
TERRORISM – A MONSTER FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EGO: A RELIGIOUS SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

The concern of this publication is to look into the religious terrorism in the world, Nigeria in particular. It has been viewed from the point of religious hatred and killing of opposite party, that people terrorize themselves because of religious differences and faith. It has become a system where by a group of the people that believe in the same faith use terror against their neighbors in the name of God. It is mentioned in this publication that all major religious can justify violence, and religion having long been associated with terrorism ever since there was good and evil. It will let people know that terrorists are disgruntled elements who pose as freedom fighters, and believe that by causing havoc; his or her requests will be given attention. These terrorists were trouble shooters who always want to use force in intimidating their prey to have their way. This intimidation might either be religious or political in nature. It is also a means whereby violence and fear with formidable forces are used as instrument to have their freedom. It would be read in this paper, the cause of terrorism in the society. The cause includes intimidation, defending one's faith, depriving people from their rights or freedom, marginalization, and so on. The paper will also mention the havoc wrecked by terrorists both on political and religious matters. It will look into religious terrorists in Nigeria. Then, it will be known that, like other parts of the world, Nigeria is also affected by the influence of other terrorist's countries of the world. The expression, religious terrorism, is also applied to various religious persons or groups in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Religious groups have used terror to obtain their ends for Millennia. The Romans fed their Lions with the body of Christians, faithfully because of their religion. Pharaohs killed Jews and terrorized them to keep them in chains as slaves; Christians terrorized native populations during the crusades. Muslim terrorize Christians in the Northern Nigeria because of religion, Christians killed Jew during holocaust. The white hated and terrorized the black because they are of different skin colour. People hate and terrorize themselves because of difference in religion. Religious terrorism is a way to make people use terror against their neighbour in the name of God. Did God say it is good to kill infidels, Jews, Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, Christians etc.? No. The Quran does not advocate killing of innocents, nor does the Bible or the Quran. Yet people have used these religious books to entice followers to kill others in the name of God. Hatred between religious groups has caused regional terrorism. Terrorism and religion have become closely linked in the eyes of many today, which is serious because through the 1980s terrorism was likely to be committed for the irreligious, part of the problem here is that, absolutism of religions makes terrorism more extreme, dramatic and dangerous than most political terrorism. Tragically, all major religions can

justify violence, and religion has long been associated with terrorism ever since there was good and evil.

Who is a terrorist: A terrorist is a disgruntled element that poses as a freedom fighter whose belief is that by causing havoc, his or her requests will be given attention¹. Oxford dictionary described a terrorist as a terrifying person or a formidable troublesome person who organizes intimidation on people of difference². He organizes violence against government or religious body so as to create fear in the mind of his victims³. Advanced learner's dictionary defined a terror as one who uses violence and intimidation, especially for political purpose. A terrorist is a troublesome person; it is also an act of violence according to John Smith⁴.

Middle East is a good example where terrors reign. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) started as a terrorist group under the leadership of Yassar Arrafath. Though now it is highly recognized by the international communities as Palestine State, but they started as a terrorist groups⁵. Before South Africa came out of colonial rule, they had various forms of pressure groups, some of which were causing havoc by bombing and burning government properties and terrorizing skilled white men. Even in Nigeria, states like Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa, the groups called terrorists were there fighting for their rights, against the intimidation of the white skilled men. In fact, many freedoms today were actualized through terrorism⁶. Though this medium should not be encouraged because of its uncivil nature, but it remains a strong weapon in the hands of those who feel that their requests are not given due audience and attention.

What are the causes of terrorism, in the society?

Obviously, there is no flame without fire; there are causes for terrorism in the society which needs to be analyzed one after the other as follows.

Intimidation: Being over bossy can lead to terrorist attack. America, Britain and other powerful nations are receiving series of bombing attacks these days because some countries, especially the Arab world felt that they are being intimidated and over bossed by the world powers. They feel threatened as they see the gap between them and the world powers as that of master and house boy. They see themselves still under the colonial masters even after receiving self-rule and self-independence.

Faith: The global terrorist activists centered mainly on religion. The battle between the Jews and the Arabs is more of religious than territorial problem⁸. Remember the Jews and the Arabs are from the same father historically yet they terrorize themselves. This case is suppose to be handled in a family way, because it is a family affair, but because of different faiths being adopted by the two sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmail⁹, it is not easy for them to put an end to their disagreement. In order to show the world that the enmity between the Jews and Palestine nations, all the Arab nation joined hands together in fighting the Jews, because of the fact that the Arab nation have the belief that the Jews are terrorizing them¹⁰. They are only terrorizing them because of their belief and faith in Islamic religion.

Deprivation: Nigeria is the sixth largest oil producing nations in the world today¹¹. This oil is in the coastal region of this country. But the areas where these products are mainly located have nothing to show. These areas where oil is being exploited lack good infrastructure like water, good roads in their regions. The educational structure of the places where we tap this crude oil are poor, even these communities are still living in abject poverty. Other parts of the Nigeria that have no oil at all were enjoying the benefits, while degradations were the only incentives left behind for these oil producing communities. It becomes a problem for their children to go to school even though they cannot obtain gainful employment. Because of these developments, the youth of the Niger-Delta took to arms struggle and took laws into their own hand in form of terrorism.

The worst of all is the failure on the part of religious and electoral bodies during the time of religious activities and electoral process. Terrorist's activities in many countries of the world today are as a result of religious terrorism and failure in elections. Instead of accepting defeat in good faith and work hard in the subsequent endeavors, they take to terrorism. This is common in Arab world and many other Islamic countries where their fundamentalist believed that if not them, there is no peace.

THE HAVOC WRECKED BY TERRORIST ACTIVITIES

The United State of America (USA)

The heartbreaking terrorist attacks against the World Trade Centre, the Pentagon, and the obliteration of four airliners resulted in about 3, 000 deaths. It was a heart sinking event, as millions of people were being rescued and efforts were made to save lives among the rubble of destruction¹³. United States of American Security officials stated that at least 19 Islamic men orchestrated the suicidal hijacking of four Boeing jets that had connections to the fanatical religious leader, Osama Bin Laden¹⁴. At least one of the hijackers owned a copy of the Quran, which authorities found in a bag that didn't make the flight. They also found pages of spiritual instructions which contained statements such as "you're doing a job which is loved by God, and you will join the Virgins"¹⁵ and "I pray to you God top god to give me from all, my sins, to allow me to glorify you in every possible way"¹⁶. The Quran is their embedded faith and their will provide important dues as to the reason for their actions. Apparently, these dues have yet to affect the minds of our military and political leadership. However, the most fanatical suicidal terrorist does not perform his acts from a vacuum. Terrorists do not commit acts out of pure insanity or jealousy. It takes patience, planning and a concerted effort to carry out these atrocities¹⁷.

The Iranian

The most dreaded religious terrorist of today are the Iranian followers of Ayatollah Rholiar Khomeini, the Iranian leader who toppled the Shab, Emperor of Iran in 1979 after fifteen years of wagging Islamic jihad from his exile in france¹⁸. He started as an enemy of oppressors (the Shab and his Government) and defender of the oppressed (the Iranians). On stepping off an Air France jetliner in Teheran in 1979, he promised to "cut off the hands of foreigners and their helpers in Iran"¹⁹. In his Christmas message of the same year, he directed a note to the Christian clergy, particularly those in Iran he said:

Father of the church and the Christian clergy, rise and support the oppressed and downtrodden that are ceased in the clutches of the oppressor. For the sake of God's will and in order to obey the edicts of Jesus Christ, chime the bells of your temples for once in favour of the oppressed people of Iran and for the denunciation of the oppressor. Rise and save Jesus Christ from the executioner's clutches, because the great prophet reverts the oppression who resorts to religion as a means of oppression and who prays for ascending the throne of oppression against humanity and also because all heavenly teaching were sent down to save the oppressed.²⁰

The language understood by the terrorist is always provocative hammering on their narrow interpretation of the scriptures, which at best antagonizes the believers of other religious or sects rather than win them to their sides. Sometimes some terrorist may resort to physical violence to make the infidels or the 'hell-bound' to their line of belief and worship. In view of the meaning and feature of a terrorist, it makes one ponder the salient question, "Who is the believer or a physical person that is not a terrorist?" Soon after taking over the reign of power Khomeini's burning desire to eliminate his enemies', the oppressors, and the age-long enmity between Iran and Iraq made him toughen his brand of religious zeal²¹.

The Iranian phenomenon is, to say the least, the best example of an international government – sponsored and monster-type of religious terrorism. No evidence has come to light of Iranians giving assistance to those other than Muslim. And no one can predict the end to the terrorism, of the defender of the oppressed' turned "the oppressor"²².

The Irish Terrorists

The Irish religious terrorism predates the Iranian type. It has its origins in the age-long division between the catholic and the Protestants. The catholic minority in Northern Ireland seeks a re-unification with the Irish republic while, the Protestants wish to continue their association with the British. Attempts made to internationalize this terrorism by seeking the support of freedom movements in late sixties and early seventies met with little success. The Irish 'terrorists' as the British government and people call them do not officially receive any government support,²³ not even from Irish government, so it is different in this regard from the Iranian type.

In their operation, the Irish type also differs from the Iranian type. The Irish terrorism has been very devastating, destroying government functionaries causing resignation of minister eliminating Irish people especially the innocent ones and so forth. Now as a reprisal, the British Army in Northern Ireland has literally moved down many recalcitrant' fanatics²⁴, the riots by the Irish Catholics have reached such a large scale that the British government has investigated the cause of the out burst and suggested possible solutions, all to no avail. Even the recent ones, by a small section of the Irish terrorist to accept a political solution resulting in formation of a political party and using the ballot box rather than battle and violence has further escalated the problem²⁵.

The Indian Terrorist

The Indian situation is rather disheartening. Three of the major religious groups are locked in two-cornered religious battle. The first involve the Hindus and the Sikhs. The origin of this terrorism, is the demand of the Sikhs for a greater autonomy in regional government of Punjab, while the Hindus are resisting it ²⁶.

This terrorism has brought disaster and untold hardship upon the Punjabis. For instance, it has cleared many lives, especially those of Hindus priest, damaged rail roads and government properties as a result of incessant and powerful bombing blasts, and caused the imprisonment of many people; especially the Sikhs as well as the banning of the militant²⁷. Al Indian Sikhs students Federation (AISSF) recently charged with inciting violence and organizing weapons, training camps in Punjab.

A more serious religious battle is that waged between the Hindu religion, the indigenous religion, and Islam, regarding the Muslims as intruders and polluters of true religion, the Muslims regard the Hindus as "infidels" because of the age-long strongly held Hindus belief in multiplicity of gods and the rites corrected with the burial of the death. The results of their disagreement have brought many religious upheaval, deaths and destruction of properties. Yet none of the religious groups wants to tolerate the other their unending wart of domination over each other has become an acceptable way of life in the Indian sub-continent.

The Arabs of the Middle East

There are numerous religious groups and individuals who have exhibited dangerous traits of terrorism in the Middle East, be they Muslim or Christians. The most famous in this area are some Muslims generally referred to as "Islamic fundamentalist" or "Muslim extremists" who are fighting for and against the Israel occupation forces in southern Lebanon and Beirut. Lebanon is undoubtedly one of the most religiously divided countries the world today. Among the key factors responsible for this is the religious intolerance of the Lebanese, and the political arrangement the country adopted after gaining independence from France in 1943²⁸.

The arrangement which was based on the 1932 census which saw the Christians in majority, therefore gave the presidency of the country to the Christian maronites²⁹. The Sikh Amar Muslim group got the prime minister; the Sunni Muslim had the speaker of the parchment and the Druze³⁰. (Some of whom are businessmen in Nigeria) secured the officer at the head of the Ministry of Defense. With time the Muslim outnumbered the Christians and rightly demanded to select the president. Since the Christian ammonites would not submit their position of dominance, there ensued a civil way in 1958, which has since shattered the country. Beirut, the former famous Paris' of the Middle East has been reduced after the mass killing of one another because of religious egocentrism. Many religious terrorist all over the globe is for instance, the Indonesian groups³¹, which sometime threatened some 13,000

French, Italian, British and American national's ion Indonesian with death to avenge the killing in Lebanon.

Let us take note of several things about the fore mentioned terrorists. First, they are mostly Muslim wishing to reform Islam. They are politically revolutionary movements, fighting for the freedom of their fatherland. Second, most of these groups are known from Khomeini's regime. Third, these groups are always ready to give assistance to any Muslim group in the world, fighting the cause of their fatherland and most especially that of Islam. Lastly, the groups have associated themselves with other revolutionary groups in some parts of the world, Colonel Moammer Gaolhafi, was sometimes reported to have threatened to officially recognize the I.R.A in its revolution' against the British government.

Individual Believers

The last set of religious terrorists are the most numerous and the most elusive. They would never see themselves as terrorists. Yet in their heart, there is poison to harm those not of their religious or doctrinal persuasion. These are the tens of thousands of small religious groups, students and individuals. They seek ways of propagating their faiths, of defending the minutest details in their holy scriptures, of improving the religious and moral growth of their communities and of proving religious education to the thistly adherents of their faiths.

In pursuance of these their noble objectives, however, they exhibits characteristics of terrorism which make one wonder whether they are not at times out of their minds, and are intolerant even of their own parents and friends. They condemn, sometimes in an undisguised language and as strong as they can all those who do not share their religious views; they segregate themselves and refuse to share their joys and sorrow with non-members of their group, they demonstrate a holier-than-thou attitude in all places and at all occasion. In fact, their peacock approach whatever brings them and the others together show clearly that they constitute a problem not only to the society but also to themselves.

Religious Terrorist in Nigeria

In Nigeria as in other parts of the world, the expression religious terrorists are applied to various religious persons or groups that fall into different categories. First, the adherents of one religion rightly or wrongly regard those of other religions as religious fanatics. Thus, while Muslim generally accuse Christians of 'intolerance', Christians often called the Muslims the appellation 'religious terrorists and fanatics'. Second, some groups within the same religious persuasion consider those they regard as fundamentalists as fanatics. Within the Christian community, the Pentecostal and Evangelical are so regarded. In Islam, the Ahmadu Muslims regard other Muslim that does not sympathize with their tenants as intolerant. Non-Ahmadu Muslims do not even consider the Ahmadis's as worthy of the name Muslim, for instance, a situation where various Muslim groups resort to fighting and violence in establishing their claim to be the true Muslim. Third, the expression 'religious terrorist' is used for any religious adherent or group that exhibits characteristics such as intolerance, narrow mindedness, religious emotionalism, foul and offensive language and force during discussions or debates on religious issues at home, in educational institutions in places of

work and in mass media. Furthermore, those who make unscheduled and incessant preaching and religious propaganda in the streets, in buses, at market places are 'religious terrorist, propagandist and fanatics'. During them 'hell fire' preaching, these "religious terrorists" sometimes make use of musical instruments and Loud-speaking equipment which some people often regard as nuisance

Conclusion

Judging from the experiences of the more advanced countries of the world as where efforts of religious terrorists are yet to be curbed as earlier indicated, it will simply be day-dreaming to expect a permanent solution to the problem. And in Nigeria where no problem had ever been adequately and satisfactorily solved, and with the many obstacles enumerated above, religious terrorism cannot be exception. It will be the eighth wonder of the world if terrorism is completely eradicated and become of will not destroy the world through violent and dangerous outburst. Today in the whole world, religious terrorism has become a dangerous monster being used by some powerful men of the world power to destroy the whole world because of their religious egocentrism.

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22. Leading citizen of Irish origin in United States of America strongly supported the Irish "Terrorists" militarily and materially. This information was collected from a new bulletin on the BBC television, sometimes in 1985 while in Birmingham.

23. Ibid

24. Some of those who wanted to contest the British elections, and who were know to be former members of the I.R.A (Irish Republican Army) were hunted and a lawyer was reported killed.

25. See "Hindus priest killed in fresh Punjab violence," *New Nigeria* 24 March, 1984. P.8

26. Ibid

27. Ibid P.9

28. The maronites are the leading church community in Lebanon. Due to several; factors including migration and intermarriage they have lost their statistical dominance over the Muslim.

29. The Duzes, a community living in Lebanon and around Damascus, derive their name from Darzi. Their ethnological origins, as well as their religions are obscure. What is called the Druze religion is a learned system. Those who know it are called cuggal (the learner) all others are the Juhhal (the ignorant) see druzes, shorter Encyclopedia of Islam. P.84.
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