

RETHINKING THE TERROR OF TERRORISM ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN YERIMA'S *PARI*

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Abstract

Effective protection of lives and properties is the primary duties of every responsible government. Therefore, the incessant killings and terror targeted on Nigerians by terrorist is a great threat to national security and development. This paper critically examines the effect of Boko Haram terrorism on Nigerians as represented in Ahmed Yerima's *Pari*. The overwhelming feeling of fear and anxiety on the family of Tada was caused by the calculated use of violence against the citizens in order to attain goals that are religious or ideological in nature. The main objective of this work is to explore the terror and confusion of terrorism and its devastating effect on the lives of the affected Nigerians using the Ahmed Yerima's *Pari*. Using the content analysis method, the paper explores the courses of terrorism and exposes how such family terror poses a threat to national development. It recommends that parents, religious leaders and government through its various agencies should work together towards combating the Boko Haram terrorism.

Introduction

Divergent views emerge on the rationale behind Boko Haram Islamic insurgency in Nigeria. Some see it as an attempt to Islamise the secular Nigerian state, while some believe it to be an attempt to change the status quo in order to concretise the perceived dominance of the Northerners over the rest of the country. Sanni Oluyemisi notes that in Northern Nigeria, Boko Haram terrorist activities have resulted in the deaths of numerous individuals, the destruction of communities and displacement of families, and the closure of schools and abduction of teenage girls as part of their fight against Western education (51). The 2014 invasion of Chibok Girls High School in the north-eastern part of the country, which led to the kidnap of over 250 girls, continues to generate public and academic curiosity. Eme Innocent and Ibietan Jide opine that, "parents who have been displaced and have teenage daughters may experience fear and be reluctant to send their children to school" (14). Displaced parents experience a variety of challenges that hinder their financial support of and personal commitment to the education of their children. This paper discusses terrorism in Nigeria using Ahmed Yerima's *Pari* as an anchor. The psychological effects of this insurgency on various stakeholders are unquantifiable (Aliyu, Ravichandran, and Nor 315), which is going to be our departure point because its impacts are still unfolding. This study explored the experiences of displaced parents, their children and the psychological trauma effect on them.

Boko Haram

Since 2009 the Nigerian state has been under the throes of the deadly terrorist activities of the Islamic sect formally known as "Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad" (Association for Propagating the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad). The sect, popularly dubbed Boko Haram, meaning Western civilisation/education is forbidden, claims to be on a mission to Islamise the Nigerian State. Roman Loimeier observes that with Saudi support, Islamic activists in Nigeria formed an organisation called the "Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reestablishment of the Sunna," or "Izala" for short. Over time, Izala became the key driver of Sunni radicalism in Nigeria. By the late 1990s, however, Saudi funding and active proselytisation, coupled with the fact that a majority of Nigerian Muslims are Sunni, overwhelmed the Iranian effort (143).

Salafi Sunni ideology became the driving force of radicalisation in Nigeria and neighbouring countries. Boko Haram is the most recent, albeit more deadly, reiteration of radicalism and terrorism in West Africa. The kidnapping of schoolgirls in 2014 is unfortunately an ominous omen of West African terrorists' future plans and the terror associated with this wicked act is explored in Ahmed Yerima's play, *Pari*.

Ahmed Yerima's *Pari*

Ahmed Yerima is a director, playwright and scholar. According to Yerima:

Pari investigates the Northern Nigeria crises from the prism of a family thrown into despair by the loss of their only daughter. In simplified language and engaging dialogue, the play examines the complicity of religion, government and individuals in the Boko Haram menace in a way that tugs at heartstrings (75).

The Chibok girls that were kidnapped in Borno State, attracted a worldwide outcry against Boko Haram, the Islamic extremist group that held the region hostage (Yerima 1). In Yerima's play, Hyelapari is a major character and one of the girls kidnapped. The play is titled *Pari* which is part of the name Hyelapari. A playwright's mission is to see and think of the best way to convey the message of the play, stimulating questions of moral choice and the resulting consequences of the choices made while conveying the target or intended emotions of the play. A playwright, therefore, probes into the very intriguing human nature, fearlessly and with a magnifying glass, honestly showcasing the meaning and mystery of life. However, this paper is not a study on the person of the playwright rather it investigates the terrorist attack in Northern Nigeria and the terror and trauma on the affected families as anchored in the play, *Pari*.

Further inquiry according to Innocent Chiluwa and Presley Ifukor revealed that "the teenage girls abducted in 2014 by Boko Haram from Chibok were 276 and apart from 103 girls who were rescued by the Nigerian army in 2016, the remaining girls are yet to return home" (269). Following this incident, displaced parents may show higher anxiety for their teenage daughters than for sons. Researchers have suggested that parents exposed to terrorism experience insecurity, deprivation, fear, and emotional instability that induces reluctance in them to send their children to school (Imasuen 291).

The presence of terrorism is a significant risk that impacts negatively on formal education, social living, development, and psychological well-being of children. According to Idrissa Ouili, there were significant gaps in schooling activities and educational attainment for children internally displaced compared to those who did not experience armed conflicts, even when they lived in the same region" (167). Hence, advocating for a school-based re-orientation for children living in conflict-ridden environments can serve as a remedy in the fight against insurgency.

Causes of Terrorism

Boko Haram's recent kidnapping of schoolgirls in northern Nigeria has focused the world's attention on Islamic radicalism and terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel countries. Although the growing terrorist threat in Iraq and Syria has replaced coverage of this extremist group on the front pages of international newspapers, Boko Haram remains a deadly force that must be confronted. Like the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Boko Haram threatens to spread its violence beyond the borders of its base country.

Sogo Angel Olofinbiyi and Jean Steyn, writing on causes of Boko Haram terrorism, opine that:

more importantly, the widespread assumptions about the cause of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria have made it difficult for many researchers, particularly those that have shown a high sense of research interest, to have a clear-cut understanding of the root cause of the crisis (135).

However, Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova opine that the causes of terrorism may not be ignorance and poverty:

The fact is that members of terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas are neither poor nor uneducated, so calculated attacks tend to have severe economic damage. Viewed as a conflict resolution mechanism, terrorism can be broadly viewed as a strategy deployed by individuals, either singularly or in groups, to resolve disputes. The basis of such disputes could be based on distributional issues (e.g. of political power, income, wealth) or merely existential – based on religious conflict – or have a foundation in the historical past causing persistent conflict (121).

To the extent that terrorism is caused by distributional issues such as income inequality, the analyses of Krueger and Maleckova above, for example, raise doubts about terrorism being caused by ignorance and poverty, as they find that some terrorists are well-educated and typically not members of the poor society. On the other hand, Barros, Faria, and Gil-Alana aver that, "poverty in Africa is associated with terrorism"; and it is mediated through condition of low political and economic freedom (59).

In the play, *Pari*, Ama, the mother of the kidnapped girl, Hyelapari, laments on the level of poverty associated with them and the locality where they live which is capable of contributing to the existence of terrorists in that region.

Ama: Indeed, poverty is a curse from the gods. Since I got married to my husband twenty years ago, it has been one suffering after the other. Not a day of happiness. I never liked that cheap school, you know? But for my husband, it was cheap enough for his pocket. I wanted my only child to go to one of those schools where there is so much security, even the angels of God would struggle to enter. Not to that cheap dark school with dark environment, so that dark gun-tottering souls can just drive in trucks in the darkness of the night where children fall prey to them as animals forcing them into slavery. This country is dying gradually, through corruption everywhere. I tell you, someone somewhere is benefitting from all this madness. And I ... we the poor in soul and pockets, are the ones suffering for their greed. (*She starts crying.*) How can God just turn His back on us? What did we poor mothers ever do to Him? Why won't He just let us smile for one second of our miserable lives? Where is God's compassion? (31).

It is believed that in the past decade, Muslims who trend toward radical ideas have identified domestic and foreign factors as drivers of their radicalism. The domestic issues included unemployment, poverty, poor economic conditions, hopelessness, regime repression and corruption, injustice, inequality, and massive violations of human rights including against women and minorities. In support of the public opinion, Ibrahim, one of the terrorists in the play narrates to Tada and Ama, how he joined the Boko Haram:

Ibrahim: It all started the night my mother was buried. I regretted her death more. I blamed myself for her death because it wasn't that I was away when she died. I was there ... useless ... but I was just a dead person there. She needed food and medicine ... and none was within my reach ... so I watched her ... with tear-filled eyes, I watched life ebb out of her veins ... then her eyes closed ... her heart stopped beating ... and she was gone. After her burial, I tried to find a taste to my mouth. I did not cry, I could not cry and I did not even try. Even if I had, there would be no tears. My friends, Zaki and Yakubu, had begged me to join them (46).

Tada: Join who?

Ibrahim: The jihad. The Sunna Lidda'Awah Wal-Jihad.

Tada: Boko Haram?

Ama: Who?

Ibrahim: Yes. Young men living in hopelessness, angry at nothing in particular. All smoking and drinking. Then when we were thoroughly soaked in everything, the talk started. They sounded so wise so profound. At the end of the day, between the women and drinks, talks and dreams, I felt I

could do something. What it was, I did not even know. All I knew was that I was angry at everything (46).

Also, foreign factors include perceived anti-Islamic policies by the US and other Western powers, continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and the suppression of Palestinian human rights and freedoms, the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, drone strikes that result in civilian deaths, as well as western lukewarm support of democratic uprisings and coddling of dictatorial regimes. 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.

Nakhleh Emile notes that Nigerian terrorism did not develop in a vacuum. As stated earlier, competing historical and ideological narratives, Saudi proselytisation, and active recruiting by "religious radicalisers" in the past two decades have paved the way for radicalism (14). However, some terrorists that were termed religious radicals realised that they were deceived, even as Ibrahim (a terrorist) shares his experience with Ama:

Ama: What about Allah?

Ibrahim: What about him? Him, too. We had predicaments strewn all over... and god stood silently by. We were ready to burn and blow up the sky where we believed he lived in smugness and allowed life to pass us by. Even after a while, the promise that we would go straight to aljana faded. With time, the aljana we believed was what we created. It was nowhere but we stood. We were the gods in the aljana we created. With guns and bombs, even allah was afraid of us. (*In whisper*). Or so we thought (47).

Prima facie Boko Haram's motivations appear to be religious. However, considering factors such as the dismal socio-economic conditions that prevail in the northern region, the epicentre of the sect, a religious explanation alone is reductive.

The alarming socio-economic inequality and deprivation manifested in pervasive poverty across the nation, but particularly in the northern region is accentuated as one of the main factors that predispose the teeming disenfranchised and jobless populace, particularly the youths in the region to take arms against the state. Fundamentally, Boko Haram terrorism pivots on the growing anti-state tendency in Nigeria, a state arguably losing its legitimacy as a result of her inability and failure to meet the political, social and economic needs of its populace. These factors, according to Jacob Omede, may not actually be the causes of unrest in Nigeria. Omede sees these factors as symptoms, shadows and not the substance.

Why unemployment if we may ask? Who is to provide the jobs? And why are they not providing the jobs? The answers may be found in corruption, misappropriation of public funds and lack of quality education, bad governance,

and etcetera. Corruption, lack of good or bad governance, ethnic superiority and domination of one community or person by the other as well as the rest others mentioned above are all moral and values problems (Omede 315).

The effect of the above mentioned attitude is particularly on the youths of today with their wrong/false or negative values. Such values include hard work, discipline, respect, honesty, truthfulness, integrity, love for one another and respect for law and order. These have given ways to excessive quest for materialism, apparent worship of money, taking side with the powerful even when they are wrong, lack of patriotism, tribalism and ethnicity

Consequences of Terrorism in Northern Nigeria

The speed with which evil is growing in Nigeria and the merciless ways that lives of innocent ones are being wasted are worrisome. People are burdened on a daily basis with psychological and emotional trauma resulting from gory sights of lifeless and mutilated bodies of loved family members, close associates and colleagues littered on the streets, public squares and everywhere. The cost of terrorism is manifested in the life of Pari as she laments:

Pari: Yes, Father. In two years, your little girl became a woman ... and then she became a mother. One was a girl and the other a boy. When my eyes fell on her helpless naked body, I cried. Then I became afraid for her. How was she going to survive this wicked world which uses girls for sacrifice? What `if she grew and was raped? What if ...? Slowly, I tore off a long piece from my hijab ... and with my hands, I strangled my own child. I buried her in a shallow grave by the stream. With my gasping breath, I tied the well-fed brother to my back and continued on my trip to find you both in Chibok. When I got to your old office, I was told that you had left for your hometown, Askirau-Uba. They took me to stay first in a refugee camp, where I was able to receive treatment and gain back my health. Today, they came for us. And we were brought here. Did I do right, Father? Did I? (40).

With the coming to the scene by Boko Haram, the insecurity situation in Nigeria seemed to have assumed higher and more complex dimensions. A part from the frequency and intensity of deadly attacks and carnages, insecurity situation in Nigeria cuts across cities, towns and villages that there is hardly anywhere to run to for cover. Lives and properties are not safe for urban dwellers as well as for the rural dwellers. People live in apprehension almost every day. These crises have heightened tensions and insecurity in Nigeria and they have assumed a frightening dimension.

In addition, one of the effects of terrorism is the shattered and devastated lives that the young girls were exposed to, especially the life of the eponymous character, Pari, who narrates her ugly experiences:

Pari: Two years. For two years, I lived my life with him... dodging bullets and bombs. He taught me how to clean his AK 47 gun, how to cry and how to muffle tears and pains with honour. He even showed me the dark shade of death and the clownish face of life. We would run barefooted for miles, sometimes we even played foolish roles of princess and prince scuffling food that was liberated from the attack front. Most times, in-between movements from one camp to another, we scrounged the bins for food or begged forcefully from people too scared to die. And in moments such as that, our heartbeat measured the distance between our miserable lives and quick unmourned deaths. (*Kneels before Ama and Tada.*) Father, Mother, for two years I have known no other life than that. I grew up five years each passing year. I am no longer the Pari who left here. I am a forced-to-ripen woman now. This is Ibrahim's girl, Khadijat Hijab number two hundred and ... (68).

Terrorism potentially has adverse impacts on economic growth, investment, and tourism. Terrorism incidents worldwide usually result in massive destruction with injuries and casualties. Most terrorist groups have the tendency to physically destroy productive assets as well as redirect resources away from productive uses (OECD 2). The indirect costs that are not usually measured include the emotional toll suffered by the victims, friends, relatives, other survivors, and the community at large have focused more on the direct economic cost such as expenditures on direct attack, to financial markets, national security, and supply chain, which are calculated from direct approaches such as cost to property, productivity loss, and human (Barth et al. 26). Businesses associated with the location of the event usually suffer setbacks.

African countries have experienced a high economic cost due to the activities of Ansaru and Boko Haram. These two groups have been linked to Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and have waged a brutal campaign against military, government, and civilian targets including Christians (START 3). For developing countries, such as, Nigeria and Kenya, it makes the investment environment unfriendly as investors shy away because of compromised safety and weak national security, which affects economic growth.

The potential threat to investors' confidence in the economy can deter investment, as most investors are risk averse, posing a fear of not being able to remove their investment. The economic cost in Africa is far beyond the direct outlay, because terrorist incidents can deter future investment in affected countries, reduce Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and deter economic growth (START 3). For example, Boko Haram, located in the northern part of Nigeria, has the highest poverty rate in the country and has remained relatively unsafe as it is the region in Nigeria experiencing the highest number of terrorist incidents – making it difficult to attract FDI.

Since the emergence of this sect in 2002, human lives had been lost to their attacks in thousands. The Vanguard newspaper put the death toll at more than 12,000 with more than 8000 injured or maimed and thousands of other innocent Nigerians displaced (*Vanguard*). The killings have continued unabated until recently that they are being gradually overcome. Their escalated activities created widespread insecurity among

Nigerians, increase tensions between various ethnic communities, interrupt development activities, frighten off investors and generate concern among Nigeria's northern neighbours (Eme and Ibietam 12). According to Okpaga, Chijioke and Innocent, between 27 July, 2009, and 17 February, 2012, Boko Haram had carried out 53 deadly attacks (81).

In fairness, insecurity is not a problem that is unique to Nigeria. It has geographical spread across the globe. The United States, United Kingdom and many countries face the challenges of insecurity within their borders on a daily basis (Adejumo 1). The difference between these nations and Nigeria according to Adejumo is how they manage the threats.

The Terror of Terrorism

Nigerian children affected by the Boko Haram insurgency still face the psychological effects of direct exposure to terrorism. Incidents of terrorism, family displacement, and loss of family and friends may have long-term, broad effects on children's development. The goal which Boko Haram seeks to achieve in the northern Nigeria is to reject western education and stop children from going to school. To achieve this goal, Boko Haram deployed violent tactics that include forceful abduction of students from hostel, and killing of children in their hostels. They also destroy school infrastructure through bombing. Also, Valarie Thomson concludes that, "Boko Haram seeks to create psychological disturbance, enthrone the Islamic Caliphate, and establish Islamic schools based on Sharia law in North Eastern Nigeria" (49).

Aside from the amounts of life disruption such as orphan refugee, school or home damaged, as well as social disorganisations were other associated risk factors that may increase adjustment problems for children. However, if a child in the formal operational stage is out of school, is displaced, and begins to witness violence, the child may become doubtful, exhibit negative behaviours, become unconstructive, lack self-reliance become pessimistic about life and his or her environment, and begin to exhibit negative attitudes toward schooling and positive attitudes toward violence. Boko Haram insurgency is not and cannot be unconnected with wrong moral, values and religious education. In as much as the Nigerian leaders are not justified due to bad governance, the Islamic militants (Boko Haram) are also not justified. Using wrong approach to correct the wrong done is double tragedies that can be catastrophic.

Recommendations

Religion refers to the belief in the existence of a god or gods; and the activities that are connected with the worship of them. Nigeria by constitutional provision is a secular state. By this it is meant that there is no one nationally accepted religion or way of worship. Everybody is free to practice any religion of choice provided the rights of others are not infringed. Religious crises in Nigeria that had been budding since attainment of political independence is now assuming a crescendo that must put all hands on deck to get it strangulated. And the best way to do this is conscious and correct religious education. Salawu observes that, "the loss of lives due to ethno-religious crises since political

Independence is estimated to be over three million including psychological and material damages that cannot be quantified" (351).

Adherents of any form of religion are to respect the sanctity of human lives. No one is permitted to take another person's life except when in battle or in self-defence. In addition, God is the ultimate and has the ultimate power. He can fight battles for Himself without any human assistance. Killing one another is not of God it is wickedness, arrant wickedness and must stop.

Apart from religious fanaticism, in Nigeria, for selfish gains, some politician gathered some young boys, trained them and supplied ammunitions for them as political thugs. Therefore, politicians' will be under the watch-list of government and citizens as the also share the blame of terrorism as revealed by Ibrahim Ahmed in the study text:

Ibrahim: (*Gives a wild laugh.*) Did he really say that? Well, this is a different story from what really happened. The irony is that they created us, nurtured us for their own good at first ... and after, they dumped us. Where did we get the arms? Where? From them, the military and black market. Where did we get the money we spend? Who fuelled our anger? Who? (*Chuckles.*) See how well they lie now that they do not know how to quench the fire they selfishly lit. Pity (48).

The members of the Boko Haram (terrorists) were disappointed because according to Ibrahim (a terrorist) they never bargained for such denial and disappointment by their sponsors (the Nigerian politicians).

Conclusion

This study was designed to gain deep insights into how such terrific experiences among this group of children, parents, and society at large affect the families and the nation. As a result of terrorism and insecurity, many Nigerians live every day in tensions and suspicion. Many productive lives have either been lost, displaced or living in constant fear and pain of the loss of loved ones. Foreign investors due to the sordid security situation are scared away from Nigeria which has further increased the unemployment ratio as well as the overall economic outlook of the country in present times. The nation's educational institutions are not spared either as institutions of learning are equally points of targets and attacks of terrorists and other hoodlums. Terrorism and insecurity are symptoms of poor moral values and religious education. These life threatening activities frustrate economic and technological transformation keeping Nigeria in a perpetual state of economic dependence, loss of productive human resources and general apathy and discontentment. Unless this situation is checked and reversed, Nigeria will remain perpetually dependent and underdeveloped.

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