization, rightly agrees with incentive motivation. Maslow's fifth hierarchy of needs includes self-fulfillment, self-achievement of goals and ambitions and attaining one's dream.

The significance of these theories to religious terrorism is based on the fact that those involved in the act argue that they are "fighting for God". This position presupposes that they are motivated by the fact that they have a goal in focus, that is, eternal bliss in paradise. They are reinforced by this, thus motivated to go to any extent to perpetrate their nefarious activities.

Brief view on religious terrorism

Religious terrorism basically refers to religiously inspired terrorism. The contemporary religious terrorism cuts across the whole world, with more impact in the Muslim world, with Islamic terrorists playing a formidable role. It is worthy of note, however, that terrorism in the name of religion is not restricted to Islam alone, though they have been more prominent in respect of contemporary terrorist actions. This position is supported by different literatures that opined that religious terrorism is noticeable in most religions without outrightly incriminating any single religion. Some scholars argue that religious extremism is a major derivative of terrorism in our contemporary world. All religions have exhibited diverse levels of violent extremism, which has often resulted in terrorist movements (Hoffman 1995, Hoffman 2006, Pipes 2002, Weinberg and Pedahzur 2004, Juergenmeyer 2006, Laqueur 1987, Laqueur 2009, Vries 2009, and Martins 2011). Their various positions converge in the fact that extremism is prevalent in most religions, and would likely lead to religious terrorism.

Overview of terrorism in Christianity

It is common knowledge in church history that the Roman Catholic Church launched the Crusades. These crusades, with about nine of such invasions launched against the Islamic east in 1095, were said to be in the name of the Cross (Phillips 2015). The ultimate purpose of the crusades was to capture the holy lands from the Muslims. The motivation for the crusades was that those involved were sure to be forgiven their sins if they died in battle. This position was

clearly reflected in the war cry during the crusades, which was “*Deus lo volt*”. This means “God wills it” (Phillips 2015). The depth of zeal and violence perpetrated during the crusades could be described simply as legendary as many series of campaigns were carried out to capture more cities. Their ruthless disposition and terrorist acts were acceptable to them, since they were seen to be in consonance with the will of God.

Overview of terrorism in Islam

The contemporary Islamic terrorism, exemplified by the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, and other groups in different parts of the world, has incriminated the Islamic religion with respect to the contemporary spate of religious terrorism in Nigeria in particular, and the world in general. The intention is not to stir up controversy in this regard, but to examine the deadly invasion by the Islamic terrorist groups, as motivated by the desire to “fight for God”.

The facts presented by Dudley (2018) support the aforementioned argument. He posited that about 18,814 deaths were caused by terrorist acts in the world in 2017, and of this number, well over half were caused by four major Islamic groups. These are the Islamic State (ISIS, ISIL also known as Daesh). This is the deadliest religious terrorist group in the world, accounting for about 4,350 deaths in 2017. The second in line, the Taliban, accounted for 3,571 deaths in 2017, while Al-Shabaab, which is an affiliate of Al-Qaida, accounted for 1,457 deaths in 2017. The Boko Haram, also known as *Jama' tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda' await wal-Jihad*, accounted for about 1,254 deaths in 2017. The Boko Haram religious terrorist group has split into different groups, with the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) being the largest.

Reinforced to “fight for God”

A valid goal is to examine how positive reinforcement could encourage the desire to “fight for God”. In one of the preceding sections, it was claimed that those involved in the crusades believed that they would earn remission from their sins should they die in battle. This assurance was strengthened by the positive reinforcement from the benefit of such a privilege. This position is further corroborated by Burstein (2017), who surmised that religious terrorists do not see themselves as engaged in an earthly conflict against an enemy that has committed some historic wrong. Rather, they see themselves as soldiers in the army of God, fighting against “His” enemies as part of a larger cosmic, eternal battle of good against evil. The consequences are that the religious terrorist groups are ruthless in their disposition since they are trying to annihilate an enemy. Secondly, they are bent on achieving total victory by all means as this has already been preordained by God. In the words of Stern (2003), the relationship between religion and terrorism is simply referred to as religious terrorism. It is important to note that most religions command an extremist group who often believe that they are fighting for the position shared by their religious persuasion. They are reinforced by the belief that a greater worldly power has sanctioned their terrorist actions for the sake of their faith.

It is also argued by Hoffman (2006) that those involved in religious terrorism see violence as an act of sacrament or divine duty carried out in direct response to some theological requests or expectations. They perceive the battle as having transcendental aims, hence absolutely divine (Juergensmeyer 2003). He further opined that due to the perceived promises of the next world, insecure, alienated and marginalized youths join religious terrorist groups (Juergensmeyer 2003). Another clear feature of the desire by the terrorist to “fight for God” is that they are bent on entrenching their beliefs and teachings on others. For example, the Boko Haram sect believes that Western Education is sin, and Boko Haram is bent on introducing sharia law across Nigeria. The implication of this, according to them, is to govern the nation according to the teachings of Islam. It is their opinion that they can enthrone spiritual sanctity which *Allah* demands. Thus, their actions are in the “interest of God”. This gives the terrorist a sense of divine approval,

culminating in his motivation to unleash terror on any supposed opposition. He also feels he would receive commensurate reward from God in the hereafter in “paradise”.

Identifying some causes of religious terrorism in Nigeria

Some of the common causes include, but are not restricted to, the followings:

- **Palpable poverty.** The poverty index in Nigeria is generally believed to be at the lowest ebb. The citizens are exposed to deep economic challenges that make it impossible for them to live above the ideal poverty level, thus leading to the upsurge of religious terrorist groups (Dagne, 2002).
- **High rate of unemployment.** The position of Danjibo (2009) is that high rate of unemployment, mostly in the northern parts of Nigeria, has necessitated the consistent upsurge of religious terrorists and impacted heavily on terrorism in that region.
- **The upsurge of “Almajiris”.** The term “almajiri” refers to an army of children and youths who roam the streets especially in northern Nigeria, begging and scavenging. It is argued that those who are bent on carrying out acts of terrorism find them to be ready tools (Gwamna and Dayil 2011, Makinda 2005, Ogundiya and Amzat 2009, Lenmang 2011, Danjibo 2009, Bolaji 2010).
- **Wrong teachings and interpretation of religious texts.** The position of Mandani (2004) and Black (2011) is that some religious leaders have given a subjective re-interpretation to the sacred texts of some religious ideologies. Hoffman (2009) has opined that it is also caused by their belief in millennialism that the end of the world should come quickly and their followers can influence this expectation by being involved in religious terrorism. Nakhleh (2019:1) also argues that:

Sunni-based terrorism, whether in Africa or the Middle East, has principally resulted from warped interpretations of religious “jihad” by poorly educated and ideologically motivated clerics and recruiters following Salafi/Wahhabi ideology. These teachings invariably begin with the premise that Muslims and non-Muslims who disagree with these interpretations are “unbelievers” or “kafir” and “apostates” who must be killed.

- **The fear of deprivation.** This position was canvassed by Hashimi (2009: 21). According to him “the fear of being deprived of something drives one to act aggressively, while the fear of being left out drives movements against prevalent forces”. According to Hashimi all religious institutions have exhibited one element of fear or the other. This includes “fear of being deprived of their place, fear of secularization and fear of Western education” (Hashimi 2019: 21).
- **Martyrdom complex.** This was described by Gwamna (2011) as indicative of a blissful hereafter. Most of the terrorists are reinforced by the conviction that their “fight” would guaranty sure access to paradise. They are often deluded into believing that their terrorist activities would secure the good things of paradise for them, in spite of the good things they have lost on earth. In their perception, there is a divine compensation which far outweighs what is prevalent on earth (Gwamna 2011).

The causes of religious terrorism are definitely inexhaustive. These and other factors have continued to fuel the prevalence of insurgency and other forms of terrorism in the country.

Examining some panaceas to religious terrorism

There is a need to advance some panaceas in addressing the issue of religious terrorism as expressed in the context under consideration. Some of the suggested panaceas include:

- **Values education.** This, in the words of Omede and Omede (2015), refers to what is right and wrong and what is important in life. There is a need for re-education of most religious

adherents towards appreciating the essence of the sanctity of human life. This can be accomplished through holistic teachings by their leaders, as this would re-orientate them and change their warped perception of the issues of religion (Omede and Omede 2015).

- **Amnesty for those involved in religious terrorism.** There is a need for the “stick and carrot” as a veritable approach to the issue of religious terrorism in Nigeria. The case of amnesty, as applied to the issue of the Niger Delta militants in Nigeria, is generally assumed to have yielded some significant results. It is the opinion of the writer that repentant offenders of religious terrorism may be re-enforced by introducing amnesty as a form of positive reward. This would serve as an inducement towards recounting their former belief and perspective.
- **Psychological rehabilitation.** In a study carried out by Sukabdi (2017), he examined the process of psychological rehabilitation for ideology-based terrorism offenders. The clear thesis of his research is the fact that two types of rehabilitation of terrorism offenders can be employed. They include exclusiveness and inclusiveness. According to him, exclusiveness involves isolating terrorism offenders in some special ways. This is intended to “prevent the ideology that justifies the violence” (Sukabdi 2017:247). The advantage of this according to him is that the sacred texts and range of terrorism network are jeopardized and made ineffective to some minimal levels. He further opined that the inclusive dimension to the aspect of rehabilitating terrorist offenders has to do with allowing them to blend with family members and others under some determined circumstances. These approaches are anchored on “counselling sessions, exposure to new learning experiences, dialogue with favourable resource persons and empowerment facilitation” (Sukabdi 2017:247).
- **Religio-philosophical panacea.** This addresses the aspect of religion and philosophy, which represents the world view of most terrorists. It is important to note that the basic religious belief is acceptance of allegiance to the Supreme Being. This controls man’s attitude in most cases, as it addresses the issue of morality, which refers to what is right or wrong. In this instance, religion and its basic tenets can be explored in addressing the issue of terrorism. This is made possible by teaching the ideal religious belief that encapsulates morality, love for your neighbour and the sanctity of human life. It is presupposed that when these tenets are imbibed, the aspect of religious terrorism, which involves the destruction of lives and property would be brought to the barest minimum. Suffice to state that it is difficult to extricate the philosophy of any people from their religion. This is premised on the fact that philosophy, within the context of this discourse, refers to the common worldview of the people.

Discussions

The theories of Skinner and Maslow could be adduced as having a deep impact on the discussion concerning religious terrorism and the perception of the terrorists. It could be clearly deduced from the literatures examined by this study that the argument by the terrorists that they are “fighting for God” is more a perception than real. There are no individuals in any religion that can lay claim to the fact that they have been instructed by God to fight for him. On the other hand, the activities of religious terrorists negate the nature of God who places a great premium on the sanctity of human life and peace. These terrorists are often involved in the destruction of lives through suicide bombing and other actions. This is grossly against the sanctity of life as exemplified in the Holy Bible (“thou shall not kill”- Exodus 20:13) and the scriptures of most religions. It is a known cliché that Islam is the “religion of peace”. It is also often generally declared by Muslims that Prophet Mohammed stood for peace as he propagated Islamic beliefs and doctrines. The terrorists are often reinforced and motivated to carry on with their activities on

the ground of the wrong perception that they are “fighting for God” and are therefore sure of paradise. It could be deduced from some aspects of literature that Christianity at a particular time in history, through the execution of the crusades, showed some marked attitude of terrorism (Phillip, 2015). This could also be said of some other religions.

It is safe to reiterate the fact that most religions at one time or the other have expressed clear attitudes of extremism, encapsulated in morbid terrorism. However, the contemporary religious challenge in Nigeria is the depth of insurgency, occasioned by the Boko Haram terrorists. This view is put succinctly by Muazu and Babagana, who argued that:

Religiously inspired terrorism is on the increase, while Islamic terrorists and organizations have been the most active and the greatest recent threat. All of the major world religions have extremists that have taken up violence to further their perceived religious goals. Religiously motivated terrorists see their objectives as holy summons, and therefore dependable and non-negotiable (Muaza and Babagana 2015:11).

The above position supports the fact that the attitude of the terrorists is due to the motivation they have towards the defence of their perceived religious goals which involves the desire to have a blissful afterlife in paradise for “fighting for God”.

It is pertinent to note that several of the perceived views of most terrorists are born out of the misinterpretation of their common scriptures. Their views are sometimes obviously distorted, hence they operate under great delusion and believe that they are “fighting for God”. This is also aptly captured by Odhiambo (2014:190) who surmised that “Religious terrorism which is executed by those whose motivation and aims have a predominant religious influence is rooted in the misinterpretation of theological epithets, or it could be the result of extreme forms of delusion that may alter reality, and thus subject an individual or a group of people to distorted versions of religious facts ...” The perception held by most religious terrorists is encapsulated in the fact that they are God’s army; hence their acts are religiously justified. In the words of Volf, “to legitimize terrorism they see ‘themselves as God’s soldiers’ and they claim that ‘God is on their side ...’” (Volf 2008:1).

The value of this discourse is hinged on the fact that the real problem is with the practice of religion and not necessarily religion. The position of Makinde (2007:347) is that “the extent to which religion becomes evil lies on its bad practice, borne out of ignorance of what religion is, and other selfish reasons”. The characteristics of “bad religion” were listed by Obioha (2005:105) as “conflicts, wars, bloodshed, wanton destruction and looting of properties, exploitation ...” Most of these experiences have characterized the present Boko Haram activities in the guise of “fighting for God”.

Conclusion and recommendations

The major contribution advanced by the author is that religious terrorism as a demonstration of a willingness to “fight for God”, exhibited by the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria, should only be seen as their perception. The disposition of the terrorists should not be taken as an overall indictment of religion. It must be conceded that some religious adherents see religion as a “willing bride” in defending their negative actions. Some religious sects have often capitalized on this and exploit it as a formidable *alibi* in defense of their actions, even when negative. The claimed practice of religion by some adherents should not be seen as the right measure of what religion actually represents. An examination of the various definitions of religion, especially from the sectarian perspective, shows that it is a clear allegiance to the Supreme Being. This in effect means absolute obedience to the values and virtues extolled by the Supreme Being. These values, which include love, the sanctity of human life, protection and others have clearly been jettisoned by the religious terrorists.

The challenge of religious terrorism and its impact has continued to take a toll on the nation in terms of the destruction of lives and property. This has also discouraged investment by nationals and foreigners. This definitely affects both economic and social development of the nation.

The following recommendations were deduced from the study:

- Education of religious adherents by their leaders to embrace the spirit of tolerance towards those with divergent religious views.
- Applying the tactics of the “carrot and stick” approach towards the desired reorientation of repentant terrorists through a well-structured amnesty programme offered by the government.
- Provision of basic social amenities like roads, power, hospitals and others. These would enhance speedy social and economic development.
- Proper parenting, as the home is the first social organization that any child comes in contact with. It is important for the children to be brought up with the philosophy of attaching the right value to the sanctity of human life and deep moral ethos.
- The challenge of youth unemployment should be addressed with deep passion and zeal by the government and all stakeholders as the youths are the most vulnerable and are easily recruited into terrorist activities.
- Addressing the issue of “brainwashing” and “almajiris”. The “almajiris” are a group of children, teenagers or youths that are sent to a teacher to learn some tenets of Islam and others. It is generally acclaimed that they form a ready army exploited by individuals who intend to get involved in terrorism.

The implications of the study include the fact that the nefarious activities perpetrated by the Boko Haram insurgents have affected the nation socially and economically as this has continued to impact on the willingness of the international community to invest in the nation. In addition, the law abiding citizens have continued to live in fear as they are exposed to wanton destruction of both their lives and property.

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