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BIONOMICAL TERRORISM: THE CHALLENGE FOR CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN LEADERSHIP

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Abstract. *This paper argues that the failure of contemporary Nigerian leadership is due to the extension and incessant activities of the terrorist groups in Nigeria. The prolonged violent acts of bombing, hostage-taking and genocide in Nigeria, by Boko Haram sect, kidnappers and bandits, have unleashed havoc on Nigerians, and, in turn, posed a great challenge to effective Nigeria leadership. As the paper acknowledges that the seemingly insurmountable leadership difficulty in Nigeria is in connection with 'bionomical' terrorism, it, however, maintains that Nigerian leaders, who have failed in providing for the Nigerian populace, are part of the problems. On this note, this paper provides an overview of the effects and factors responsible for the problems of the Nigerian leadership. It challenges the government's idea of recruiting and giving amnesty to the repentant terrorists. Hence, their repentance or denouncement could be a trick to accomplish their mystified missions. The paper recommends conversationalism, as a method, for inclusive leadership and aversion of the terrorists' pummel ling threats, instigated by poverty, religious, political, ethnic cleavages and variables.*

Keywords*: Bionomical terrorism, Conversationalism, Boko Haram, Banditry, Kidnaping, Leadership*

Introduction

Nigeria has formed a topic of discussion in the whole world, as it is getting more terroristic, dreadful and unsecured, as a result of unending attack and bombing orchestrated by the Boko Haram sect, unknown gunmen, herdsmen, kidnappers and bandits. In Nigeria, bombing, ritual killing, kidnapping and ethnic skirmishes have become the order of the day (Egwu, 2001; Imhonopi and Urim, 2012). Nobody is safe anymore; the lives and properties of citizens of Nigeria are constantly jeopardized. It is difficult, if not impossible, to consistently predict what is likely to happen in Nigeria in the next second, minute or hour. This terroristic and horrible situation has, in no minimal way, brought about fear and civil unrest, in the lives of both followers and leaders of the nation. It is also the reason for the bad leadership, disharmony, rape and instability we experience today (Fukuyama, 2004; Achumba, et al; 2013, Igbozor, 2011). Additionally, the Nigerian security agencies that are to protect both lives and properties of the masses are equally being attacked and molested daily. This is evident in the way and manner, Police Station, Army Barracks, INEC buildings, prison custody and custodians are being carbonized, scorched and humiliated here and there. Ikeke (2014-2015, p.

231) was correct when he avers that "when there is an incidence of terrorism in any society, human life, property and bio-diversity are put in danger".

In other words, terrorism affects all segments of human society. It destroys historical, physical, cultural and structural make up of a nation (Udama, 2013). This, suffice to say that a terrorist society is a destabilized or unstable society. In all, it is obvious that the leadership comatose in Nigeria, is as a result of terrible acts of terrorism, such as, incessant bomb attack by members of Boko Haram sect; kidnapping that is said to have been started by the Niger Delta militants; sporadic shootings by the bandits; intimidation, humiliation and genocide often committed by unknown gunmen and herdsmen. This, notwithstanding, Nigeria government's insensitivity to the welfare of the Nigerian populace, contributes equally to the terrifying engulfment and untold hardship in leadership that is being experienced today. Although the government have put in tremendous efforts to stop terrorism, banditry, and unknown gunmen's operations, such efforts are not good enough to end the proliferated terrorist activities in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that government's approaches to tackling terrorism, were described by some scholars as tactless, undiplomatic and inconsiderate (Aderonke, 2015, p. 131). This claim was substantiated by Adeleja et al (2018), who opines that the ineptitude on the side of the government can be linked to the existence of criminality, political instability, frustration, unemployment, economic imbalance and poverty, marginalization and repression in the country.

To attend to the issues raised above, it is imperative to regenerate, inject and bring the principles of coversationalism, which include respect of life, harmony, interdependence relationship, dialogue and inclusivity, to bear on discourse on terrorism. This will help in reeducating and pedagogical training of the mindsets of both terrorists and government/leaders, to see reality not in a bifurcated, exclusive and divisive manner, but as that that cannot exist without the existence of others. It is only when reality is understood in this mode that the long embattled terrorism in Nigeria can be addressed, and a new society created. This paper is divided into three major sections. The first section covers the historical background and concept of bionomical terrorism. The conceptualization of the above term, will perhaps, assists in knowing the 'form', and why all the efforts made to alleviating terrorism in Nigeria seemed to have proven abortive. In the second section, the causes of terrorism will be enumerated. Here, we shall establish that the various causes of terrorism can be addressed through inclusive leadership. That is, when the rich and the poor, majority and minority groups, are given an equal sense of belonging, in terms of appointments to government offices, quota systems, educational opportunities and sharing of the national cakes. Thirdly, we will show that terrorism is the 'why' of the susceptibility of the Nigerian Leadership, and can be quenched, through complementarity, interrelationship and interdependency, between and among existents or realities in Nigeria. When this happens, Igbo people will cease to agitate for Biafra Republic, Yorubas will not gun for Oduduwa Republic anymore and Hausa/Fulanis will shun Arewa Republic. In all, Christians and Muslims will live, wine and dine together, in expression of love and brotherhood. We will conclude by insisting that granting amnesty to the repentant terrorists is not, and can never be, the solution to the terrorist crises. And recommend complementarism; an inclusive philosophy of inter dependency and relationship that kicks against 'I'-'YOU' or 'WE-THEM mentality and hegemony, as a way forward.

Bionomical Terrorism in Nigeria

Bionomical terrorism here is simply referred to an act of violence or attack on not only human being but also other living things, such as animal, plant and environment (atmosphere). It could as well be seen as a state of ecological quagmire of biospheres. Terrorism in Nigeria can be linked to the self-determination campaign, for greater Niger Delta autonomy led by Isaac Adaka Boro, an Ijaw nationalist. In the course of this campaign, he introduced Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), an armed militia group trained in the use of firearms and explosive devices, to protect creeks and bushes. The said group, in February 23, 1966, attacked a police station and engaged officers in a gun battle, which led to the raiding of armory and kidnapping of some officers as well. To intensify the situation, they abducted expatriate oil workers, to demonstrate to the world how they were exploited and marginalized. "They equally blew up and damaged oil pipelines, and declared the Niger Delta, an independent republic" (Okafor, 2011; Odoh, 2010). As a matter of fact, insurrection, which is today called terrorism, in Nigeria, started as a result of the aforementioned incidences in Niger Delta. Thom-Otuya (2010), corroborates this, when he argued that kidnapping and hostage in Nigeria started in the Niger Delta region. Be that as it may, terrorism is a global phenomenon (Oladimeji, 2019; Alao, et al; 2012); hence, every nation of the world, in one way or another, experiences its untold disaster and mass casualties. On this note, it is difficult, if not impossible, to really say when and where terrorism started in Nigeria or elsewhere. As difficult as it is, as to the time and first place of terrorism, the frightening heat of it is being felt everywhere in Nigeria.

This is the case of contemporary Nigerian leadership; the vulnerability and susceptibility of the national leadership is due to the phobia, frivolity and unleashed havoc orchestrated by terrorists. Nevertheless, there are terrorists of various groups and camps, which have dealt with the Nigerian populace, but the most formidable and terrifying ones among them, in Nigeria, are the Boko Haram sects, kidnappers and bandits. Boko Haram, one of the terrorists groups in Nigeria, is an extremist sect; "a jihadist group that pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in March 2015" (Thurston, 2016). The Hausa name for Boko Haram is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad*. It is "a movement or an association domiciled in the North-east of Nigeria, which was founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, to kick against man-made laws" (Eme and Ibietan, 2012). After the death of Yusuf in 2009, Abubakar Shekau, a former deputy to Yusuf took over and later died too in mid-April, 2009. This group is against the secular system of government, and seeks to enforce Sharia Law in the country. This they agitate for, believing that the existing law (s) has little or nothing to offer, as far as they are concerned. Boko Haram, an Hausa linguistic term, just like any other linguistic term, is a human creation, which depicts "Western education is a sacrilege" or "is forbidden" This is both comic and pathetic. It is comic because the Islamic sects claim to be against Western education; yet, they wittingly or unwittingly communicate to the world about their position (s), using English language, and operate phones and computers, made out of Western technological and scientific apparatuses and discoveries. In other hand, it is pathetic; hence, their virulent venom and intensive malignant acrimony have caused "insurgency-related conflicts that have claimed almost 350,000 lives in the North-eastern part of Nigeria" In fact, since 2009, according to Sanni (2021a), the North-east has been the abode of the violent campaigns of:

The so called Boko Haram, its breakaway group, the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), and counter-insurgency forces. United Nations Development Program me (UNDP), confirmed the above in their latest report that conflict has caused deaths of 350,000 people in

the States of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, as a result of unending battle or one-sided friction or violence since 2009.

The affliction witnessed in the mentioned regions, due to unseasoned bombing and destruction of lives and properties, led to massive internal displacement of over 1.8 million Nigerians in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, with the vast majority (nearly 1.5 million) located in Borno. Indeed, the Islamist group under review has instigated terror and fear among the masses. This is proven beyond doubt, when considered the incessant bombing that has even generated to suicide bombing, kidnapping and raiding of Chibok Girls, sometime ago. Upon the demonstration tagged "Bring Back our Girls", and the use of powerful and imported microscopic and macroscopic devices, the extremists still hid the captives. With all these, and many more to enumerate, in mind, it is obvious that Boko Haram is the most dreadful terrorist group, and the 'teacher' to all other terrorist groups that have played down on the sanctity and value of life in Nigeria.

Moreover, the calamitous acts of kidnapping and banditry, also contribute immeasurably to the leadership problems in Nigeria. The issues of kidnapping and banditry are taken seriously, as they have caused brutalities, incited violence and bred social unrest, within and outside the international communities (Jesse, 2016). This implies that the kidnapping and banditry menaces have gained international recognition. That is to say that kidnapping and banditry are global phenomena, just as Boko Haram is, as we acknowledged elsewhere in this paper. However, other nations, may be experiencing the pathological hostility of kidnappers and bandits, no doubt, Nigeria is the host nation. In Nigeria, those who have money are not safe, just as those who do not have anything to offer in their coffers cannot be said to be free from it too. This is evident in Kaduna-Abuja train incident, and many other incidents, on the roads, churches, farms, markets and social gatherings. The bandits kidnap both the rich and the poor, and make demands based on the reason that led to their actions. In other words, kidnapping and banditry are done for multitude of reasons. It could be carried out for money, for political, religious gains or parochialism, hatred and so on. Mohamed (2008), traced kidnapping to have originated around 1682. For Turner (1998), "the menace originated in 17th century in England, where there exist the incidence of Children being kidnapped and sold as slaves or agricultural worker to colonial farmers".

However, this work agrees with Ugwoke (2011) that kidnapping and banditry are shameless attitudes driven by political desires and self-aggrandizements. This instinct of self-preservation, in mind, is the very reason for the concealment that often thwart and infect the sense of judgments of the kidnappers, bandits, Nigerian government and leaders, in keeping with reality and understanding that the nearer is not always the best and safer (Asouzu, 2004), and every action has boomerang effects. Within this complementary mood and mode of understanding of reality, government/leaders will strive to protect and provide for the populace, while followers will be under obligation to reciprocate, irrespective of tribes, religions and affiliations.

Causes of Terrorism

Here, the 'why' of terrorism is divulged, to excavate the root factors responsible for various terrorist acts in Nigeria. It is of great importance to do this; hence, the terrorist deadly operations of kidnapping, banditry, suicide bombing, hostage-taking and sporadic shooting, in various villages, communities, local government areas, States and federal capital territory of the country, started for some reasons. The emergence of terrorism in Nigeria can be linked with

factors, such as bad governance, unemployment, poverty and economic marginalization, religious extremism and ethnicity, proliferation of weapons of war, etcetera. Each of the following factors is addressed below.

Bad Governance

The war of terrorism that the country is into today is orchestrated by bad governance. The corrupt practices in government such as looting, bribery and corruption, less concern about education, selfish interest and a host of others, fomented the incidence of terrorism in Nigeria. Adeleja et. al (2018), confirms this when he observed that the insensitivity of the Nigerian government on the welfare of its citizens is the cause of the high level of repression that exists in the country. In fact, it is worthy to note that poor governance led to the emergence of Boko Haram. Meagher (2014), testifies to this when he advances that Boko Haram emerged "as a protest against the poor governance and corruption of Northern leaders, which the movement sought to remedy through demands for an Islamic State and strict adherence to sharia law". For Adedire et al (2016; Omede and Omede, 2015), terrorist groups, especially Boko Haram, came due to inability of the ruling government officials to perform their duties by creating wealth instead of amassing wealth, at the detriment of the society.

The morally bankrupt individuals in the government have been the problem of this nation, as they have incited violence that in turn brought about terrorism and insecurity in Nigeria. Anyway, it is an impossibility to expect anything good from the leaders, who have little or no value on the people they are representing, or entered into politics with the aim of enriching their pockets and acquiring wealth, for their generation and generations unborn. A mango tree cannot produce guava fruits. It is practically unattainable. Bad governance brings about disenfranchisement, marginalization, unemployment and poverty that have triggered and intensified the activities of terrorist groups in Nigeria. This was the reason we emphasized elsewhere in this work that leaders/politicians cannot be exonerated, hence, they exacerbate or incite terrorism and its acts of jeopardies, in different forms.

Unemployment

This is a strong factor that brought about terrorists activities in Nigeria. Unemployment or joblessness in Nigeria is a bad omen to both graduates and the aspiring students. It is as a result of this that many graduates are frustrated and the aspiring students discouraged, in keeping with the views and dreams of furthering their education. The maxim, "we go to school to be educated not for job" is the reason for yahoo business that has expanded to money ritual, Boko Haram, kidnapping and banditry activities that have engulfed the peace and decorum that ought to exist in the Nigerian society. Instead of being humiliated with series of exposure; first class and the likes, those who are not opportune to get employed, in the few available jobs that have been politicized and purchased over by the bourgeoisies, are forced to involve themselves in criminal and terrorist activities. This disheartening, pathetic scenario and laden tension is what informed the discouraging aphorism "education is a scam", advanced by the Nigerian youths today.

Furthermore, the unavailability of jobs in Nigeria has led to the untimely death of many job seekers. Adedire et al (2016), supports this claim following his account that "over 16 job seekers died over a stampede that took place when 500,000 unemployed youths rushed to apply for about 5,000 vacancies at the Nigeria Immigration Service". This can be further

substantiated with the incidence that led to the death of Umoren Iniubong, an Ikwa ibom lady, who was murdered in a cold blood by Uduak Akpan, and many others that were raped, kidnapped, humiliated and threatened, in a bid to secure meaningful jobs for themselves. A hungry man, they said, is an angry man. Poverty and economic marginalization associated with unemployment are drivers that have pushed many to register as Boko Haram members, involve in yahoo business, kidnapping, banditry and so many other social ills that have threatened contemporary leadership in Nigeria.

Poverty and Economic Marginalization

Poverty and economic marginalization are seen as common causes of terrorism. This is borne of the fact that people who are poor or economically marginalized or deprived "are more likely to resort to violence" (Bhatia and Ghanem, 2017), as a way to express unhappiness and showcase their grievances. A good example of this are the expressions that have often be made by Boko Haram sect, unknown gunmen, bandits and a handful of the Nigerian populace over the manner at which the government officials handle the national treasuries. Currently, the Accountant General of Federation (Ahmed Idris) is under a serious probe by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on allegation of diversion of funds and money laundering that amounts to 109 billion naira (Sanni, 2022b). This is a man who said that federal government does not have 18 billion naira for the revitalization of the Nigeria education and implementation of the 2009 ASUU-federation government agreed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Indeed, both lecturers and students have been deprived of what they ought to have for a long time. That is the reason for the ongoing strike and the grievance demonstrations that have been made by various students, in their various capacities and enclaves. This can lead to terrorism, as an idle mind is the devil's workshop.

Poverty and poor economic conditions can "create the ambience for people to join terrorist organisations" (Kavanah, 2011). Poverty could be said to be the motivating factor of the Northern youths in joining Boko Haram. Aloziuwa (2014), collaborates this when he unveils "low life expectancy, endemic poverty and high illiteracy rates, as some fundamental socio economic indicators that support terrorism and its negative socio economic profiles. By implication, poverty and poor economic conditions are the reasons for the emergence of terrorism, *insurgentism* and social unrest in the nation. This, notwithstanding, religious extremism, bifurcation and ethnic cleavages contribute too to the disharmony and truncation that have befallen Nigeria leadership and governance.

Religious Extremism and Ethnicity

It is obvious that fundamentalists and fanatics cause terrorism. A case study is the Boko Haram sect, who holds extreme religious ideology, which they use as a yardstick to involve in all sorts of heinous acts. The group under review is so much interested in the dictates of sharia law, and is out to do away with any group or Western ideology, which it sees as an obstacle towards the fulfillment of the Islam law and teaching. The relationship between religious extremism and ethnicity lies in the facts that both are capable of creating tension, and are meant for self-aggrandizement and accomplishment. This is evident in the ethno-religious clashes or conflicts, which often occur between the Christian and Muslim faithfuls, in trying to prove or elevate their selves, beyond world immanent missing links of reality.

Conversely, Hoffman (2006), observed that "the Islamic religion is the instigator of terrorism in Africa. More so, the extreme-right Christian groups are also not free of this blame", as they have in one way or another, instigated violence, in view of protecting their faith, and creeds they prophesy, propagate and believe in. The Islamic sects and ethnic cleavages, which our leaders often patronize, have caused war, and in defense of this unplanned crisis, Nigeria government aided or proliferated weapons, which they fill, can help basically to protect themselves from external or internal attacks. By so doing, their protectors or thugs during political campaigns are given these weapons, which become theirs after campaigns. Predominantly, the issue of terrorism is therefore, traceable to the proliferation of weapon of war by the government, and government agencies, that always collect bribes to open secluded borders for the terrorists to import their weapons.

Proliferation of Weapon of War.

This is the last but not the least, among the factors responsible for terrorism in Nigeria. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons can be said to be causes of Boko Haram's insurgency in the North, unknown gunmen in the South East, banditry and kidnapping in all parts of the country. This is because no terrorist can make any headway without the availability of arms (Sagir, 2013). "Some borders, particularly in the North Eastern wing, are used for trafficking arms and can be taken to be an abode for drugs, terrorists and their collaborators". The terrorists mostly champion their course and execute their mystified missions through the use of cutlasses, knives, ropes, A.K.47 riffles, sub-machine guns (SMGs), armored tanks (ATs) and other explosive devices (OED). It is with the above mentioned arms that the terrorist acts are being propelled.

Most importantly, the guided and unguided borders where the illegal arms or weapons are being smuggled in are what have boosted the terrorist activities in the Nigerian society. We emphasized on both guided and unguided borders because there are still borders that are guided yet the security agents that oversee the particular place collect bribe and allow the illegal arms to be brought in. More so, the unguided one could be as a result of settlements already made by the culprits. The terrorists having settled the security agents, in charge of a given border, are given express pass ticket, in spite of the aim and purpose at which the arms were deployed to serve. Above all, government, leaders or politicians have proliferated weapons, as they often sponsor personal guns for thugs, who will at the interim, protect them with the guns, but when the cheeps are down, run away with them, for their own usage, which in turn, lead to terrorism, and hiring of the guns for execution of kidnapping and banditry businesses. The above enumerated factors are responsible for terrorism and susceptibility or vulnerability of the Nigerian leadership.

Terrorism: The 'why' of Susceptibility of the Nigerian Leadership

The upsurge of terrorist organizations has made the Nigerian leadership susceptible. It is on this background that this work recommends that the Nigerian government should look into the above identified factors of terrorism; hence, the problems of terrorism, which have cost both lives and millions of naira, in Nigeria, can only be addressed by understanding of their root causes. When this is done, government will now understand how important it is to provide and create jobs for her citizens, as this will go a long way in enthroning peace and serving as a way of appraisal to the leaders and their governance. It is on this note that the vulnerability of the

Nigerian leadership can be checkmated. Under this sphere, the unemployment, poverty or hardship, ethic chauvinism and religious bigotry that fueled terrorism in Nigeria will be curbed. But when otherwise, according to Meagher (2014), terrorism will persist, since; a good number of the terrorists were recruited by this conviction or promise that jobs or employment will be provided, feeding and their livelihood protected and guaranteed.

With this, in mind, leaders/ politicians are enjoined to abhor the mindset, which always make them to think in the web of bifurcation, ethno-religiosity, *alonism* and clandestineness, and fight for the interests of all that exist. It is only in this mode of life animated by good governance, charity and selflessness that the posed or staring question; "the 'why' for terrorism and susceptibility of leadership in Nigeria", can be answered, and a change kick started.

Conclusion

This paper deduced that the growing onslaught, phobia and frustration in the Nigerian leadership are borne out of terrorism. The menaces and activities of Boko Haram sect, kidnappers and bandits, through bombing, hostage-taking and other heinous acts, have created anomalies and led to loss of lives and properties in the country. It is observed in this work that the various social vices mentioned, emanated or stemmed from bad governance, unemployment, poverty, marginalization, religious extremism and proliferation of weapons. The study reveals that bad governance is asymmetrical and incomparable with other scourges, in terms of intensity and gravity; hence, other upsurges would have been mitigated, if there were good governance and inclusivity, in the Nigerian leadership. In other words, the major reason for 'bionomical' terrorism (Boko Haram, kidnapping and banditry), which is the subject of consideration in this paper, is the government insensitivity on the needs and welfare of her citizenry.

To address these vices and annul or abrogate more volunteers from joining terrorist groups, radicalization and interethnic rivalry, this work recommends and enjoins government to create jobs or employment opportunities to the Nigerian youths. It equally establishes that only political aspirants with (soft and hard) qualities, who understand both Nigerians' human nature, and the nature of the state, should be voted into power. And insists on the need to reposition the thoughts and values of the indoctrinated terrorists, as these will serve as antidote, and bring them out from the world of fundamentalism, regionalism, sectionalism and dogmatism, to a dialogical or conversational world, to appreciate inclusivity and complementarity, in ensuring of peace and harmony in the Nigerian leadership.

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