TERRORISM: NIGERIA’S NEWEST FACELESS SOCIAL PROBLEM AND RETARDATION TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
The paper discussed the term terrorism, its origin, definition and characteristics. It showed some of the social and developmental problems Nigeria has had to face over the years emphasizing terrorism as an addition to her social problems. It tried to highlight some of the cases of terrorist manifestations in Nigeria over the years and how terrorism affects social development.

Key words include: Terrorism and development

Introduction
Over the years, people have had to make their presence felt by several means when issues arise. There had been revolutions, strikes and demonstrations being used as instruments to bring other people’s demands to the knowledge of others. People had used assassinations, torture and other violent activities to press their demands home on the imagination of the others. People had protested, not only against the state in the way government affairs were conducted, but also against a whole society, which they saw as unjust. Over the years, the acts of terrorism and the attendant killings and assassinations have received wide publicity. This type of activity has gained wide publicity because of the attention it gets, (Roberts, 2007: 449). Discrimination like witnessed by a religious group from another can fuel terrorism. Many nations achieved their independence through resorting to terrorism against their masters.

Most recent scholars begin the discussion of terrorism with the citing of the September 11, 2011 attack on the United States. In this attack, terrorists had hijacked four commercial airlines. One crashed in a wooded area, and the other three were flown and crashed into public buildings full of people. The attack was estimated to have taken as many as 3, 025 lives or more. These people that lost their lives came from many nations of the world. The attack was also seen as the most serious terrorist act ever recorded.

From the above, questions begin to be raised. What activity should we call terrorism? What are the characteristics of terrorism? Between the supposed terrorist and the terrorized, what does the word terrorism stand for? In Africa and Nigeria, in what areas have we witnessed the act of terrorism? What are the over all effects of terrorism on our general social life?

Terrorism defined
Light, Keller and Calhoun (1989:838) defined terrorism as “the use of violence by small groups of people to accomplish political aims they feel unable to bring about by peaceful, legitimate means Thomas (1995: 419) defined terrorism as “the use of threatened or actual violence in the pursuit of political goals.” Schaefer (2003:430) saw terrorism as “the use or threat of violence against random or symbolic targets in pursuit of political aims.” Giddens (2005: 460) defined terrorism as “acts of violence or the threat of such violence used as a political strategy by an individual or a group.” Giddens (2009: 1057) concluded that terrorism is a difficult word to define in one single way. As such, he tried to bring in an all encompassing definition to from Panyaracham (2004) seeing terrorism as “any action [by a non-state organization] …that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians, or non-combatants, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act.” Finally, According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2010), the word terrorism means “the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act.” We can continue to bring in more definitions of the word terrorism. Views from those called terrorists may even differ from that of those that call them terrorists. Said and done, terrorism from our definitions can even be defined according to people’s background. It may not mean exactly the same thing for people in the former war torn Liberia. It may not mean the same thing when the views in Sudan and South Sudan are confronted. The differing interests in Nigeria may not interpret it the same way. This therefore takes us the characterization of terrorism.
Characteristics of terrorism
According to Giddens (2009), Johnson identified four characteristic features that distinguish terrorism from other violent acts. The number one of these characteristics is that terrorists try to point violence as a legitimate political tactic, even though such acts are condemned by virtually every nation when it takes place. To the above, terrorists are not most of the time given the chance to participate in the negotiation of state affairs. To Johnson therefore, terrorism is a “weak organization’s strategy to harm a stronger foe.”

Second, terrorism is employed not just by groups but also by governments against their own people. State terrorism is the use of violence, generally without support of law, by government officials. State terrorism is lawful in some authoritarian and totalitarian states, which survive by inciting fear out intimidation.

Third, democratic societies reject terrorism in principle, but they are especially vulnerable to terrorism because they afford extensive civil liberties to their people and have less extensive police networks to deal with the situation of terrorism. In contrast to this, totalitarian states and regimes make widespread use of state terrorism, although, at the same time, this extensive police power minimizes opportunities for individual acts of terror against government.

Lastly, terrorism is always a matter of definition. Governments claim the right to maintain order, even by force, and may brand opposition groups that use violence as “terrorists.” Similarly, political differences may explain why one person’s ‘terrorist’ is another’s ‘freedom fighter.’

Origin of the word terrorism
The word terrorism has its root in the French word “terrorisme” which also had its roots in the Latin word “terreo” which means, “I frighten.” It originally was used to describe state terrorism as practiced by the French government during the reign of terror in France. According to Giddens has its origin in the French revolution of 1789 when thousands of French people chased out their leaders demanding for changes in government way of administration. After the fall of the French revolution, that was when those who organized the revolution could not come out with any clear leader, the former leaders reorganized themselves and used the military to haunt down the revolution organizers. Many of the organizers were executed using the guillotine in public places to strike fear into people’s heart.

The term terror was actually a term invented and used to describe the activities and tactics used in killing and torturing those who organized the failed revolution. The term terror was not also used until the 18th century to describe the phenomenon of terrorizing people through violence but the phenomenon itself was a very old one. The point of using violence on people was not actually just to destroy, but also to strike fear into those elsewhere and demonstrate the power which that terror represented. “So the phenomenon of using violence with the idea of terrifying populations, especially civilian populations, is obviously older than the term” (Giddens, 2009).

Terrorism has emerged as a development that will shape events for the rest of the twenty first century. It has been called “the ultimate violation of human rights.” Ordinary citizens are often harmed or killed by terrorist actions. A few of the victims are well-known businesspersons and diplomatic personnel. Many national groups in Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East live constantly with the danger of terrorist activity.”

Terrorist acts sometimes have been carried out by individuals to satisfy a personal grievance. Most, however are committed by political groups demanding certain rights on behalf of a people or a cause. Terrorists in these groups usually believe that they cannot achieve their goals by normal political means, so they resort to violence.

Terrorist tactics
The purpose of terrorism is to scare opponents and force them to accept terrorist demands. Hijackings, bombings, kidnappings, murdering, and armed attacks on embassies and government buildings are the common methods used by terrorists to achieve their goals. In some cases, terrorists have the support of large groups of people. They are often viewed as freedom fighters rather than terrorists. Most terrorists are linked to an international network that supplies training, weapons, money and forged documents for operation.

International terrorists hold many differing political opinions. Some are seen as anarchists, while others support a new social order based on Marxist ideas. Many terrorists represent ethnic, religious, and nationalistic causes.
Although most people are not affected directly by terrorism, it has had an indirect effect on their lives. “Regular searching of clothing and baggage take place before boarding a plane. Security measures for world leaders have been tightened, making them less accessible to the public. Business people and diplomats may be restricted in work and travel.”

The difference between war and terrorism
The above then brings us to the difference between war and terrorism. Wars follow certain patterns. These patterns are rules that guide wars. Warring parties are known to each other. The objectives of the warring parties are clearly stated and they often involve territorial control. Terrorism however breaks from these patterns. Terrorist individuals and organizations may not be known and terrorists can deny responsibility for some actions most especially when such actions go beyond the expectations of the perpetrators. Of note, the reasons for operating may not be known or it may be unclear. Conventional warfare is symmetrical, with two nations sending their armies into battle each with its own strength. On the other hand, terrorism “is an unconventional form of warfare, an unsymmetrical conflict in which a small number of attackers use terror and their own willingness to die in order to level the playing fields against a much more powerful enemy. Further, while the terrorists may be ruthless, the nation under attack must exercise restraint in its response to terror because little may be known about the identity and location of those responsible.

Policies toward terrorism
Governments have worked out different ways of dealing with terrorists. Some have followed a policy of giving in to terrorist demands in order to save lives. A more common tendency today is to follow a hard-line policy of refusing to cooperate with terrorists. Many countries such as Britain, Israel, and Germany, have special police and army units to deal with the problem. Most government officials want to end terrorism, but no international agreement exists on how to deal with it. Government officials cannot agree whether terrorists should be treated as criminals or political offenders.

Political differences among nations also cloud the issue of terrorism. Many nations claim that they are opposed to terrorist acts in principle no matter what the terrorist motives might be. They want international agreements to punish the offenders. However, in certain instances, they will support terrorist groups that might seem to advance their interests. Other nations openly admit their belief that some terrorist acts are legitimate if the cause is just. They often view terrorism as a tool of revolution against outside influence and control.

Understanding terrorism
It is difficult to define what terrorism as it is used today stand for precisely. The reason for this is that whenever there is a terrorist act, two sides emerge. These are the attackers and the attacked. The attacked group would define the attackers as terrorists. On the other hand, those attacking can be considered as good and freedom fighters. Governments are known all over the world to have used very violent actions to stop those perceived as opponents. The use of violent force by governments is to strike fear into those opposing. This two can be called terror, but is it terrorism. The government activity can be labeled legal and as such non-terrorist since it seeks to protect everybody. Therefore, according to Giddens (2009:1057), “it is sensible to restrict the concept of terrorism to groups and organizations working outside the state.

Giddens had identified two types of terrorism. These are the old and new terrorism. The old type terrorism was associated with “the rise of nationalism, and with the establishment of nations as sovereign, territorially bonded entities, which predominantly occurred from the late eighteenth century onwards.” This simply put was fighting for independence and the regaining of lost territories and rights. On the other hand, new terrorism has to do with groups fighting their own local governments or an outside government, which they perceive as a threat to them.

In the case of Nigeria, Nworisara (2010) noted that terrorism in is a sign that formal authority is ineffectual and that checks and balances in governance are not working since little or no prosecution of cases abound.

Terrorism and Nigeria
Right from 1960 when Nigeria gained her political independence from Britain, her ex-colonial master, Nigeria has grappled with many problems ranging from economic, educational, political and
religious. Nigeria has struggled like a ship on a turbulent sea, right from the process of handing over government to Nigerians, which many still believe to have been done in such a way to make British influence over Nigeria remain, to the many political experiments which Nigeria has continued to do with herself like an inexperienced scientist. Within 50 years of her independence, Nigeria has experimented with almost every kind of political system. She has seen presidential system, parliamentary system, and civilian rule of all sorts, military rule and transitions. Some were peaceful, while some were very violent and bloody. Hitherto, Nigeria has managed to continue until that which is foreign to political issues in Nigeria began to take center stage. This is the era of terrorism in Nigeria. According to Nworisara (2010), terrorism in Nigeria was unknown in the early years of Nigeria’s independence in 1960. It became rampant in the late 90's and further culminating in today's epidemic proportion

The first case of what might be called full modern terrorism in Nigeria came on October 19, 1986. This was when Dele Giwa was killed in his house in Ikeja, Lagos through a letter bomb. This sent horror feelings down the spines of Nigerians. Nobody has been convicted of that attack in or outside Nigeria. Since then, series of other bombing incidents have taken place in the country, “with majority of them happening under the despotic rule of the late General Sanni Abacha, who was rumoured to be behind most of the bombings and some state-sponsored killings to intimidate opponents of his regime,” (Kolawole, 2011).


Other cases include the March 15, 2010 attack in Warri during an Amnesty Dialogue sponsored by Vanguard Media Limited; October 1, 2010: During Nigeria’s 50th Independence anniversary celebrations in Abuja, suspected to be sponsored by MEND, a group of Niger-Delta militants; April 8, 2011: At INEC office in Suleja, Niger State; April 26, 2011: At Maiduguri, Borno State; May 29, 2011: At an Army barracks in Bauchi and January 1, 2011: At an Abuja Army Barracks Mammy market. By June 10th 2012 while this paper was being written, cases of bomb blasts were reported in Nigeria’s Borno and other places and as usual lives were lost and properties destroyed. I believe that the above are evidences enough to show that Nigeria is under a serious siege.

**Terrorism and Nigeria’s social problems**

Over the years, Nigeria has had to grapple with many problems ranging from political instability to poverty occasioned by very weak monetary system; shortage of skilled human capital occasioned by the flight of Nigeria’s professionals to oversea nations to constant inflation problems; worsening foreign trade to rising debts owed the developed nations as a result of the constant borrowing with very high interests; inadequate socio-economic infrastructure and poor attitude of Nigerians to government properties. The above issues have left Nigeria in a very low standard of living. Other problems include over reliance on foreign aids, a large population with little to support it, shortage of technical man power, unending rural to urban migration of youths who have no hope of sustenance in the urban areas, high level of dependency on foreign nations, over dependence on the Niger Delta oil, dishonest leadership and dishonest followers, and a very high rate of unemployment that we have no hope of surmounting in the nearest future.

Today we have got yet an addition to Nigeria’s social problems. This newest social issue is terrorism. This has manifested itself in many areas including attacks on innocent Nigerian citizens and foreigners. Many lives have been lost as a result. Properties worth much in monetary terms have also been destroyed. The recent cases of terrorist attacks on Nigeria have been directed against churches and Christians in the Northern parts of Nigeria.
One characteristic behavior of terrorists is to state the reasons for embarking on attacks on the people and government. This is not the case with Nigeria’s terrorists. They have been attacking without coming out to say why. The attacks on Christians and churches have left people without option than to term the attacks religious war. Nigeria’s terrorist attacks are not defined as the activities of any individuals fighting for their rights in any way. It is not the case of any known aggrieved group fighting for their right or rights. Nigerians are faced with a faceless war. This is a war without direction and any identifiable actors. A war that will definitely continue to destroy whatever faces of social progress that Nigeria may have made in the recent years. A war that will continue to pull Nigeria in the direction that nobody is sure she wants to travel. A war that will continue to mar the new face of democracy that Nigeria is struggling to keep in the eyes of the world.

**Conclusion**

Having looked at terrorism and all it stands for, it is hard to locate the terrorist actions in Nigeria within the characteristic features of terrorism anywhere. It appears that Terrorists in Nigeria do not have any clear aim. They do not seem to have any direction for their actions. They should come out and name their reasons for what they are doing if as some of the claim they are fighting for the people or if they are pursuing any just cause. This would give the government of the nation a footing on how to go about solving any grievance that anybody may have. This would help in solving the worsening image of whatever good function that religion may have in the nation since most of the terrorist actions have been seen as hiding behind religious curtains. This will help in solving the ever-shaking political scenario of Nigeria. Let the killings stop and let Nigeria remain one for good.

**References**

Light, Keller and Calhoun (1989),