The Menace of Terrorism: Threats and Consequences to Our Generation

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Terrorism is the use of intentionally indiscriminate violence as a means to create terror or fear in order to fulfill a political, religious, or ideological agenda. In other words, terrorism is any act intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, with the sole aim of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or eschew from doing any act. Based on how widely the term is defined, the roots and practice of terrorism can be traced back to the 1st century AD. In January 1958, Italian patriot Felice Orsini threw three bombs in an attempt to assassinate French Emperor Napoleon III, which resulted in the death of eight bystanders and injured 142 people. The event played a key role in stimulating early terrorist groups. Debatably, the first organization to utilize modern terrorist techniques was the Irish Republican Brotherhood, founded in 1858 as a revolutionary Irish nationalist group that carried out attacks in England.

Since then, terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda (1988), ISIS (1999), the Taliban (1994), Boko Haram (2002), and Al-Shabaab (2006) have been formed and have been responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of people, with millions displaced across the world.

Major terrorist attacks in the world include, but are not limited to, the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York City, United States of America, which claimed about 2,996 lives; the 2007 bombings in Yazidi communities in Kahtaniya and Adnaniyah, which killed 500 people; the May 2013 attacks in Iraq, killing 449 people; the Cinema Rex fire in Abadan, Iran, which took over 422 lives; and the April 2014 kidnapping of 276 Chibok schoolgirls.

Terrorist groups tend to favor targets of high impact value, where massive casualties will be recorded, such as churches, mosques, marketplaces, social gatherings, as well as other densely populated areas. In some instances, they employ tactics such as shootings, hijackings, kidnappings, bombings, and suicide bombings to carry out their deadly attacks. They also use high-tech weapons such

as Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and Rocket-Propelled Grenades (RPGs) to cause massive deaths. Every act of terrorism is a performance designed to affect many audiences.

Terrorists also attack national symbols to exemplify power, attempting to shake the foundation of the country or society they are fighting. This may have a negative effect on the government while enhancing the prominence of the given terrorist group and ideology behind an act of terrorism. According to the Global Terrorism Database by the University of Maryland, College Park, more than 61,000 incidents of non-state terrorism resulting in at least 140,000 deaths have been recorded from 2000 to 2014.

However, this article will give special attention to the menace of terrorism to our generation.

To start with, terrorism is a fatal cankerworm that has led to the slaughter and massacre of innocent civilians, some of whom are breadwinners of their families, thereby leading to abject poverty and loss of valuable human resources that contribute meaningfully to the bane of society. For instance, in 2014 alone, Boko Haram killed over 6,600 people and displaced many others. This monstrous phenomenon creates an aura of fear, insecurity, and depression, which threatens the very fabric of our resolve as a nation, as well as the hope of future generations.

Furthermore, terrorism greatly undermines our economic stability due to the financial losses incurred, damage to properties, and demolition of critical infrastructure, which are of national importance to the country. According to the International Centre For

 Investigative Reporting (ICIR), Nigeria spent $2.6 billion dollars on combating Boko Haram in 2016, at a time when such mammoth funds could have been invested in developmental projects and infrastructure. This huge expenditure is particularly alarming for a country where many states are still struggling to pay salaries, pensions, and arrears. In fact, according to the 2017 report of the Global Peace Index (GPI), violence consumes up to 12.6% of the world's GDP, leaving many sectors of the affected countries neglected and underfunded.

Moreover, the threat of terrorism stretches beyond the immediate consequences, as it challenges our national security and places a stigma on our country. It is a curious paradox that, despite the international visits and overtures President Muhammadu Buhari made to many countries around the world in a bid to attract

investors and forge economic partnerships, the results have been quite negligible and unproductive, especially in comparison to the efforts intensified.

As a matter of fact, no country or foreign investor, no matter how benevolent they may be, is likely to do business in places where their security, as well as the security of their investment, is not guaranteed. It is noteworthy that one of the major features of terrorists is the induction of fear and unrest in the minds of people. Sometimes, when they want to make a statement of intent and send a strong signal to the government, the people, and the world at large, they upload videos of their excruciating bloodshed killings to social media, where international media outlets, news agencies, as well as the entire world, can view them. This causes panic and fear, thereby discouraging potential investors and national affiliations that could be vital to economic prosperity. Without mincing words, the plague of terrorism to our generation cannot be overemphasized.

In addition, terrorism creates a secular divide, which often degenerates into underdevelopment, poverty, and illiteracy. Secularization, otherwise known as a secular divide, may be defined as the process in which the various aspects of society, such as the economy, politics, law, and morals, become increasingly specialized and distinct from one another. It is no longer news that over 20,000 people have been killed and over 2 million displaced since the inception of Boko Haram's onslaught in 2009 in the Northern part of Nigeria, which is the hotspot of terrorism in the country.

It is no coincidence that the Northern populace has been trapped in the web of illiteracy and poverty for many years. For further illustration, while the United Nations Poverty Index that measured the years 2004 to 2014 estimated the average poverty rate at about 46.5 percent, the regional breakdown revealed that it was 80.9 percent in the North-West, 76.8 percent in the North-East, and 45.7 percent in the North-Central. Poverty was, however, only 19.3 percent in the South-West, 25.2 percent in the South-South, and 35 percent in the South-East.

The lag in literacy levels is also mind-boggling, where UNESCO in 2015 estimated an adult literacy rate of 56.9 percent for the country, one of the lowest in the world, when, in stark contrast, illiteracy in the South is low. The literacy level was 92 percent in the Southern state of Lagos, 80 percent in Osun, 74.7 percent in Ekiti, and 70.7 percent in Akwa Ibom. Whereas in the North, Borno recorded 14.5 percent, Katsina 21.7 percent, Yobe 26.6 percent, and Taraba 23.3 percent.

The North has been slow in development, while only little progress has been made in eradicating poverty and illiteracy in the region, no thanks to the overwhelming forces of terror, which until recently threatened to exterminate the region due to the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group.

Nevertheless, underdevelopment, poverty, and illiteracy promote the creation of a legion of idle youths who, because of hunger, poverty, and lack of education, become ready tools for criminality and other violent activities that endanger the security architecture of the nation, as well as its territorial integrity. This has also contributed to an increase in vices such as armed robbery, terroristic kidnapping, cultism, rape, and insurgency.

Nonetheless, one possible explanation for all these vices can be traced to terrorism championed by Boko Haram in Nigeria. Interestingly, the quality of education in any country is a significant determinant in the development of its youths. The youths are the hope of our generation, but sadly, in a situation where they are not well educated and they're poor, such youths would easily join terrorist groups without restriction in return for food and financial rewards. This behavior rooted in terrorism makes them not just a threat to society but a menace to our generation.

Furthermore, the peace of a region is crucial to its popularity and its ability to attract tourists from around the world, as safety plays an essential role in a traveler's choice of where to go and have rest. Bearing this in mind, it is a disturbing narrative that Nigeria is the 14th least peaceful country in the world, according to the 2017 Global Peace Index report. In a region where terrorism is a major cankerworm, tourism cannot thrive, and this negative factor adversely affects economic diversification and foreign exchange earnings.

Moreover, it is evident that one of the objectives of terrorism is to frighten the people. In doing so, it has a direct impact on society as people try to avoid places where attacks take place and seek safety measures. People experience major shock and sorrow due to the massacres and severe injuries caused by terroristic elements. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI), in its 2016 report, ranked Nigeria as the third most terrorized country in the world.

In extreme cases, terrorism causes government overthrows and mass anxiety. Powerful nations, especially international enemies, hijack civil unrest and rebellions to overthrow the government, and this usually leads to heavy disaster, the loss of many lives, and post-invasion crisis.

Apart from the injuries and deaths immediately brought about by terrorist attacks, survivors often suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and major depression.

In conclusion, it is beyond reasonable doubt that terrorism is a veritable menace to our generation. However, if this menace of terrorism is going to be arrested, a pragmatic approach must be employed, with emphasis on intelligence gathering to stop the recruitment of bombers and to be able to detect them when they are dispatched to their targets. In line with the review happening across the globe, as it is well known that most, if not all, female bombers wear the burqa, the full-face veils, it would be sensible to review this practice. The veils have been abolished in countries like Congo Brazzaville, Chad, Cameroon, and France, citing security reasons. Even Senegal, a country with over 90 percent Muslims, is also contemplating the same action.

No stone must be left unturned in the quest to defeat terrorism and ultimately save our generation.