Boko Haram And Terrorism In Nigeria: Ethical Implications And Responses Of The Christians

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Abstract

This study investigated Boko Haram and terrorist activities in Nigeria while looking at the ethical implications and responses of the Christians. The study was guided by two objectives which are to; analyse whether the acts of terror carried out by Boko Haram are ethical and examine the responses of the Christians with respect to Boko Haram acts of terror. However, the methods of exposition and critical analysis was used and content analysis was used to analyse data collected. Data was collected from secondary sources like textbooks, journal articles, interviews, institutional materials and internet sources. The study also looked at concept of terrorism and a brief history of Boko Haram. The findings of the study showed that since Boko Haram acts of terrorism is simply a display of violence to terrify the populace and the government, it can be said that their actions and activities which include violence is unacceptable and could be termed wrong taking cognizance of the consequentialist view which opines that the morality of an action depends on its results. The ethics of care which is seen as a context-based approach to preserve relationship, negates Boko Haram acts of terror which apparently has a considerable effect on a number of relationships. The findings further showed that the Christians responded by rejecting to integrate with Muslims and also encouraged Christians to move to areas where there are major Christian settlements while others had to fall back to the natural tendency of self-preservation.

Keywords: Boko Haram, terrorism, christians, consequentialism, ethics.

Introduction

Terrorism can be seen as systematic use of terror especially as a means of coercion. For some they call it terrorism whereas for others it is called freedom fighting hence gaining both support and condemnation (Roberts, 2008). Another definition that is more elaborate is that terrorism is "the systematic use of terror or unpredictable violence against government, publics or individuals to attain a political objective. Terrorism has been used by political organizations with rightist and leftist objectives, by nationalist and ethnic groups, by revolutionaries, and by armies and secret police of governments themselves. The United States Code of Federal Regulations defined it as the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objective (28 C.F.R. Section 0.85). If we consider the Hobbesian idea of "state of nature"

we will understand that man has been involved in terror acts from the inception of society where "man was a wolf to man". The first recorded act of terrorism was cited in the Middle East in the first century Palestine done by the Zealot sect. The record is that as at that time the Jews rebelled against the census that was carried out by the Roman authorities. It is said that the Romans suppressed them into submission. Consequently, there was an organized resistance by the Zealots against the foreign authorities through violent means (Chalianda and Blin, 2007). The history of terrorism can be traced down to the inception of the society. Man, naturally have the inclination or tendency of carrying out terror activities which can be termed as terrorism.

From the inception of Boko Haram in 2002 and its attack on the Nigerian state its citizens have been killed while others have been displaced. Moreover, the two major religious groups (Christians and Muslims) have been affected by these killings, but Christians have been affected more from the attacks of the terrorist group called Boko Haram (Felter, 2018). Their attacks are basically targeted at the state because of their belief that it is the western education acquired by these elite rulers that have made them to be corrupt and thus their rejection of western education. Boko Haram also attacks any group that do not believe in their ideologies and consequently the attack on moderate Muslims they see as corrupt and also Christians around the places they declared dominance. The most affected states in Nigeria are Adamawa, Bornu, Plateau and Yobe. In the states mentioned Christians face a lot of persecution and thus have no option but to respond. Nigeria is not a failed state but it is been perceived as a failed state and this is because the country has failed to make available basic amenities for its citizens just as promised by various government from independence till date. Thus, the government has failed in making an enabling environment for things to work, ranging from the level of unemployment that is very high, in the southern part there is high level of environmental degradation and neglect, in the eastern part there is obvious marginalization since independence in 1960, in the north there is pronounced level of illiteracy and poverty striving in every angle of the country. Hence, this makes Nigeria a fertile ground for terrorist group like Boko Haram to strive. According to Ikechukwu (2016) Boko Haram's aim or reason is not to fight or agitate for these aforementioned reasons but rather their aim is to change the nature and structure of the country by way of totally Islamizing Nigeria where Sharia law will reign as the supreme law. The philosophy of Boko Haram is radical and the acts they carryout are treasonable and thus it infringes on the ethics of Nigerians who are Christians because Boko Haram have killed Christians, old and young, rich and poor, even the army has lost a lot of soldiers in the mayhem that has been caused by Boko Haram therefore the Christians have looked for ways to respond to these attacks. It is against this backdrop that this study is been carried out.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to; (1) analyse whether the acts of terror carried out by Boko Haram are ethical; and, (2) examine the responses of the Christians with respect to Boko Haram acts of terror.

Methodology

The study used the methods of exposition and critical analysis to examine Boko Haram and terrorism in Nigeria taking cognizance of the ethical implications and response of the Christians. The study was analysed using content analysis. However, data was collected from secondary sources like text books, journal articles, interviews, institutional materials and internet sources.

Concept of terrorism

Terrorism is the deliberate and systematic use or threat of violence to coerce changes in political behaviour. It involves symbolic acts of violence, intended to communicate a political message to watching audiences (Sick, 1990). According to

Laquer (1999) terrorism has been looked and defined in various ways and there is no certainty in any except that it is application or use of violence by a group for political ends usually directed against another ethnic group, race, and class, political or religious movement. Any attempt to be more specific is bound to fail, for the simple reason that there is not but many different terrorisms. Kegley (1990) is of the view that the term terrorism has no precise or widely accepted definition, establishing a definition would be simple because terrorism is violence or threat of violence calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm in a word, to terrorize and thereby bring about some social or political change. However, Frey and Morris (1991) in their view saw terrorism as a despotic use of violence to cause fear and intimidation on the innocent citizens to gain social and political goals. Terrorism is also seen as intimidating a group of persons with force with the intention to force them to do or consent to what they would not ordinarily want to do (Primoratz, 2004). James and Brenda (2004) argued that they perceive terrorism as evil, randomly violent and ferocious. Schmid and Albert (1988) argued that terrorism is an anxiety inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi) clandestine individual group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby in contrast to assassination the direct targets of violence are not the main target. The direct human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly or selectively from a target population and serve as a message generator. Bringing to the fore the United Nations in its Security Council Resolution 1566 of 8th October 2004, proposed an inclusive explanation of terrorism as a criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the mind-set to cause harm or abducting people with the aim to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons, intimidate a populace or force a government or international organization to do or disease from doing anything, which constitutes offences within the scope of and defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism (Ikechukwu, 2016). According to Corlett (2003) terrorism is another form of political violence, which had existed long ago but its significance may have increased. The Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency use Title 22 of the US Code Section 2656f (d) sees terrorism as a premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant's targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience. Whereas the Federal Bureau of Investigation sees terrorism as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment thereof. Continuing, the Department of Defense defines terrorism as the unlawful use of or threatened use of force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives (Gary, 2012).

History of Boko Haram
Boko Haram which etymologically means "Western education is forbidden in Hausa" was created in 2002. The emergence of Boko Haram was as a result of a clash between the normal Islamic teachings of the highly placed Sheikeh Adam at the Mahammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri, Bornu State in the north-eastern part of Nigeria, and the militant exposition of the holy Quran by his follower and disciple Mohammed Yusuf. Yusuf was expelled from the mosque for his rebellious tendencies. An instance of such was that he conceived in his heart of establishing a new order in which those who are said to be poor will inherit the earth. After Yusuf was banished from the mosque, he did not give up with his dream so he went further to build his own mosque immediately after his expulsion Yusuf started recruiting young boys at the primary and secondary level the moment, he was done building his mosque at the north-eastern part of Nigeria. His mission was first to indoctrinate them with his own

philosophy of Islam thus making them to do away with the previous thought of views of western education which he perceived as a sin and consequently the nametag "Boko Haram". Several scholars have pointed out that the emergence of groups like Boko Haram is as a result of the corruption among the class of elites which has adversely affected those in that region (North East) and thus poverty is the order of the day. Yusuf linked this type of dichotomy of life to be as a result of western education and culture. Looking at the aforementioned point one can say that since the majority are living under penury and abject poverty while the few who are basically the ruling class are waxing with the nation's wealth, this was major reason for the emergence of Boko Haram group.

The primary aim of Yusuf was to Islamize Nigeria state so therefore the first attack against the Nigerian government was carried out in 2009 and consequently a bounty placed on Yusuf and this resulted to his death that year 2009. The mantle of leadership was thus handed over to Abubakar Shekau who immediately pronounced his leadership on video tape that circulated. The groups aim is Islamizing the country and apply Sharia law in the entire country and this group has tried to accomplish this through activities such as kidnappings, suicide attacks and bombings at both religious and government institutions which cover a large number of people at a time. It was the killing of the group's leader that angered the group and consequently leading to the violent attacks against the Nigeria Police Force and also on innocent citizens. Boko Haram became a very dangerous and lethal group. However, over 20,000 lives have been lost and millions of people displaced mainly in the north-eastern part of Nigeria (Idahosa, 2015). Amnesty International recorded that Boko Haram fighters have bombed, destroyed and killed many civilians, burnt villages and kidnapped many including children, women and men. According to Global Terrorism Index 2015 report, Nigeria experienced the most significant increase in terrorist deaths ever recorded by any country from 1595 in 2013 to 6118 in 2014. This

data record made the group to be declared as the most dangerous terrorist group in the world that year and also the attack of the police force headquarters in Abuja as well as the United Nations head office in Abuja too. One of the deadliest acts carried out by Boko Haram was the kidnapping of over 300 school girls from Chibok in Bornu State which actually attracted or got the interest of the world and also international response. At one point the Nigerian military claimed that they had cited the location of the girls but was sceptical about going for their rescue because if they do it might result to the killing of some or many of the girls. Their activities rose to the pick when they conquered so many local governments in the north-eastern part of the country and further declared those areas an Islamic caliphate. The activities of Boko Haram also show that they have been able to infiltrate the government, military and also the populace and thus carrying out successful terror acts. Within 2019 and 2020 this terrorist group had done so much killings and damage to the civilian populace. In fact, there has been series of attacks between the later part of 2019 and early 2020 on the military that has led to the loss of over 100 military personnel. The fight against Boko Haram so far has recorded some win against the group amidst all the sabotage.

Ethical Implications of Boko Haram Terrorist Attacks in Nigeria

Terrorism as an act of violence is an issue that can be discussed within the confines of ethics. Here ethics simply means the values and moral principles and how these connects to our conduct and social institution. Ethics include questions about the nature of our moral obligation, moral principles we ought to follow, what is seen as good for human beings, the nature and justification of social structures, political systems, the morality of different types of behaviour and social policies that involve important human interest (Velasquez, 1999). It is in line with this that some ethical views were applied to analyse the issue of the terror carried out by Boko Haram in Nigeria. Consequently,

consequentialist principle was utilized as well as the virtue ethics and ethics of care to analyse ethically the activities of Boko Haram. Consequentialist principle opines that the morality of an action depends on its consequences or results. The ethical breakdown or evaluation of terrorism has most regularly been in particular, consequentialist ethics, and this involves an all-round evaluation of the likely advantages and harms. This issue of if terrorism can actually be justified is obviously disputatious and there are speculations on both sides. According to Hare (2006) consequentialist arguments have been made for and against terrorism, based on whether or not terrorism amounts in an increase or decrease of good in the society. Using the consequentialist principle to analyse the acts of terror carried out by Boko Haram, we will come to a divided conclusion. The reason for a divided conclusion is that what consequentialism looks at is the end and not the means, in other words it is the end that justifies the means. As shown in the study above, the aim of Boko Haram is to Islamize the Nigerian state where Sharia law will reign in the entirety of the country. In other to achieve their aims, the Boko Haram have involved in many terrorist activities so as to put fear in the hearts of the populace and also to make the government to submit to their wants. But in all, it is obviously that they are nothing close to achieving such aims or goals. Consequently, their actions if measured using consequentialism as a yardstick can be seen as wrong because their projected end cannot be achieved. Furthermore, looking at this from another lens of consequentialism we can also deduce that the terrorist act carried out by this terrorist group cannot be totally condemned. This view is from another divide of consequentialism. This divide puts forward the argument that harming or threatening to harm others and producing feeling of terror are insufficient to make it morally unjustified, as punishing wrongdoers includes a degree of harm for example civil disobedience and non-violent direct action against racial discrimination in the southern part of United States made several

segregationist very afraid but was morally justified due to the evil inherent in segregation (Corlett, 2003). In summary, consequentialist theory measure the morality of actions by the non-moral consequences. They look at the ratio of good to evil that an action produces. The right action is that which produces or will most likely produce as great a ratio of good to evil as any other action. The wrong action is the one that does not (Velasquez, 1999). With this since Boko Haram terrorism is simply a display of violence to terrify the populace and the government one can say that their actions and activities are associated with violence and thus unacceptable and could be termed wrong.

Secondly, using virtue ethics to look at the issue of Boko Haram terrorism is fascinating. According to virtue theorist, morality depends not only on rules or on the consequences of actions but rather on our character. For them what is important in ethics is not about what we do but rather about the type of people we are. They border about questions like; are we good or bad, generous or selfish, compassionate or mean, honest or dishonest, cowardly or courageous (Velasquez, 1999). According to Oakley (1998), virtue ethics supports actions that are able to build good character and involves a feedback relationship amongst the conduct and the development of good character. According to the early proponents of virtue ethics Confucius and Aristotle, once one is living a virtuous life doing good is spontaneous. In other words, doing that which is good becomes habitual and thus one is not forced or obligated by any law to do that which is good or right. Using this as a yardstick to measure the rightness or wrongness of Boko Haram's terrorism one can only come up with the conclusion that there is no room for virtue ethics to accommodate terrorism as a good act. This is because the activities carried out by this group which includes kidnapping, suicidal bombings, killing of both military and civilians etc. in no way showcase or portray features of virtuous persons. In summary, applying virtue ethics to the issue of Boko Haram terrorism one can only

come to the conclusion that their activities are condemnable in other words wrong.

Lastly, using the ethics of care which is seen as a context-based approach to preserving relationships we will notice that Boko Haram acts of terror obviously has a considerable effect on a number of relationships. Consequently, one can also conclude that since terrorism do have a considerable effect on a large number of relationships the act itself can be termed as a wrong one.

Responses of Christians to Boko Haram Terrorist Attacks in Nigeria

Taking cognizance of Boko Haram attacks on Christian and the responses of the Christians with respect to these attacks the north east has been under turmoil since the emergence of Boko Haram. Take for instance, in Gombe state, Rev. Terwase and Evangelist Musal affirmed that so many churches have been destroyed as a result of this crisis, morning prayers and masses were stopped because of the fear of attacks. It was also pointed out that as a result of the attacks night vigil and other church activities that held at night were all stopped. At the peak of these attacks all the Anglican churches in Gombe halted its 2014 Easter vigil ceremony as a result of intelligent report from security that the church maybe targeted during this period (Bakinde, nd). All these amounted or led to pastors and priests been threatened, attacked or abducted. According to Rev. Terwase in an interview, "it reached a stage where we had to stop the ringing of church bells" this is because the bell gives awareness of when services are about holding and at this time attacks can take place. The attacks in Gombe resulted to the closure of many churches. An interview with pastors like Musa Yohanna, James Bitrus, Nuhu Goji and Damian Vandi from Chibok, Maiduguri, Bama and Gwoza Local Government Areas exposed that churches were burnt down to ashes, clergymen were gruesomely murdered and Christian doctrines were ridiculed and reduced to almost nothing. Many Christians were abducted including women, girls and children and were

forced to convert or denounce their faith. In this process many were molested and raped. A pronounced attack that got the attention of the world was the abduction of over 300 girls from a secondary school in Chibok. Though some of the girls escaped in the process but record has it that over 200 girls were still missing and a video was later released showing the girls been forced to proclaim Islam as their religion. Furthermore, churches as a result of these incessant attacks were forced to close because their time of holding services became a time of target by Boko Haram. Consequently, the Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri which had lost over 20 parishes and had no option but to donate their priests to other dioceses in other states that enjoyed relative peace. Similarly, in Bauchi and Yobe State more especially in Damaturu and Potiskum Local Government Areas Christians also face same persecution by Boko Haram. Churches were destroyed, many pastors and priests were abducted and some killed. Some churches even went further to hold some secret services. At a point in time pastors were sent letters for an opportunity to convert or be killed. This resulted to the halting of all church activities and rituals that are peculiar with the Christian. In Adamawa state the case was not different as churches were openly destroyed and Christian place of worship were also desecrated. Christian religious symbols were ridiculed and destroyed and in addition the Catholic Church in Bazza in Michika Local Government Area was destroyed and the altar converted into a bath place for the terrorist.

As a result of the impact of Boko Haram attacks on the practice of Christianity, several Christian religious leaders and communities have reacted to this menace as understood by their religious context. For instance, Rev. Terwase of the Anglican denomination and Evangelist Musa Misal stated clearly that the response was that of self-preservation. Some pastors even preached revenge on the philosophy and assertion that "self-defence is not revenge" (Bakine, nd). According to Bakinde, another element that spawned out as a response from the Christian

church was the rejection to integrate with Muslims and consequently encouraged Christians to move to areas where there are major Christian settlements. Some Christians called on the government to provide them with securities while they hid from attacks but some other had no option but to use themselves as securities since they had poor responses from the government. The case was not different in Bornu as over 15 churches were closed down by the Catholic Dioceses of Maiduguri. Several Christians migrated for safety. At some point, some pastors preached forgiveness where others had to fall back to the natural tendency of self-preservation, protection or defence. In summary, amidst all this crisis as it is seen in Christian teaching, belief and practices in the bible several pastors preached forgiveness, tolerance and mutual co-existence and as a result some leaders have gone back to build their churches as well as creating a room for reconciliation, forgiveness and peace.

Conclusion

The study concluded that Boko Haram acts of terrorism which is a display of violence to terrify the populace and government is unacceptable and termed wrong taking cognizance of the consequentialist view which opines that the morality of an action depends on its results. Continuing, it was further concluded that the ethics of care which is seen as a context-based approach to preserve relationships contradicts Boko Haram acts of terror which has a considerable effect on a number of relationships. Finally, it was concluded that Christians have responded to Boko Haram acts of terror by rejecting to integrate with Muslims and also encouraged Christians to move to areas where there are major Christian settlements while others had to fall back to the natural tendency of self-preservation.

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