

THE EFFECT OF CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT IN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) ON ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

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Abstract

Development is a positive thing, and each state, country or nation desires it. When the development is eventually realised, the effect is felt by all. In the present era of technology and modernization, there are developments in various areas such as Christian religion, Islamic religion as well as African Traditional Religion. Islam as a religion today wears the outlook of a religion synonymous with conflict and intolerance not because it is so but because of the obnoxious developments within the religion. The role the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has played in this sphere cannot be overemphasised. This paper is focused specifically on the effect of development on Islamic fundamentalism. The research examined this issue with the intention of isolating the degree to which development generally has affected Islam and specifically on how the development in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has affected Islam especially in the brainwashing and the radicalisation of young Islamic faithfuls. A qualitative method was adopted in the conduct of the research and it was discovered that it is indisputable fact that rapid development especially in ICT has affected the current world view of Islam and also facilitated the obnoxious activities of the Islamic fundamentals.

Keywords: Development, Islam and Fundamentalism

Introduction

Islam is one of the widely accessed religions of the world today. It is one of the revealed religions of the world, together with Judaism and Christianity and the likes of others. It is also a religion that has Qur'an as its holy book. According to Onuoha (2015) the word Islam is derived from an Arabic word "Aslam" which has been variously translated to mean: "resigned", "submit", or "to yield to the will of God". AlhajiJah "The term Islam in its proper meaning implies the attainment of both inner and outer peace, by submission of oneself to the will of Allah".

The religion (Islam) is closely linked to the person of Muhammad, who is generally seen as its founder and only prophet. The teachings of Islam is said to have been revealed by God to the prophet Muhammad. These revelations are collected in a book called Qur'an which forms the principal scripture of Islam. Islam is seen by its adherents as not just a religion but a total way of life. Its teachings embrace all aspects of human life, political, social, economic, cultural and religious.

The growth level of new media Technologies have become a global phenomenon. Recently, the usage of internet worldwide has led to the popularity of social network sites. Facebook, Twitters and YouTube are the common websites that have shaped cooperative structures wherein human interactions are encouraged proactively. The increasing interest in this means of communication technology has significant impacts on the social, economic and political landscapes of global affairs. This revolution have thereby reduced the world into a global village where there are fast and free flow of interactions. However, (Especially,) the perception of Islam and Western worldviews are being challenged by these means of information revolution. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine the significant impacts of this rapid development in technologies on Islam. The paper is optimistic on the negative usage than being pessimistic about the application of this development on the spread of Islamic faith.

The Concept Development

The concept development does not lend itself to a univocal definition. It has various levels and dimensions of meaning. Almost every field of human endeavour employ the term, giving rise to various theories of development. Some see development as having to do with "the elevation of man's quality of life." Mbefo (1996) notes that by quality of life here is understood the assurance and promotion of those rights and liberties with their corresponding obligations and responsibilities which belong to men as men. They form the context in which we understand and define the dignity of man which he should not be deprived of without dehumanizing him.

According to Iroegbu (1995), etymologists trace the origin of development to the French (*un*) and *veloper* (wrap). To development therefore literally means to unwrap. Thus development is the unwrapping, un-folding, unveiling, out-growing, of what was enveloped, hidden or latent. Structurally, development is "epigenetic, in the sense of being the realization of new or additional data, forms or systems via combination or employment of already present material objects. Hence, Franois (1995) defines development as:

The combination of mental and social changes of a people, which enable them to increase cumulatively and permanently, their total real production. This is achieved

fully in the measure that by reciprocity of services, it prepares the way ... for reciprocity of consciousness.

A socialist holistic definition holds that development is man's ability to appropriate his total essence in a total manner, as a whole man. It is a historical vision in which mankind assumes control of his destiny. Iroegbu (1995) continues and said that development is a concrete unfolding of personal, natural and cultural data from one point A to another point B. It is the unfolding of latent qualities that lie in A to its flowering in B. However, since the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century, there has also been a revolution in the concept of development. In public discussions, it has longed been reduced to its economic dimension. Development has been identified with material development to the neglect of other aspects. Thus, development tend to refer only to the present high speed communication system, machines and networks, the fantastic space and distant shuttles and wars, the ever increasing efficient medical therapies, the high technology and computer systems. But, as Stemmiller remarked, "although economic development is the indispensable basis of any more comprehensive concept of development, it is not identical with it". For example, in the 1960s development in Nigeria was understood as growth in Gross National Product (G.N.P). All that was needed for the country to develop was to pump money into the various sectors of the economy. Thus, the goal of the various national development plans was to increase the growth rate of the GNP. And this rate was used as a standard for evaluating the past development plans. But that did not change everything, teaching hospitals and health institution multiplied, yet the masses lacked elementary health care, schools and universities proliferated, yet learning was deficient. As the number of billionaires and millionaires was increasing and as the economic statistics was registered growth for Nigeria.

Conceptualising Islamic Fundamentalism

According to the Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary international Students Edition, fundamentalism simply means the practice of following very strictly the basic rules and teachings of any religion. In this case, Islamic fundamentalism would imply that practice of following strictly the teachings of Islam. Within the context of this paper it is pertinent to understand this concept as a group of Islamic fanatics who are not just enthusiastic about their religion but holds extreme and dangerous opinions against others. The effects of unguided flow of information enhancing Islamic fundamentalism and its attendant consequences are becoming unbearable. This would not have been made possible without the rapid development in ICT. For instance, in September 2001 the Twin Tower of the World Trade Centre in New York was bombed by a group called the Al Qaeda terrorist and in October, 2001, there was a mayhem in Kano. This was, however, caused by the international event

mentioned above. To corroborate the above statement, shortly after the United States launched an offensive against the Taliban government in Afghanistan that provided a safe haven for the Al Qaeda network, Kano erupted with another round of ethno-religious conflict. In this case, some Islamic fundamentalists who felt that the United States of America had no reason to bombard Afghanistan decided to set the city of Kano on fire.

This is an era with much emphasis on globalization but rather than narrowing the globe into a village of people with a brotherly understanding and love, it has rather globalised forces of terror wherever they are in the world with the intensions of unleashing mayhem. On daily bases, there are cases of suicide bombing leading to hundreds of loss of lives and properties.

When the mention of terrorism is made what readily come to mind is the activities of Islamic fundamentals. Contemporary terrorism carried out by these Islamic fundamentals is certainly not the brain child of Marxism Leninism of Muslim fundamentalism, even though proponents of these creeds have made no tangible contributions to its spread (Kegley&Wiltikope. 1992:106). Terrorism is a significant and disturbing development in the international society. It steals the peace of all nations, exposing the fragility of national frontiers, and therefore threatens people who cherish freedom. Terrorist creates illegitimate alarm, put their reason on toss, and mutilate their tongues and ears. Prior to the 21st century most of the groups were sometimes faceless, nameless often without a standing army, fly no flag, plans in the secret and unleash violence without morality and remorse. Terrorism undermines friendly relations among different nations and instils unnecessary fear (Momah, 1993:53). But in contemporary times, the contrary to the above statement is the case except that they still plan in the secrete.

An Overview of Evolution of Islam in Nigeria

Islam is one of the religions practised in West Africa. Nigeria has a good proportion of Muslim populations in West Africa, and according to this source, about 50.4% of Nigerians are Muslims (www.nigeriabusinessfile.com/information/people/religion). However, other sources give a slightly lower estimate of 50%. Muslims in Nigeria are predominantly Sunni in the Maliki school, which is also the governing Sharia law. However, there is a significant Shia minority, primarily in Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto State. A smaller minority follow the Ahmadiyya Islam, a reformatory sect originating in 19th century India. In particular Pew Forum on religious diversity identifies 12% as Shia Muslims and 3% as Ahmadi Muslims.

Islam came to Northern Nigeria as early as the 9th century CE, and was well established in the Kanem-Bornu Empire during the reign of HummeJilmi. It

had spread to the major cities of the northern part of the country by the 16th century, later moving into the countryside and towards the Middle Belt uplands.

However, there are some claims for an earlier arrival. The Nigeria-born Muslim scholar Sheikh Dr. Abu-Abdullah Abdul-Fattah Adelabu has argued that Islam had reached Sub-Sahara Africa, including Nigeria, as early as the 1st century of Hijrah through Muslim traders and expeditions during the reign of the Arab conqueror, Uqba ibn al Nafia (622–683) whose Islamic conquests under the Umayyad dynasty, in Amir Muavia and Yazid periods, spread all Northern Africa or the Maghrib Al-Arabi, including present-day Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Morocco (www.esinislam.com).

Islam also came to the southwestern Yoruba-speaking areas during the time of Mansa Musa's Mali Empire. In his *Movements of Islam in face of the Empires and Kingdoms in Yorubaland*, Sheikh Dr. Abu-Abdullah Adelabu supported his claims on early arrival of Islam in the southwestern Nigeria by citing the Arab anthropologist AbduhuBadawi, who argued that the fall of Koush southern Egypt and the prosperity of the politically multicultural Abbasid period in the continent had created several streams of migration, moving west in the mid-9th Sub-Sahara (AbduhuBadawi 1979). According to Adelabu, the popularity and influences of the Abbasid Dynasty, the second great dynasty with the rulers carrying the title of 'Caliph' fostered peaceful and prosperous search of pastures by the inter-cultured Muslims from Nile to Niger and Arab traders from Desert to Benue, echoing the conventional historical view that the conquest of North Africa by the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate between AD 647–709 effectively ended Catholicism in Africa for several centuries (Mawsuaat Al-Islam Al-Kubrah 1979). Islam in Ancient Yoruba is referred to as EsinImale (religion of the malians) as the earliest introduction of the religion to that region was through Malian itinerant traders (Wangara Traders) around the 14th - 15th Century. Large-scale conversion to Islam happened in the 18th-19th centuries.

The account of the evolution of Islamic religion into Southeast Nigeria and particularly Owerri has also been portrayed here. Fidelis Onuoha (2015) noted that, according to the information gotten from the leader of Muslim community in Owerri, Alhaji Daudu Onyeagocha, he narrated that before independence, the Igbo and other groups in the southeast were agriculturist and fishermen, as a result trading was not common. The Igbos link with their neighbours through marriage and trade predates colonialism. They were peasant farmers, traders and fishermen within their locality and therefore have late link with the north central before 1900, perhaps except Nsukka of Igbo land. He opines that by 1910 to 1930, some business migrant traders and soldiers entered Owerri through Ekoi of Cross River and hunters of elephant tusks in search of greener pasture. According to Egodu Uchendu (2012), in the dawn of Islam in Eastern Nigeria, the views expressed by Ahaji Dauda

Onyeagocha on Muslim penetration in Owerri are in agreement, she maintained that before 1910, there was no detailed link between the Igbo and Hausa and no documentation written records of this relationship or interaction. Hausa commercial activities facilitated the extension of Islam into Eastern Nigeria. According to Alhaji Dauda Onyeagocha between 1905 and 1910, the first recorded Muslim migrant into Owerri from Elele Alimini in Port Harcourt was Ibrahim Zaki, accompanied by Abubakar Sanni Nuhu Alikali Mustapha. This record agrees with Egodi Uchendu's documentation in 2012 where she explained that Mallam Hali'lu and Yahia after trading and settling in Owerri for years left for Port Harcourt. Other settlements sprang up in Onitsha, Enugu, Ogoja, Oguta, etc.

Muslim settlement in "Evil forest" now known as "Ama Hausa" came as a result of agreement between the Oha Owerre elders headed by Chief Njemanze L.A. and the then Sarkin Haruna Leader of the Muslim community then. The district officer Sir H.J. Douglas an Anthropologist was overseeing the affairs of old Owerri district. During this period trade in horses and cattle succeeded the hunting business and slave trade. The Chief Imam of Owerri confirmed the presence of Muslim in 1910-1911. The relationship between the Muslim and the host community was cordial, because the numbers of migrants accompanied by the Hausa soldiers were very few. The docility and unassuming nature of the Muslim migrants into Owerri and its environs necessitated cordial relationship. The host communities equally were flexible in dealing with foreigners.

The Effect of Development in ICT on Islam

The growth level of new media technologies have become a global phenomenon. Recently, the usage of internet worldwide has led to the popularity of social network sites such as Facebook, Twitters and YouTube. These are the common websites that have shaped cooperative structures wherein human interactions are encouraged proactively. The increasing interest in this means of communication technology has significant impacts on the social, economic and political landscapes of global affairs. However, (Especially,) the perception of Islam and it also serves as a platform for challenging worldviews about Islam.(Abdi Shuriye, Bello. Adeyemi and Shittu Huud, 2013)

Information technology plays an indispensable role in disseminating news and educating on issues relating to social, economic, political and religious concerns. Generally, the impacts of ICT are many and diverse, some are realized in short term while others are uncovered after a long period; the effect is which can either be short- or long-term, depending on the genre of (news and) information being disseminated. Besides spreading of the Islamic faith across borders, it has also served as a tool in the hands of Islamic

fundamentals or fanatics in propagating wrong views about the religion little wonder young men and girls tie explosives round their waist and are ready to detonate them under the guise of being faithful Islamic believers and with the obnoxious promise of seventy virgins waiting for them in paradise.

The last twenty-five years have seen the rapid transformation of (these) traditional media into new media which are predicated upon the use of digital technologies, such as the Internet and video games, advent of digital television, online publications, image manipulation software (like Adobe Photoshop and desktop publishing tools) and social network such as FaceBook, and micro blogging Twitter. The world has witnessed this powerful tool of the global mass media due to the recent advances in communication technology that supplement the old or traditional media with new means of information production and dissemination (Faatin and Mujabeen, 2005).

The new information technology is radically transforming the world closer to realizing Marshall McLuhan's notion of global village, which has been the major sources that questioned cultures, social and political movements (Faatin and Mujabeen, 2005). According to Faatin and Mujabeen, "we are witnessing the evolution of a universal interconnected network of audio and electronic text communication that will blur the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication and between public and private publication. The emergence of new communication technology has enabled the world to break the barriers of differences.

More recently, the impact of ICT in a contemporary society of Muslims and the West is more significant and topical than ever. In spite of the advent of internet means of communication that have helped to bridge the distances and tear all sorts of walls of ignorance and prejudice; it has been, however, found wanton for portraying erroneous information, one-sided images and misrepresentation of the Western ideologies and civilisation in the Islamic world and of the Islamic world in the West (Kai Hafez, 2000).

Going by their enormous capability to support connection and communication, media technologies especially social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter etcetera) have received considerable attention from scholars and researchers worldwide. It is revealed that the use of these new information and communication technologies (ICTs) is expanding rapidly in the world.

The mad rush of new media is inevitable and is not without challenges and implications. The pertinent questions are; who will control these electronic superhighways? Who will decide what information will be available? Will the new media brings individuals together or act as a divisive force? (Wilson, 1997). These new technologies are radically transforming and revolutionizing almost every aspect of human communication and the result can be a new kind of democratic communications environment which gives freedom of

communication to the extent of radicalising unsuspecting young adherents of Islam. There is no gainsaying in the fact that most radicalised Islamic fundamentals either belonging to Al Qaeda or the Isis militant groups are recruits not by face-to-face contact but based on internet communications. George, (1990) in his writings considers the transition to new media environment liberation:

A new age of individualism is coming, and it will bring with it eruption of culture unprecedented in the history.... We will discover that television was a technology with supreme powers but deadly flaws. In the beginning the powers were ascendant; now the flaws dominate. The cultural limitations of television, tolerable when there was no alternative, are unendurable in the face of new computer technologies on the horizon.

The traditional roles of mass media are to inform, educate, entertain, and bring change in behaviour and attitude of the people. With the pace of revolutionary progress of mass communication, one would expect an opportunity to share information for knowledge and social change. But, many media houses have turned the communication affairs into a tool of propagating hates and brainwashing.

Social media is gaining momentum as one of the most important tools for people to lift their voices. Citizens are using them to overcome the power of politicians by having the ability to express their opinion and engage in a direct conversation with an unlimited audience. Social media is levelling the field by allowing every person to engage in a discussion. Unfortunately some of this information is becoming more detrimental in view of the recent development in the Islamic religion. There is no doubt that most if not all of those turned radicalised had little or no contact with those who brainwashed them to become suicide bombers.

In his speech to the Muslim World in June 2009, US President Barak Obama states that:

I have come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and the one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not to be in competition. Instead, they overlap and share common principles, principle of justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings". (Mosad and Valaintisna, 2010).

The fact remains that after that wonderful speech which was well intended to bring the two cultures into a mutual respect, the opposite seems to be the case.

Why because the reality is that the two cannot irrespective of rhetorics be on the same page. The more attempts are made at galvanising the two cultures into respecting human lives, the more and more people are rushing to become radicalised via the ICT with the aim of unleashing mayhem on any culture these groups considers antagonistic to theirs. We must not lose sight of the fact that most of the bombs and electronic device used in their detonation are products of rapid revolution in technology.

Since the attacks of September 11, relationship between western and Islamic worlds and their differences entered a new phase, especially in the realm of social and political values. In these circumstances, Western civilization has been associated with individual freedom, secularism and tolerance, while Islamic civilization was associated with collective rights, individual obligations, despotism and intolerance (Karen, 2002). According to Huntington (1993), the world will be shaped in large measure by the differences between these realms of irreconcilable interests and natural clashes between these two civilizations. Today the West has identified a new enemy, “radical Islam”, a stereotype common to Western thought that portrays Muslims as fundamentalists or potential terrorists (Faatin and Mujabeen, 2005).

There are many other effects of development on Islam such as: more adherents, more construction of mosques and Islamic schools, increased number of peoples that go on pilgrimage, more of sharia courts, more schools of ideology on Islam, use of modern technology, use of telephones and computers for dissemination of Islam, etc.

More Adherents: Moslems have more adherents with this rapid development on Islam. Many people are converting into Islam nowadays; some are converting into Islam with ulterior motives. Some join Islam either because of money or they are aspiring for one post or another and the only way to get there is to be a Moslem and they have no option but to convert to Islam in order to achieve their heart’s desire. Some are there either because they have married a Moslem or a Moslems have married them.

Increased number of people that go on pilgrimage: Pilgrimage is a spiritual journey; hence, as a result of more converts to Islam, the new adherents desire to go on pilgrimage too. Hence, the massive number of pilgrims. Some of the new adherents who has ulterior motive for converting into Islam, go to Mecca for the purpose of business. While others are in the mosques, they are out there looking for a lucrative job to embark on. These are facts, and not fictions.

More Schools of Ideology on Islam: Boko Haram is one of the Muslim’s school of ideology. Mallam Mohammed Yusuf, the leader of Boko Haram took advantage of this situation as narrated by Mathew Kukah (2010)and argued that turning inwards, away from contamination, was a greater source of

strength than looking outwards by means of acquiring Western education and other tools of modernization. Naturally, over 90% of his followers with no Western education and graduates of the Islamic education system would have made a lot of sense. However, most of these rantings of Boko Haram discontentment sounded very familiar. The Government and security agencies knew what was happening. But like all previous crises, no pre-emptive measures were taken.

Insurgency: without the revolutions that have taken place in ICT, insurgency no doubt would not have been at the magnitude it is today. It is ICT that enhances the operations of the various insurgent groups. In order to gain popularity and win sympathy, they use the media to showcase their activities such as beheading of their captives as well as the destructions of popular buildings for example, the beheading of Journalists and the recent beheading of the Head and Director of Antiquity of Syria. British Broadcasting Corporation recorded the current destruction of the UNESCO World Heritage site in Syria by the Isis insurgent group operating in that area. As a result of modern technology, Boko Haram and other groups of Islamic fundamentals use modern weapons such as timed bombs as well as, sophisticated weapons in fighting. By implication, it is the rapid development especially in ICT that have provided not just the idea of their usages but also of how to either acquire or even manufacture them. (BBC News).

Use of Telephones and Computers for the Dissemination of Islamic Faith: As a result of the 'computer age', Muslims use telephones, e-mails, text messages, etc for the dissemination of Islam in other to win more converts to themselves. By implication therefore, these technologies can always be a positive platform as well as a tool in the hands of Muslims towards changing the current world view of Islam.

Conclusion

In view of the above discussion, the paper concludes that the emergence of rapid development in media technologies and their role as a change agent has led to shape a new phase of negative relations and developments especially in the rise and proliferation of Islamic fundamental groups thereby impacting negatively on the Muslim religion. The use of the media technology such as Facebook, Twitters and You tube as a communication tools to disseminate information has been very significant in our today world. Especially, the success of this communication revolution is beginning to change the perception of the Islamic religion as one that is intolerant and fundamentalists or potential terrorists. Besides the negative effects of these media technologies, the use of new resources in media technology such as Facebook, Twitters and You tube as a communication tools to disseminate information has also been very significant in enhancing the worldview of Islam especially in Western nations.

This is an era of technology and modernization in which the Christian and the Islamic religions are affected. It has also brought about some positive developments in Islam which are glaring and have been enumerated above. In every merit, there are also demerits which are well enumerated on the effects of the rapid development on Islam. Despite the radicalisation of young Muslims, there are some demerits of rapid development on Islam such as incessant divorce, homosexuality, etc. Development is good but members of the society needs to be wise and should not over use their freedom. Parents too should rise up to their responsibility of custodian of their offspring. International terrorism in which Islamic fundamentals are at the centre of it has become part of modern life and constitutes a danger to both national and international security and the role the current developments in ICT is playing in this regard must be given urgent attention in order to save the world from the eminent danger of total annihilation.

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