PHILOSOPHY AND THE PROBLEM OF TERRORISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
One of the greatest problems facing Nigeria today is terrorism. Terrorism is a various grievous problems that lead to destruction of life and properties, dehumanization of the human person, fear and intimidation, social retrogression, environmental degradation, etc. There is no doubt that terrorism has to be confronted if society is not to degenerate into anarchy. This is why all hands must be on deck to solve the hydra-headed problem. Philosophers are part of the Nigeria society and should join in combating this problem. Through a critical analytic method the issue of terrorism in Nigeria is examine here and what role philosophy and philosophers can play. It is concluded here that philosophers can help in the transformation of people mind and thus dissuade them from this dangerous ideology of terrorism.

Keywords: Terrorism, Nigeria, Philosophy, Philosophers, and Ideology.

Introduction
One of the greatest problems facing almost every country in the world is that of terrorism. There is hardly any country in the world that is not affected directly or indirectly by the scourge of terrorism. Terrorism is a grievous problem that cannot be ignored. Ignoring this problem will eventually bring about the destruction of society. When terrorism happens in any society, it affects almost every segment of that society. It brings about the destruction of human life and property; it brings about the destruction of bio-cultural diversity. The lives of people and that of society are impeded. Boff (2006) is of the opinion that "terrorism is today the major threat to the current global order, and its power can strike anywhere in the world" (p.47).

This problem of terrorism has also greatly affected Nigeria. The highest manifestation of terrorism so far in the country seems to be that of the Boko Haram. Boko Haram, a name which means that western education is forbidden rails against the value of western education and all that is associated with it, including its technology. This is despite the very fact that the group use western technology to communicate their messages and carry out violent campaigns.

The problem has become so challenging for Nigeria that every discipline in the humanities, including philosophy should make their voices heard in trying to find a solution to the problem. Philosophy has always made positive contributions in the social, political, cultural, economic and other aspects of society's life. The challenge before this paper is to set forth how philosophy can specifically contribute towards helping to curb the plague of terrorism in Nigeria. Following the analytic school of philosophy,

conceptual clarifications are very important. That will be the very first thing this paper is set to do. When that has been examined, the problem and situation of terrorism in Nigeria will be exposed. Since this is not a work in the social sciences, the factors that precipitate terrorism and even its consequences will not be studied here, though these are implied in the reflection. It will suffice to provide the problem and situation and immediately go to investigate the role of philosophy which is the main concern of this paper. The primary objective here is to present the problem and offer a solution from a philosophical paradigm. Arising from that, the paper will make some concluding reflections.

Conceptual Analysis

The words, philosophy and terrorism are important words to be defined here. It is widely accepted, as Makumba (2005) notes that the word philosophy comes from two Greek words, "philo" meaning love and "Sophia" meaning wisdom. In the general sense, this implies as Makumba (2005) notes that: philosophy is love of wisdom and a philosopher is a lover of wisdom. This is philosophy in the general sense. Philosophy has grown to become a critical and rational enquiry into the reality of existence and being. It probes and questions. It takes nothing for granted. This is why the study of philosophy makes one to be critically conscious and to question philosophies, theologies, ideologies, religious and political thoughts, ideas and practices that people take for granted. Makumba (2005) is on target when he argues that:

> Philosophy alone among the branches of human knowledge has for its object everything which is. No individual science formally poses the question that defines the identity of philosophy, that is, the question regarding the world as a totality. Philosophy consists in going to the roots of the question:
> "What is it all about?" To engage in it means to ask questions, to reflect on questions, and ultimately facing one single question only. To say that philosophy's object is all that is, does not mean philosophy is the sum total of all the other sciences, as Descartes thought. Neither is it absorbed by the other sciences, as the positivists thought, thereby losing its specificity. It obtains its specificity from the aspect under which it is concerned with everything. (p.27)

It is clear that philosophy in many ways is unlike other disciplines. While other disciplines have a specific subject matter, the subject matter of philosophy is limited to no particular matter but all reality. For Mautner (2000), the term philosophy could be used in various senses to include an intellectual activity, a theory from philosophical enquiry, and total view of reality and is the name of a particular discipline studied in universities and schools. Recognize then that philosophy is vital to every society and community. Much of the wisdom of human civilization has come from the philosophical disciplines. It is not out of place then to see what role it can contribute in curbing terrorism. It is important here then to define terrorism.

The term terrorism is associated with the use of terror or terroristic means to intimidate people and societies in other that others may accept one's ideology or positions. Terror can include the use of violence and threat to drive fear into people to intimidate them. It should be stated that it is difficult to define the word, terrorism and that there is no universally accepted definition of the term acceptable to everyone. This problematic is recognized in Rourke (2007) who states that though there is a lack of consensus on the meaning of the term, terrorism involves the following: violence, this violence is undertaken by individuals, non-governmental organizations or covert government agents, this violence targets civilians, uses clandestine methods, and aims to influence political outcome. It should be noted that not every form of violence is terrorism and it should be realized that war may also not be terrorism.

Papp (1988) defines terrorism as involving the use of violent means to achieve political objectives. Momah (1993) avers that it is systematic maiming for political gain. According to Boff (2006), "Terrorism is every spectacular form of violence that is practiced with the aim of keeping minds busy, busy with fear and terror" (p.49). For Bauhn (1989) terrorism is: "the performance of violent acts, directed against one or more persons, intended by the performing agent to intimidate one or more persons and thereby to bring about one or more of the agent's political goals" (p. 28). Coady (2001) defines terrorism as: "The tactic of intentionally targeting non-combatants [or non-combatant property, when significantly related to life and security] with lethal or severe violence … meant to produce political results via the creation of fear" (p. 1697). It is already becoming clear from the foregoing the dilemma of defining the term. Which perspective will you define it from-that of the terrorist or that of the victim, or from the means and method used? A look at few more definitions reveals how problematic it is to define the term. Canada Department of Justice says that: "In Canada, section 83.01 of the *Criminal Code* defines terrorism as an act committed 'in whole or in part for a political, religious or ideological purpose, objective or cause' with the intention of intimidating the public" (par. 3). From another perspective Kamal (2008) sees it as negation and aiming to annihilate the non-identical other. For the Terrorism Research Center (N.d),

> Terrorism has been described variously as both a tactic and strategy; a crime and a holy duty; a justified reaction to oppression and an inexcusable abomination. Obviously, a lot depends on whose point of view is being represented. Terrorism has often been an effective tactic for the weaker side in a conflict. As an asymmetric form of conflict, it confers coercive power with many of the advantages of military force at a fraction of the cost. (par. 2)

The point must be emphasized that terrorism is not only for political goals. Terrorists can have other goals such as religious, cultural, economic or otherwise. The goals of some terrorists may be confusing, complex, obsolete and repugnant to authentic human values. It ought to be noted that very often, terrorists are equally fundamentalists. They are fundamentalists because they accept no viewpoint that is contrary to their own. Very often they are not open to reason and dialogue. They are willing to stand by their

viewpoint even when it is proved to be weak and false. They see no value in event such as the enlightenment, globalization and the post modern world. They are conservative and hold strictly to traditional interpretation of their ideologies and faith. It is unfortunate to note that a great deal of terrorists have often misused religious faith in its traditional form to propagate their vision of the world. If terrorism is to be frontally combated, then one of the fronts to confront it is in the realm of the mind and ideas. And this is where the discipline of philosophy comes in. Realize that nobody is born a terrorist; rather people are indoctrinated into it either from birth or along the way in life. There is the possibility that this indoctrination can be reversed. No matter how serious the problem, society cannot give up hope in the struggle against fundamentalism.

The Problem and Situation of Terrorism in Nigeria

It is imperative to understand terrorism in the strict sense if not every form of violence may erroneously considered as terrorism**.** Terrorism is not a problem that started today in Nigeria. If the definition of terrorism is to be followed strictly, then there were forms of violence that took place in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Nigeria that could all be classified as terrorism. But the focus here will be on current forms of terrorism. A look at the Niger Delta reveals that to a certain degree, terrorism has taken place in the Niger Delta. It is true that the people of the Niger Delta have a just cause; they have a right to demand for justice, environmental peace, equity, and resource control, social and cultural autonomy. The Niger Delta has suffered from decades of environmental degradation and infrastructural underdevelopment. But a just cause should be fought by just means. If not the cause is greatly damaged. There are offshoots of militant groups that have hijacked the struggle and used it to terrorize people, blow-up and destroy public facilities and instill fear in both locals and foreigners in the Niger Delta while perpetuating criminal violence. This present author is one of those who is against the way that oil multinational forces have carried out their activities in the Niger Delta yet this does not warrant kidnapping of locals and foreigners, blowing up of pipelines, hostage taking, armed robbery and other forms of violence that have taken place in the Niger Delta. Nwuba (2007) notes that, "Due to terrorism and criminal violence currently holding sway in the Niger Delta region, a lot of oil companies, especially the engineering services firms are pulling out of the production sites and this portends dangerous and dim prospects for the nation's economy" (p.279). Nwuba (2007) relates that a company like Wilbros oil firm has left and other multinational oil companies are thinking of leaving. It is unfortunate that construction of roads and other social infrastructures have often been delayed in the Niger Delta because of insecurity arising from criminal violence.

Another major form of violence in the country is that coming from Boko Haram insurgency. This group, Boko Haram has caused a great deal of violence and harm especially in the Northern part of the country. They were responsible for the kidnapping of the Chibok girls and many other kidnappings. They have set schools and villages on fire in the North East. They have caused bombing in Abuja, Niger State, Borno state, etc. In all of these, they have destroyed human lives and properties. Schools are closed for many months because of fear of Boko Haram. People cannot access social amenities

because of fear of Boko Haram. They have burnt down religious houses and killed adherents of all faiths. Boko Haram has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS), one of the worst terrorist groups in human history. ISIS has caused genocide, destroyed cultural heritages and are still on the rampage. By pledging allegiance to Islamic State (IS), Boko Haram is ideologically and practically aligning with IS. This is a group that should be confronted.

Nigeria has also witnessed political assassinations and killings which in themselves should not be considered as terrorism but all use violent means of putting fear in political opponents in order to cheaply win elections. Nwuba (2007) has enumerates the following political killings that have taken place in Nigeria. They include: the killing of Dele Giwa, the killing of Felix Oteka, the commissioner of police in charge of police mobile force, the killing of Bola Ige, the killing of Marshall Harry, Aminaosari Dikibo, Funsho Williams and Ayo Daramola. All these are forms of political assassinations. The fact indicates that these people did not die on their own; they were murdered either by the powers that be or by other forces to stop them from exposing the truth or running for political offices. It will also not be out of place to consider various forms of ethno-religious conflicts and wars as causing breeding ground for emergence of terroristic attacks. . Nigeria has witnessed a lot of bloody inter/intra ethnic and religious conflicts. They include the following the ones in Warri, Ife-Modakeke, Aguleri-Umuleri, Kano, Kaduna, etc. Ethnic wars or religious conflicts have brought about destruction of properties and environmental degradation. Thousands of people do not have to be killed on a massive scale before it these violent activities are condemned. Terrorism in Nigeria in whatever form it operates should be confronted. It ought to be curbed. All hands should be on deck to curb it. The consequences and negative outcomes of terrorism cannot all be enumerated here but the fact is that terrorism never does any society any good.

Role of Philosophy in Curbing Terrorism

It is important to note that from the dawn of western philosophy until recently, the subject of terrorism was not widely discussed in Philosophy. As it is, it was a neglected issue. Primoratz (2015) asserts that:

> Before the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, the subject of terrorism did not loom large in philosophical discussion. Philosophical literature in English amounted to a few monographs and a single collection of papers devoted solely, or largely, to questions to do with terrorism. Articles on the subject in philosophy journals were few and far between; neither of the two major philosophy encyclopedias had an entry. The attacks of September 11 and their aftermath put terrorism on the philosophical agenda: it is now the topic of numerous books, journal articles, special journal issues, and conferences.

The paper does not in any way intend to infer that the study of philosophy is a cure-all or panacea to terrorism. It is all forces in society that should be combined to combat terrorism including, political means, economic provision, social infrastructure, etc. It has been clearly stated that one domain in which terrorism thrives is in the realm of the mind and ideas. People have been indoctrinated into terrorist ideas and ideologies and they are willing to hold unto it until death. Long time ago, the Greek Philosopher Socrates who saw one of the goals of philosophy as building a society ruled by ethical values deplored his dialogical method in a didactic fashion to call the people of Athens, especially the youth to upright living. He called upon them to know themselves and to uphold true knowledge, truth, honesty and right living. He saw the role of philosophy like that of a midwife who stings in order to deliver truth or knowledge. Socrates did not take the traditional beliefs of the Athenians hook, line and sinker. He questioned and examined them. Some even accused him of not being loyal to the rulers and gods of Athens. The rulers of Athens were afraid that Socrates was changing the mindset of the youths. Philosophy has the power to change people's mindset if the people are willing to engage in the philosophic process. Philosophers must come out of the classroom to the open streets to confront the dangerous beliefs of terrorists in Nigeria. This is no time to seat idle; it is time to move from the gown to the town. Terrorists have often in Nigeria used the internet and other technological means to propagate their ideas. Philosophers should use these same means to challenge the negative beliefs that fill the world of terrorism. Oladipo (2006) is right when he enunciates that:

> Philosophy, like other disciplines, has a practical mission. This can be summarized simply as "the elevation of mankind." "Elevation", as used in this context can be defined in terms of: Enlightenment, Open-mindedness, Broadening of sensibilities, Sensitivity to human principles (ideals), for instance, tolerance, cooperation, compassion, and so on. In short, the genius of philosophy lies in the fact that it is the quintessential humanistic discipline. This is why the primary duty of the philosopher is not to instruct, but to prod, or to be more precise, to stimulate people to think about the basic problems of existence as they affect them as individuals and their societies. (p.15-16)

The people who are terrorists are not beyond being taught. Even though they are fundamentalists, they can be converted from their world of terrorism. Terrorists make use of the modern media and technology. They too read and listen to the news. The battle against terrorism is not lost. Society should not allow the ideology of terrorism to prevail. Let philosophers engage the public, and that includes terrorists in their writings and teachings on the value of ethical living, humanitarianism, philanthropy and the value of human dignity. The fact that every human being has a right to life, right to happiness, right to liberty, right to food and many other fundamental rights must be proclaimed in the public square. The debate must not be led by enemies of society; they should be confronted with ideas and ideals. They should be challenged to the values of pluralism, diversity and tolerance. Philosophers should push the value of philosophy which includes openness, broadmindedness, free thinking, openness to new insights and ideas, anti-

dogmatism. Philosophers should be aggressive while not being violent in promoting authentic humanistic values as antidotes to sectionalism, parochialism, regionalism, ethnicism and other negative isms.

Some terrorists often used religious language, images and stories to cajole their followers and ignorant people. They often use apocalyptic language and dream of a utopia paradise that their followers will go by killing themselves in suicide bombing and other means. You would often wonder why a ten year old child will be a suicide bomber. Such a child has been filled with images of paradise and redemption that will come at death. Philosophers and religious scholars have a great deal of work to do in doing a critical hermeneutics of religious text. Even politicians who cajole people have filled their campaigns with religious images. All these need to be evaluated. Language is a powerful tool in human history and culture. One of the things that made human a cultural and social being is the language that they possess. It was language that Hitler manipulated and used to come to power and by the time he finished, millions of Jews and people of other nationalities had been slaughtered. It was language that people misused in the midst of the Rwanda genocide. It was language that Idi Amin misused during his brutal reign. Martin Luther King Jr. used religious language to mobilize his people during the civil right era. Barrack Obama powerfully used language combined with his oratorical skill to gain power in the United States of America. Language has been a powerful tool for good or for evil in the lives of humans. This is why the language and images used by terrorists must be subject to thorough critique in the public media, in town halls, in schools and universities and in the World Wide Web. The Nigeria society should not allow terrorist to win the language campaign. Every battle and war involves propaganda. A war is won or lost based on your effective propaganda. Let philosophers help in transforming the use of language with regard to issues of terrorism in Nigeria. Oladipo (2006) is quite right when he writes that language is an important matter in philosophy for the philosopher articulates his philosophical ideas in human language and he has a duty to elucidate and clarify the language used in the social group. It is interesting to note that Oladipo (2006) states further that one of the advantages of the philosopher is:

> Sorting out human experience as a means of having a better grasp of the nature of this experience and devising means of coping with it; understanding the connection between things and processes as a means of enhancing human survival and well-being; generally, becoming more enlightened about the nature of the world and the place of humankind in it, including the kind of value orientation, which can facilitate human interaction within and between societies. (p. 14)

It is very easy for terrorist groups to manipulate and cajole gullible people because some of these people are still deeply rooted in a narrow authoritarian interpretation of their religious texts and anyone that they see being critical of the religious text is labeled as infidel. Terrorists and those who follow them need to be dialogued into the realm in which they can accept that their point of view is not absolute and that truth that promotes the wellbeing of society is better. The Boko Haram group

and other Jihadist groups often misinterpret the religious text of Islam. Islamic philosophers and thinkers should challenge the misappropriation of their text more than ever before by terrorists. Boff (2006) has argued forthrightly that:

> The original Islam is neither warmongering nor fundamentalist (in fact, Islam means 'total submission to God'). It is tolerant towards all peoples, and especially tolerant towards the 'people of the Book' (Jews and Christians). It lives off two great convictions: first, the absolute acceptance of the one and transcendent God and that everything in creation is relative to him; and, second, the prophetic community of brotherhood and sisterhood – everyone is a creature of God, and as such we must help each other. Roger Garuady comments in his well-known book *Promesses de I'Islam* (p.18)

Garuady as cited by Boff (2006) is in agreement that Islam promotes transcendence, community and this community is inclusive of all not simply a section of humanity. It is wrong as Boff further notes to interpret Jihad as violence against unbelievers when it should be authentic commitment to the values of God. Just as it is condemnable for people to use religious texts to justify their terroristic beliefs, so also it is wrong for some militants in the Niger Delta to use the struggle of the Niger Delta people as an avenue to loot people's properties, carry out oil bunkering, rape women, kidnap and kill people and take hostage of heavy price money. The freedom, "the beloved community" (this is an image that was popularized by Martin Luther King Jr.), and a better environment that the people of the Niger Delta clamour for should never be used to justify criminal violence and terroristic tactics.

Philosophers and social thinkers have a great deal of work to do. The fundamental task of a philosopher is to think critically. It is to search for misunderstanding in the world of confusing images and pictures. Not all language is ethically right for the building and development of the Nigerian society. Language that promotes violence, wars, ethnicism, sectionalism, terrorism, hatred, division, etc are to be rejected. Philosopher should be in the forefront in leading people to confront those destructive languages. The national newspapers are veritable means for philosophers to join the public debates in promoting good morals and ethical rearmament of the society. The family is another means. The religious houses are other avenues. The school system is another one. Terrorists do not fall from the sky; they are born into families in which they are nourished within the social environment. Terrorists are or were once members of formal religious communities in which they learnt an interpretation of their religious text. All these social groups that have been mentioned have a great task of reeducation to do. It could be asked what has happened to the philosophy that people learnt in general studies, in teacher-education programmes, etc. Fotion, Kasnikov and Lekea (2007) opine that one of the key solutions to terrorism is "educating the public."(p. 162). Fotion, Kasnikov and Lekea note that if this education is not well directed it can make the public panic and live in fear, but despite this risk, it is better to educate the public so that their minds can

overcome manipulation. This is where philosophers come in. They should join in this task of mental emancipation and re-education.

Another important question on this issue of terrorism is that it raises questions in the domain of ethics. Primoratz (2015) states that: "While social sciences study the causes, main varieties, and consequences of terrorism and history traces and attempts to explain the way terrorism has evolved over time, philosophy focuses on two fundamental—and related—questions. The first is conceptual: What is terrorism? The second is moral: Can terrorism ever be morally justified?" (par. 2). How you judge terrorism is based on your ethical school of thought. If you believe in situation ethics, then it depends on situation. If you are parochial and believe that people outside your affiliation are evil and infidels then you can justify terrorism or violence against them. If you are a consequentialist as Primoratz says, it depends on the consequences that terrorism produces. If you are against every form of violence then terrorism is inherently evil. It can be asked, can an oppressed people use terrorism to free themselves from oppression? Can terrorism even be a form of self-defense? Is violence always wrong? It has also been said in some quarters as Zook (2010) notes that: "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." All these questions cannot be answered here. The role of philosophy is not to provide final answers but to generate debates and issues from which consensus can be reached that brings about better benefits for all. No matter your position in ethics it is now generally and universally acceptable to see the Universal Declaration on Humans Rights and some other instruments from the United Nations as a basis for ethical action. Any form of terrorism or violence that impedes people from exercising their fundamental, socio-economic, cultural and political rights is condemnable and unacceptable. Fotion, Kasnikov and Lekea (2007) have shown that some may argue to justify terrorism on the bases of state-sponsored terrorism on the basis of just war principles. These three authors enunciate that it is difficult to justify it for terrorists refuse to accept the principle of discrimination. Fotion, Kasnikov and Lekea (2007) argue that:

> At this point terrorists go into denial. They present several reasons for denying their departure. They say that they can rightly seek vengeance; they can rightly apply the notion of collective responsibility to blame almost everyone on their opponents' side, and rightly fight as they go out of necessity. But all of their arguments fail. Most importantly they fail because of the ease with which they discount the status of their enemies. By their rhetoric, their enemies are guilty of crime so gross that they cannot be excused. Further, they claim that their own people are totally good and their enemies' totally bad. But once their rhetoric is challenged, it becomes clear that the people on both sides of many conflicts are not that different from one another. Roughly speaking, both sides are equally good and equally bad, and so it becomes morally impossible for terrorists to defend their own people while butchering those of their enemies. In effect, terrorists who target 'innocents' deserves all the criticism that they have been receiving, for, in spite of

their efforts, they have not uncovered legitimate exceptions to the discrimination principle. (p.153)

In a place like Nigeria, Nigerians have a right to life, pursuit of happiness, liberty, right to food, water, migration, a healthy environment, etc. Terrorism is evil for it lacks respect for the fundamental human rights of people and environmental wellbeing. There are many other legitimate ways to struggle for political, economic and social objectives such as peaceful protest, the courts of law, strikes, etc. The Nigerian society must struggle to bring terrorist and many others who have a different vision to the dialogue table. There must also be reparatory or humane criminal justice system that deals with people who have committed crimes against society, this include terrorist.

Concluding Reflections

The followings reveal that philosophy has a great role to play in combating terrorism in Nigeria. As the country fights terrorism in its various forms with physical arms and combat, it should also combat it in the minds of people especially terrorists. Before people can carry arms and other weapons to carry out terrorist activities they have first be influenced in their mind or indoctrinated into terrorist ideas. Philosophy as a discipline that is open to dialogue, conversation, human values, conscientization, mental enlightenment, and ethical values should help transform the minds of people so that they can resist that temptation to be violent. The teachings of philosophers, writings, and other works do should aim at re-educating people from the erroneous ideas of terrorism. With this done, a better society will be created in Nigeria.

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