

## Drama as a Panacea to Terrorist Attack in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The issues of National and International terrorism is on the increase with it brutality. In Nigeria society, the nature and type of terrorism has become more varied and complex and terrorist organization even more evasive and difficult to understand. There is thus a strong need to combat this hydra-headed monster of terrorism. This study examines in general the nature, type of terrorism and threat posed by them. It later discusses how drama that often finds a way of restoring sanity in any society; this can be achieved when there is a story to tell with the aid of actors and actresses who play different roles on a stage to pass home their messages before their audience. To this end, drama has becomes a kind of media that communicates to the target audience through any available means not only to inform but to teach morals and values of a society through positive propagation of culture, tradition and in the same breath condemning atrocities. Drama therefore can help n curbing terrorism in Nigeria society.

**Keywords:** *Terrorist, Panacea, Drama, Audience, Propagation*

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### **Background to the Study**

Nigeria right from inception has been rocked by one form of terrorist attack or the other, but compared to the current trend of terrorist attacks rocking the nation; the damage has been more devastating than that of previous times. Terrorist in Nigeria never openly lay claim to their deeds, but in some cases, like the Independence Day car bomb explosion, they do. Nigeria and Nigerians have low tolerance level and little or no sympathy for terrorist attacks or terrorism, even when the attack is aimed at the government by an insurgent group. The reason is based on the fact that the victims of such attacks are the masses who also happen to be victims of bad and corrupt leadership, not forgetting the fact that an average Nigerian man or woman loves to live out his or her life to its fullest, no matter how hard the situation of life may be. As a result of this, any terrorist attack that results to loss of life, especially innocent lives, is condemned by Nigerians at all levels. However, some terrorist organizations hide under the guise of religion to unleash terror attacks on the Nigerian populace; an example of such is the Boko-haram group in North Eastern part of the country, which has so far claimed lots of lives and properties.

Most people resort to terrorist attacks when they fail to achieve their goal through dialogue or their inability to win the people's mind over to their cause through verbal persuasion or conviction, or when military victor cannot be attained. Terrorism which has been classified by some social scientist as the “weapon of weakness” is unfortunately what most aggrieved Nigerian people, especially those in politics, resort to in order to win the target populace over to their side. While the key players sit back at home they employ the services of unemployed youths in the society to unleash terror in its worst form on selected victims. Most terrorist attacks are localized and the immediate victims killed or kidnapped irrespectively of the number involved is of no importance to the terrorists. The key players always remain behind the scene because of identification, no matter how remotely connected to any act of terrorism; make the terrorist or terrorist group(s) unpopular among the Nigerian people. Based on this fact one wonders why terrorist attacks is still on the increase in a nation like Nigeria. The answer is not farfetched. Apart from the common tactics of accusing an opponent even when an attack was organized and launched by the members in order to win the sympathy of the target audience, the news media play a leading role.

The news media solely responsible in enhancing the growth of terrorist attacks and terrorist in the world and, Nigeria is not exempted from this new spate of terrorism. Research has proven that the news media is the platform through which terrorists and terrorist organizations send out their message to the target population in order to achieve their goal, a goal whose sole objective is to spread fear in order to disturb the safety of the people so as to advance its/their political goal. It cannot be denied that in most cases, particularly in Nigeria, that the objectives of terrorist attacks and terrorism are based on selfish reasons.

The usefulness of the victims of terrorist attacks and terrorism is to function as bait used to capture the interest and arouse the imagination of the target population and the media of course helps them to pass across the message to their target – the people. Since the news media is sustained by viewer's rating the media automatically sensationalize stories on terrorism to keep viewer ratings on the increase, because people are fascinated by such subject.

According to Muller (2007), a cynical aphorism in the newspaper business holds 'if it bleeds, it leads' there is an obvious, if less pungent, corollary: if it doesn't bleed, it certainly shouldn't lead, and indeed, may not be fit to print at all”. Nacos buttress this view by stating that “terrorist

strikes provide what the contemporary media (Newspaper, Radio, Television-cable satellite stations and more recently the internet) crave most-drama, shock, and tragedy suited to be packaged as human interest news". Nacos (2006, 81-82). As long as the audience wants to be captivated by what it sees on media, the media has no choice but to continue to cover such events, after all their rating depends on their ability to capture the attention of the much needed audience.

The location and victims of terrorist attacks are mostly carefully selected. They are mainly ordinary people in places that attract large crowds where members of the civilian's population are familiar in which they feel as ease. Places that has been targeted in recent past in Nigeria includes the market square, shopping centers, night clubs, churches, mosques, hospitals, schools buses etc. and the people targeted include oil company workers, children/relations of the supper rich and politicians and the members of the civilian population. Most times these people and places are carefully selected because of the shock values they will have on the target population for example the kidnapping of fifteen school children on their way to school in a bus in Abia in a commercial town in Abia state in eastern Nigeria sent a shock weave throughout the country.

The increase dramatic and high profile attacks terrorist engage in to gain the attention of the media include kidnapping, car bombing, suicide bombing, hostage taking and hijacking. The reason they need the media when they strike or threaten to commit violence, going by Nacos (2006) analysis, is:

1. To gain attention and awareness of the audience, and thus to condition the target population (and government) for intimidation: create fear.
2. To recognize the organizations motives. They want the people to think about why they are carrying out attacks.
3. To gain the respect and sympathy of those in whose name they claim to attack
4. To gain a quasi-legitimate status and a media treatment similar to that of legitimate political actors. (Nacos, 2007).

To this end terrorists and terrorist organization need the media to keep their goal from suffering defeat as Bruce (2006) clearly states that "without media's coverage the whole impact (of the terrorist) is arguably wasted, remaining confined to the immediate victims", and the news media has not disappointed them. However, the entertainment media is a more potent and better weapon that can be used to counter, and to a large extent, curb terrorism in Nigeria in particular and the world in general.

### **Concept of Drama**

Drama is a Greek word which means "*to do*". Drama always seeks to do something in order to restore sanity in a society. But it can achieve this when there is a story to tell with the aid of actors who impersonate the characters on a stage before a target population – the audience. To this end drama becomes a kind of media that communicates to target audience through any available means not only to inform but to teach morals and at the same time keep alive the values of a society through positive propagation of culture and tradition and in the same breath condemning atrocities, while annihilating obsolete cultures and traditions by introducing new but acceptable ways of life (Dramatic, 2010).

Drama also tends its tentacles to serve as a complex but effective vehicle to communication that tends to answer so many questions through actions and dialogue in order to create positive awareness and encourage positive human relation and operation that will enhance humanity to balance up her civilization properly and to also inform them on the “needs of a new educational concept to conquer terrorism. To reach its audience therefore, a play (drama) must tell its story by impersonating human behavior that is closely related to the real life of the audience although it needs to spice with imagination and illusion to give the audience hope or justice. A playwright should therefore be able to communicate his feelings and thoughts to his audience in order to enable his audience consider his ideas or reproduce the emotion that propelled the playwright to write such a story. This can be achieved according to Miller (2006) when rather joining the news media in 'celebrating' the destruction wrecked by terrorist attacks and terrorism, the entertainment media with reference to drama in particular through action and “intimate speech of evaluation and reassessment” relate the plight of the victims of terrorism and terrorist attacks in order to “strike” and stimulate the audience's sense of action, its direction and meaning”. This means of communication if well wielded will defeat the terrorist goal of creating fear in the target population because their target, through the means of drama, has been properly informed of the terrorist intention. What now overshadow the fear of the people is their rage against terrorist and their determination to sanitize their society of such groups or organizations (Benard, 2011).

Another important role of drama is to satirize or through the use of irony “gently illuminate human weakness” or employ tragedy to divine man's greatness and limitations. And to probe a man's mind modern naturalistic play can be employed. Through any of these means the role of drama goes beyond its limitation of being an art that represents life to become a way of seeing life. Thus the drama that is most meaningful and relevant to its society is that which does not relate a story that is foreign to its society but rather tells the story that exists in its society. To this end stories related to suicide bombing, hijacking, night clubs and school shooting spree, bombing of train and bus stations, restaurants and hotels will not fit in well in a play written for Nigerian audience. However, plays that base their drama on terrorism or terrorist attacks or kidnapping of adults and or children, bombing a church or planting can be modified to be used in dramas or stage plays.

### **Concept of Terrorism**

Terrorism is almost a part of human condition. Terrorism is a weapon of coercive intimidation designed to make established authority and government to submit to demands. Terrorism is often undeclared covert warfare and it has plagued mankind for centuries but today it has moved beyond simple assassinations and bombings. It has multiplied its lethal capabilities many times and is capable of killing thousands of people at a time and threaten entire nation. The phenomenon of terrorism has become a major concern of the international community and of nations around the world, because of its accelerated frequency and with more brutal methods and tactics, causing far wider causalities and destruction.

In the opinion of Hague (2005), the development of plastic explosives and compact automatic weapons gave terrorists the ability to exploit their target and maximize their effects. The terrorists nowadays are often better armed than the police forces that have to deal with them. Also, democracies, especially in Nigeria society are extremely vulnerable to political violence and terrorists acts. The current trends of adapting newer technology by the terrorist open up newer specters of violence. Access to new terrorist tools, the broadening of the terrorist market

and the advent of sophisticated and readily available computer technologies are all significant factors in the evolving threat. In all its reality, terrorist threat is a real one; the ease of travel and the access to explosives technology make the terrorists job a fairly easy one, especially when he's willing to die to accomplish his objectives. And there's a broad spectrum of financial supporters for terrorist activities which gives fractions the ability to strike at any desired target. The effort so far in countering the threat of the terrorist has so far been mainly reactionary-responding to wake-up calls when terrorists from carrying out their intended activities.

In Nigeria recently, there have been several cases of terrorist attacks which has now placed Nigeria among the league of growing terrorist nations although this was jettisoned by Nigerians. For example on the Christmas day in 2009 one Abdul-Mutallab put Nigeria's name on the global map as a terrorist nation. Later at the end of 2010 there has been series of blasts in Nigeria. From Abuja to Maiduguri to Jos and back to Abuja. Furthermore, on the last day of the year 2010 there was deadly bomb in a busy area in Abuja (Aderonmu, 2011). Thirty people may have cost their lives with several other injured. People have been killed in Jos in violence related to both religious and political conflicts. The Boko Haram attacks and Niger Delta terrorist matter are still issues at stake. However, it is recognized that religious extremism and or terrorism has become mark of many cities in Nigeria. Also it has become obvious by the frequency and the systematic occurrence of these events that they are planned to intimidate or cause terror in pursuit of religious, political and other goals.

But, the effort so far in curbing or countering the threat of the terrorist in Nigeria and other international countries have so far been mainly reactionary responding to the wake-up calls when terrorists strike. It would be better if we could get out of this mode and prevent terrorists from carrying out their intended activities. This paper therefore examines in general the nature, type of terrorism and threat posed by them. It later discusses how education can help in curbing terrorism in Nigeria society.

Terrorism is the aggression practiced by individuals, groups or states oppressing human beings' religion life, money and honour. It includes all forms of fear, hurt, threat, killing without right, banditry and all actions of violence and threatening committed by individuals or collectively aiming to frighten, hurt or risk people's lives. Also it includes environmental damage and destruction of public and private utilities. Encyclopedia Britannica defines terrorism as the systematic use of terror or unpredictable violence against governments, publics or individuals to attain a political objective. This agreed with the opinion of Babalola (2005) who 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. Moreover terrorism of violence is adopted by certain groups due to racial enmity (Ireland) religious retaliation (Massacre in Palestine) religious/ethnic discrimination. Black Americans, South Africa under apartheid, Nigeria) and black mailing.

### **Types of Terrorism**

Terrorism according to Aderonmu (2011) can be grouped into two, namely, Traditional Terrorism and New Terrorism.

**Traditional Terrorism:** Some of the traditional terrorism are discussed below:

1. Bombs: Bombs are the main tool of the terrorist. More than half of the terrorist incidents involve explosive devices and, as with other terrorists' tactics, bombs are

being used to kill more and more innocent people. Dele Giwa was killed by letter bomb in 1986.

- a. Also the increase in state sponsored terrorism has resulted in more sophisticated terrorists bombs.
2. **Assassination:** Assassination was the earliest tactic used by terrorists. Diplomats and politicians have always been the favorite target of assassins, with military however; also assassinate business and cultural leaders, high ranking government and military personnel.
3. **Sabotage:** Sabotage is an effective terrorist tactic against industrialized nations. Utility systems are one of the targets most frequently selected because they are extremely vulnerable and almost impossible to protect. Most important is the fact that when they are hit correctly, a lot of people know it.

**New Terrorism:** A major group in the class of new terrorism is chemical biological radiological nuclear (CBRN) terrorism with this terrorism can reach an unprecedented level of destruction. In this categories are the following:

**Chemical Terrorism:** Terrorists could use chemical agents to cause mass casualty. Although the technicalities involved in some of the chemical process would be quite complicated, the intensity of the purpose makes it possible.

**Biological Terrorism:** Terrorist may use biological agents to cause mass death. There are at least four primary acquisition routes that terrorists could conceivably pursue in acquiring a biological warfare capability- They are:

1. Purchasing a biological agent from one of the world's 1,500 germ banks.
2. Steal from a research laboratory, hospital or public health service laboratory, where agents are cultivated for diagnostic purposes.
3. Isolation and culturing of a desired agent from natural sources.
4. Obtaining biological agents from a rogue state, disgruntled government scientists, or a state sponsor (Wilkinson, 2004).

**Radiological Terrorism:** This is a situation whereby the terrorist disperse radiological material in an effort to contaminate a target population or a distinct geographic area. The material could be spread by radiological dispersal devices (RDD) like dirty bombs etc.

**Agricultural Terrorism:** This occur when the terrorist disseminate disease strain that are most able to damage one or more of a state's major arable food supplies.

**Eco-Terrorism:** Similar to the agriculture terrorism is the threat to environment and ecological system. Eco-terrorists may easily damage the eco-system of a country causing immediate death and destruction with far reaching consequences. Those terrorist acts will also have devastating consequences beyond the immediate target area.

A bomb(s) in churches, political rally ground, busy streets and market square to be detonated, car bombing, aircraft bombing etc are stories relevant to the life of the Nigerian audience. The drama based on such stories have the gift of satisfying the deep communal needs of the Nigerian people and will at the same time meet the interest of different individuals in the audience (Akanji, 2009).

Another important role of drama is to entertain. Drama therefore is to be enjoyed passionately with the mind and emotion irrespective of the story it relates. Based on this fact, a playwright should create a drama that can transport his audience from their own immediate reality to an imaginary world of great possibilities, and at the same time help them to put the knowledge gleaned from the imaginative world they had been released in into good use not by preaching to them first, but by persuasion through well worded dialogue and action. The preaching aspect according to Miller (2007) comes in only after the target audience is captured. The reasons of a terrorist attacks or terrorism, no matter how sympathetic their cause may be or how much fear they desire to impact on the people, will be completely eclipsed if through action and words a play is able to persuade the audience that the act is not only inhuman but a selfish and meaningless waste of life and property. For example, a play on the kidnapping of innocent school children on their way to school should not be focused on the success of the kidnappers in kidnapping the children, but on the suffering of their relations and the adverse effects such an act of terrorism have on the socio-economic development of society. It is only then, will the audience whose attention has already been captured yield its mind to the gospel drama has to preach in condemnation of such gruesome act and, of course, cause the target population to lose whatever sympathy it may otherwise have had for the terrorists.

### **How Drama Can be Used to Curb Terrorism**

To be able to curb or counter terrorist attacks and terrorism effectively there is need to understand the profile and functions of terrorist organizations and terrorism properly. Research has shown that propaganda and indoctrination are the two major operative factors that lie at the core of terrorism. Terrorism can be solved either through *pro-active* measures or *reactive* measures. Pro-active measures are preventive while reactive measures are restrictive, pro-active measures is not as expensive as reactive measures.

Reactive measures employ diplomacy in some cases and the use of military force in others as the case may be. Pro-active measures on the other hand, involve getting the people involved through enlightenment, creating and encouraging positive human relation and operation, imparting positive knowledge, introducing new educational concept, obedience to the rule of law, and sharing intelligence by the government and the people on one hand, and on the other hand, between or among nations (Bernard, 2011).

Therefore to select an appropriate but effective course of action especially when terrorism appears to be more of an isolated event lies in the hand of the government and organizations whose duty it is to understand the profile of the terrorist. History has shown that military intervention is not the best weapon that can be employed to curb terrorism and military force is a reactive measure. However, human security paradigm according to Osaat (2004) outlines a non-military approach which aims to address the persisting underlying inequalities that provokes terrorist activity. The practice of inhuman and degrading treatment of a suspect, and in other cases, killing or disabling or sleep deprivation of a suspect only succeed in lending weight to the terrorism. It is at this juncture that drama can play a strong role in curbing terrorism because according to Encyclopedia Britannica drama in its own right is “a reactive art moving constantly in time, and any convention that promotes a deep response while conserving precious time is of immeasurable value. Playwrights (dramatists) need to understand the source, motivation, method of preparation, and the tactics of terrorist groups to be able to counter them. The need to understand the political as well as the social grievances of any sects or group becomes very crucial to a playwright because the information will enable

him write a successful story that will transcend beyond the traditional boundary of appealing to the sensibilities of an audience but also speak to their rational mind to awaken them from slumber in order to defend their life style. By this means drama can counter the activity of the terrorist effectively and equally proffer solution to their grievances.

Though critics have over the years disagreed over the ability of drama to bring about any meaningful revolutionary changes in political, social or moral issues, they, however, cannot deny the fact that the main objective of drama has always been to provide society with a means of reflecting upon itself and its values and beliefs. Thus, why drama cannot single handedly curb terrorism and terrorist's attacks, it can, if in conjunction with the pro-active and reactive measures of countering terrorism and terrorist attacks, bring about a speedy and successful result (Taiwo, 2003).

On December 14, 2006 the Israeli Supreme Court ruled “*targeted killings* were a permitted form of self defense”. Targeted killings can be given different interpretation by a playwright. Meaning that is not necessarily synonymous with the literal meaning of the other ruled by the Israeli Supreme Court. A suspect in police custody does not have to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment that will only succeed in making him more hardened or resolute to continue in the path of terrorism, but drama can suffice as an offensive though subtle but very potent strategy to break if not totally destroyed his beliefs and at the same time purges him of his ways why a spirit and soul searches for a better way to resolve his grievances. This is a form of targeted killing without bloodshed. For example, a television or radio drama constantly played or shown to a suspect of the December 31, 2010 Abacha Barrack bombing in Abuja in Police Custody whose plot is centered not on the bomb blast, but on the life of a widow whose only son was killed or maimed in that terrorist attack. Her cries of woe and lamentation, her frustration and defeat, her sorrow and pain, her anger towards and hatred of the terrorist; if effectively worded by playwright and acted by good actor and actress and communicated to the target audience, will no doubt crush the will of the terrorist. For where neither the bullet of force cannot penetrate nor the diplomacy of politician which is as cold as the callous resolve of terrorist have impact, potent words of a playwright that pierce the emotions and resurrect a presumed dead humanity, will enable the terrorist see his true reflection in the mirror of drama to provoke a change, and this is a targeted kind of killing achieved through drama.

### **Conclusion**

Drama can function as both a proactive and reactive measures in curbing terrorism and terrorist attacks because of its ability to reach the in-depth of humanity and pull on their sense of morals and true justice consciously or unconsciously while entertaining. Though its form of attack is not brutal or bloody, yet if employed as a form of counter terrorism will prove to be a faster means of curbing terrorism in Nigeria because its approach is subtle but its effect is totally cleansing of the mind. It is only when a man sees himself for what he truly is can he truly desire change for good. A terrorist does not see himself as one. He justifies his actions of violence and sees himself as a saint for the course he is fighting for. Strong words of condemnation by President's and head of state are to him mere words that gives credent to his course, and military interventions on which are equality violent and brutal confirms his claims of sainthood. However, drama wields a weapon which is foreign to him and creeps into his heart and soul without his knowledge to pull down his defense and destroys his course and at the same help he to rebuild himself and this can be achieved through the playwright's expertise of presenting a terrorist to his real self.

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