

## **Trending waves of Terrorism in Nigeria**

Mofolorunsho Taiye B<sup>1\*</sup>, James Oricha M<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1,2</sup>(Department of Arts and Social Sciences, Kogi State Polytechnic Lokoja, Nigeria)

Corresponding Author: Mofolorunsho Taiye B<sup>1\*</sup>

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**Abstract:** *The menace of terrorism in Nigeria has not only been a source of anguish and harped socio-economic and political development in Nigeria. It has also contributed negatively to global threats and terrorism with Nigeria ranking fourth in the Global Terrorism Index (GTI). In this paper attempts are made to (1) Build a nexus with domestic violence and social characteristics of terrorism. (2) Trace the transformation of the waves of terror/violent antecedents in Nigeria since independence as a gradual build up to the status of global terrorism. (3) Suggest domestic terrors/violence springing from religious, political and ethnic tensions that breed terrorism. The paper recommends that, adequate attention should be given to citizen social welfare and domestic terrors as means of curbing terrorism in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Militant, Radicalism, Religion, Terror, Terrorism, Violence.*

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### **I. Introduction**

In recent time the London-based institute for economics and peace ranked Nigeria fourth on the Global Terrorism index (GTI) also noting that in 2013 more than 80 per cent of lives lost to terrorism occurred in only five countries namely, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and Syria (Institute of Economics and Peace, 2014). According to the report, this index is reached having considered three criteria; 1. The incident must be intentional – the result of a conscious calculation on the part of a perpetrator. 2. The incident must entail some level of violence or threat of violence — including property violence, as well as violence against people. 3. The perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors. Also considered as a baseline is that, these three criteria must reflect violence act aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious or social goal. The violence act must include evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a large audience (or audiences) other than the immediate victims (Institute of Economics and Peace, 2014).

This ranking did not only reveal the extent of damage done to Nigeria social development and foreign polices but also reveals Nigeria's contribution to global threats and terrorism. Rhetorically, one would ask; how did we get here? Preceding this ranking and the listing of Boko Haram as a terrorist group, Nigeria had been faced with decades of violent crisis and insecurities since the 60s that tend to reflect some of the aforementioned baseline. Could this terror incidences, however little not had gradually developed? Were adequate actions taking to nip terror acts in the bud before the developed to this extent? Many scholars like, Isyaku(2013) agrees that the ignorance of Nigerian authorities to react to the claim of not taking pro-active measures in reducing the risk of terror attack and also pre-emptive measures in identifying tracing the terrorist network/cells, sponsors, sympathizers, and funding may have contributed to the growth of terrorism(Isyaku, 2013). Some other scholars have also argued that the act of terror manifested in different ways. Whether its impact is within or domesticated, it adds up to the dimension of terrorist groups and terrorist act. In fact, at the inception of boko haram in 2002, a lot of debates have risen on whether or not to list it as a terrorist group until the act of terror unleashed by the terror group increased dramatically in 2013.

Also, considering the historical antecedents of terrorism in Russia, France, Vietnam, America, Iran and a host of other European and Asian countries and the advancement in the modus operandi of global terrorism, one would wonder if the circumstances of terror activities in the recent ranking of Nigeria as the fourth on the global terrorism index is completely disconnected from domestic waves of violence that had existed. The objective and aim of this paper is therefore to identify and describe the waves of domestic terror in Nigeria since independence as a build-up into global terrorism and threat.

### **II. Defining And Conceptualizing Terrorism**

The word terrorism as it is used today was coined during the French Revolution's Reign of Terror (1793–1794), however an attempt to define terrorism has remained a difficult one because hardly is it defined without political assumptions and social prejudices. According to Clarke, the difficulty in assigning a truly comprehensive definition to terrorism lies in the fact that, not only is it challenging to be specific when motives, targets and methods differ so broadly from case-to-case, but also the complexity of untangling the overlaps

within each of these categories these make the task virtually impossible (Clarke, 2009). Schmid (2011) gave four reasons why defining terrorism is difficult;

1. Terrorism is “a contested concept” of political, legal, social sciences and popular notions of it are often diverging;
2. The definition question is linked to (de-)legitimation and criminalisation;
3. There are many types of “terrorism”, with different forms and manifestations;
4. The term has undergone changes in meaning in the more than 200 years of its existence.

These four reasons primarily are decided on individual or group perspectives, experiences and interpretation. Worldwide, many governments are incredibly hesitant to defining terrorism because they are worried about how an official definition of terrorism would expose the legitimacy of self-proclaimed combats of national liberation. Giving the many national and regional definitions of terrorism, a few which would be considered in identifying the waves of terror in Nigeria includes the following:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004) defined terrorism as criminal act, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act.
2. Terrorism is the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological (U.S. Department of Defense, 1996)
3. Terrorism is any act or threat of violence, whatever its motives or purposes, that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda and seeking to sow panic among people, causing fear by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, or seeking to cause damage to the environment or to public or private installations or property or to occupying or seizing them, or seeking to jeopardize national resources (Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism as adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior and the Council of Arab Ministers, 1998).
4. Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman (1988) defined terrorism as, 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 targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators.
5. Terrorism connotes, instilled fear, dread, panic or mere anxiety - spread among those identifying, or sharing similarities, with the direct victims, generated by some of the modalities of the terrorist act – it’s shocking brutality, lack of discrimination, dramatic or symbolic quality and disregard of the rules of warfare and the rules of punishment. (Schmid,2011)

While these definitions may not mean the same, it reasonably suggests that terrorism includes the use violence to unconventional target, installing fear or causing terror. The word “Terror” is derived from the Latin word *terrere*, which means “frighten” or “tremble.” Trembling and frightening are synonyms for fear, panic, and anxiety, what we would naturally call terror. Little wonder is the word “Terror” and Terrorism interchangeably used by worldwide authorities.

### **III. Theoretical Frame Work**

This paper adopts a social constructionism theory and a social movement view as its principal frame of reference. Social constructionism approach to terrorism aims to discover the ways that individuals and groups create and perceive their reality. Social constructionism a school of thought introduced into sociology by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann focuses on the description of institutions and actions and not on analyzing cause and effect. According to them, socially constructed reality is seen as an on-going dynamic process; reality is re-produced by people acting on their interpretations of what they perceive to be the world external to them.

Social movement approach views terrorism as a gradual and deliberate contentious act, given that it makes political claims and seeks to influence political processes and outcomes (Oberschall 2004). This view suggests that social movement entails ‘collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and powers that be.

Following this background, it is to be observed that the difficulty of defining terrorism is relative to perspectives, experiences and interpretation. In fact, it makes it difficult to actually differentiate between who a terrorist and who is a freedom fighter is or if there significant differences between domestic terror and the world perception of terrorism. Having a clear idea on this is vital to knowing who a terrorist is and how to curb terrorism, as well as serving as a guideline in the prosecutions of suspected terrorists. It is in the light of this that this paper posits a nexus between terrorism, domestic violence and social welfare.

#### **IV. Methodology**

The method of the paper is qualitative and exploratory in nature. A critical examination of secondary sources, such as books, journals and newspapers were used to draw insights, scholarly exegesis and empirical historical evidence.

#### **V. Waves of Terror the Nigerian Experience.**

Nigeria has since independence, experienced at least one major violent crisis in a decade (Fwatshak and Larab, 2007). These forms of violence have adversely created terror waves of and dreadful panic before the inception of Boko Haram. In this section attempt is made to categorize the various terror acts as experienced in Nigeria since her independence, using similar model of David C. Rapport's four waves of terrorism. Highlights of the cycle of activities within categorized period, the socio-economic, religious and political events triggering each wave, the modus operandi of actors and its major terror impact on Nigeria are identified.

**4.1 The First Wave:** The first wave of terror acts experienced in Nigeria occurred in the early 1960s to the mid 1970s. It was shrouded in ethno-political crisis. This period witnessed bloody military coups; political party crisis (operation wetie), mass massacre of Easterners in the North, the declaration of the Republic of Biafra and finally the civil war that claimed over 1.5 million persons. Many reasons have been attributed to this outbreak of terror: However, what was basically responsible was ethnocentrism evident in the first putsch dominated by the Igbo's against the northern leaders and the reprisal outburst of violence against the Igbos living in the northern part of Nigeria.

According to Ray (2012), it was a period of politicized ethnicity and competition for resources, which worsened the relationships between ethnic groups. This culminated in the gruesome war after the declaration of the Republic of Biafra as an expression of the Igbos' grievances of been denied of their basic human needs of equality, citizenship, autonomy and freedom, (Burton, 1992). The selective and unlawful killings in form of coups and counter coups, the reprisal attacks on the Igbos in the northern part of Nigerian as orchestrated by a few persons and the eventual civil war which claimed millions of civilians fits into the UN Security Council definition of terrorism as "a criminal act, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act".

**4.2 The Second Wave:** The second wave predominates 1980s to 2000 and was rooted in sectarian and religious intolerance. According to Neil (2012) Sectarianism refers to a whole cluster of ideas, belief, myths and demonology about religious difference which are used to make religion a social marker, to assign different attributes to various religious groups and to make derogatory remarks about others. It is more than a set of prejudiced attitudes but refers to behaviours, policies and types of treatments that are informed by religious difference. Significant example of sectarian terror was Maitatsine. Maitatsine is a Hausa word meaning "the one who damns" and refers to his curse-laden public speeches against the Nigerian state (Adesoji, 2011).

The Maitatsine sect was formed by Muhammed Marwa an Islamic scholar. He became an Islamic zealot concerned with the purification of Islam. He believed that Islam had been corrupted by modernization (Westernization) and the formation of the modern state (Danjibo, 2014). According Falola (1990) Marwa was opposed to most aspects of modernization and to all Western influence. It was the teachings of the sect that utilizing modern technology or reading books other than the Qur'an were pagan practices. The killing and destruction of Pagans or Arnas (infidels, who do not believe in the supremacy of Allah) and their practices became a key agenda for the sect. In less than 12 days, Marawa and his sectarian activities had led to the death of over 4,179 persons and the destruction of properties in Kano (Okafor, 1997).

Examples of religious intolerance that characterised this period include highly destructive and blood bathing crises of 1982 in Borno, Kano, and Kaduna States, 1984, 1985 and 1986 religious crises in Yola, Gombe, Bauchi, and Kwara States. 1987 crises in Kafanchan, Katsina, Funtua, Zaria, Gussau and Kaduna; 1991 Shite sect in Katsina led by Malam Yahaya Yakubu in 1992; Zango Kataf, Zaria and Kaduna crises; 2001 crises in Jos, etc.

In this wave of terror, one basic fact that stands is the use of force to impose ideologies. This pass for terrorism as the U.S. Department of Defense, defines terrorism as, "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.

**4.3The Third Wave:** The Third waves of terror as experienced in the Nigerian socio-political history is the wave of anti-marginalization and economic liberation. The period also covers the 1990's to 2010. This wave not only recognized the activities of ethnic militant groups such as The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Oodua People's Congress, the Egbesu Boys and the Bakassi Boys, but also government response to their activities. The growth of these groups were facilitated among many factors by the economic recession of the 1990's, privatization, deregulation, and government inability to fund welfare projects.

As Ojukwu (2009) reported, the *raison d'être* for forming these groups is not necessarily to capture political power but to serve as social pressure groups that seek to influence the structure of the power in the country, and to call attention to the deteriorating material condition of political deprivation and perceived marginalization of their groups or social environment. However Agbaje (2002) observed that the activities of these groups have assumed a dysfunctional dimension and threaten the objectives of peaceful co-existence. Their activities have exceeded the limits imposed by societal consensus.

For example, The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) claims to expose exploitation and oppression of the people of the Niger Delta and to curb the devastation of the natural environment by the Nigerian government and corporations involved in the extraction and production of oil in the area. The Egbesu boys also claimed a spiritual foundation for combating evil, used in defence or to correct an injustice. The Bakassi Boys, a vigilante outfit claimed to curb criminal activities, while their methods included arson, kidnapping, extra-judicial killings, looting, unlawful detention and disappearances.

In general terms, the actions and terrifying methods of these groups, despite their upright intentions are in doubt. The response to these groups and their actions by the Nigerian government are equally not void of terror. Amidst some of her actions were, brutality meted on the members of MASOP, the execution of Ken Saro-wiwa and the militant ijaw youths (Onimajesin 2003) and in some cases allegations of inadequate response of the Nigerian government to the phenomenon of militancy which led to the proliferation of more ethnic militias.

This wave no doubt fits the definition by the Arab convention for the suppression of terrorism (1998) as, any act or threat of violence, whatever its motives or purposes, that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda and seeking to sow panic among people, causing fear by harming them, placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, seeking to cause damage to the environment or to public or private installations or property, occupying or seizing them, or seeking to jeopardize national resources.

**4.4The Fourth Wave:** The fourth wave of terror that has recently ravaged the Nigerian social structure is one characterised by high religious extremism and anti-westernization. This wave has been ongoing since 2009 by the Islamic sect known as Boko Haram with the formal Arabic name Jama'a Al Sunnah Li-da'wa wa al-jihad meaning, people committed to the teachings of the propagation of the Prophet's teaching and jihad. Central to the teachings is that western education, or "book" is forbidden. Ideologically, the group promoted among her members that, any member who fought and died for the cause of an Islamic/ Sharia state by destroying modern state formation and government establishment would automatically gain "Aljanna" (Danjibo, 2011).

Although the movement at its inception was relatively peaceful, it became dreadful after the capture and killing of their leader, Mohammed Yusuf in police custody. Since then, Boko Haram engaged in guerrilla warfare across the north of Nigeria. Among the litany of attacks are those of the United Nations Office, Abuja, Police Headquarters, Abuja, the building housing of ThisDay Newspapers, Sun Newspapers and Daily Trust in Abuja, St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla, Niger State, Deeper Life Church, Okene, prisons etc. According to the 2014 global terrorism index report, the group has been increasing its deadliness each year, with 2013 being four times as deadly as 2009. In the period between 2009 and 2012, over 3,500 Nigerians have been killed by the group through shootings and bombings. Around 60 per cent of attacks and fatalities are armed assaults using guns, with a quarter of attacks and fatalities from bombings. They have used at least 35 suicide bombings, 28 of which occurred in 2012. Suicide bombings account for five per cent of all attacks. In 2013 Boko Haram killed 64 people who were attending services in mosques and 16 attending church services in over 11 separate attacks. In 2013, there were 11 private citizens who were beheaded and a lot more including the over 200 Chibok girls kidnapped in 2014. On 7 March 2015 Boko Haram announced the group's pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

As it is, it did not only appear that religion is used to mobilize against modernity and westernization or that it seems to be an unsettled movement of the second wave of terror in the Nigeria socio-political history. It appears that, for the first time, the global world seems to be interested in seeing this wave as an act of terrorism because it poses a threat on western culture and is gaining more support from other terror group which hitherto have been tagged terrorist. However, despite the affiliation of Boko Haram to other Arab/Jihadist group, her

activities clearly pass for terrorism as an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-)clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby in contrast to assassination the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population and they serve as message generators (Schmid and Jongman, 1988).

**4.5 The Fifth Wave:** Currently, a new wave of terror doing serious damage to the Nigerian economy is characterized by the activities of armed Fulani herdsmen. The effects of climate change, draught and boko haram crises in the northern part of Nigerian are responsible for the increasing tension between Fulani herdsmen and farmers (Adeleke, 2016). Attacks lunched by the nomadic Fulani herdsmen in the course of grazing unhindered into farming communities have often been described as more of a terrorist attack. The condition is also appropriately portrayed by Tolu (2014) as a dangerous dimension where herdsmen spare no one, including women and children, when they visit terror on these communities. Some Fulani herdsmen attacks as observed by Omawumi (2016) include; 2014 attack on Galadima Village where at least 200 people were killed; February to March, 2016 siege on communities in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State where about 500 persons were reportedly killed. These communities include; Aila, Akwu, Adagbo, Okokolo, Ugboju, Odugbeho, Ogbaulu, Egba and Obagaji; April, 2016 Fulani herdsmen attack on two villages in Gashaka Local Government Area where 15 people were killed; April, 2016 alleged attack on farmers in Lagun, Iyana Offa, Offa, Atagba, Lapata and their surrounding communities in Lagelu Local Council Area of Ibadan, Oyo State, by Fulani armed men; April, 2016 Fulani herdsmen attack on seven villages in Nimbo in Uzo- Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State, where about 40 persons were reportedly killed. More attacks have been reported in Benue State in 2017.

This wave is very much within Schmid (2011) connotation of terrorism in its ability to instil fear, shock, brutality and disregard for the welfare of a people.

## **VI. Conclusion And Recommendations**

This paper has offered significant explanation to understanding social construction of terrorism within the Nigeria experience as terror waves that had being in existence and not merely the impressions fostered by the global world. This consequently has drawn a nexus between domestic violence and the world perception of terrorism. The paper has also been able to highlight the root causes of such terrorism to human right abuses, inadequate welfares, marginalization of ethnic group and religious manipulations.

Going by the experiences of Nigeria, we recommend the following:

1. A national definition of what constitutes terrorism within the Nigeria context.
2. Encouragement of public and peaceful debate to clarify notions and ideologies.
3. Equal access to social welfare services, resources and political opportunities irrespective of ethnic, religious or regional affiliations.
4. The use of more legal-judicial responses to deter violence and impunity among groups who feel marginalised and have recourse to violence.
5. Reinforce the capacities of primary social control agents like the family, school and media in the formation of law abiding citizens.

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