

Religious Fundamentalism and Terrorism

Ruwuoma Doris Chukwu

*Department of Political and Administrative Studies,
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt*

Article DOI: 10.48028/iiprds/ijarppads.v7.i1.20

Abstract

The increasing threat of terrorism to international peace and security has spurred up studies to address this menace. This study was aimed at examining the role of religious fundamentalism in the surging wave of terrorism. Religion as a well spring of hope, life and virtues stirs deep passions that most times lead to violent action, war and terrorism. Anything that a religious believer perceives to be a challenge to his belief can constitute an existential threat to be likely met with drastic and deadly responses. The universalistic claims and absolute adherence of religious believe have sparked off ideologies that are predisposed to violence which they see as a sacramental act or divine duty. Sayyid Quth's beliefs and ideologies that focused on the catastrophic nature of contemporary life, is the foundation of contemporary Islamic fundamentalism. Millennialism combined with religious nationalism may also explain the religious violence in Isreal that has continued to spark off tensions in the entire Middle East. Al-qaeda Fatwa in 1998 that urged Muslims to kill Americans anywhere and everywhere has blazed up terrorist attacks by different Islamic groups all over the international society. Their operations no doubt shows the religious dimensions of terrorism that poses a serious threat to international peace and security.

Keywords: *Religious, Fundamentalism and Terrorism*

Corresponding Author: *Ruwuoma Doris Chukwu*

Background to the Study

Various forces have helped shape the evolution of the international society in different epochs. Throughout history, religion has played an important role in orienting human beings towards peace and peaceful coexistence. The role of the Catholic Church in the evolving stages of the modern international society has remained outstanding. Religion has continuously played important role in orientating human beings. Religious convictions and zeal, however distorted or manipulated have always been a driving force in the trends of international relations, in the positive and negative realms. The universalistic claims and absolute adherence of religious believe have sparked off ideologies that are predisposed to violence. Religious extremists see violence as a sacramental act or a divine duty that has influenced terrorism.

Terrorism has not only taken the central stage in the strategic calculation of the global community; it has also completely altered the shape of the global security equation making it a serious threat. Terrorism is a violent mode of response to a conflictual relationship. Terrorism as adopted from the French word *terreur* is derived from the Latin word *terrere*; to frighten. The connection between religious fundamentalism and terrorism is on the strict adherence and zeal to promote religious ideologies. Anything that a religious believer perceives to be a challenge to his belief can constitute an existential threat are most likely met with drastic or deadly responses. The aim of this work is to examine and analyse the height of religious connections to terrorism.

Terrorism

Terrorism has been given different definitions that boil down to the use of orthe threats of violence to pursue a goal. It can be seen as the deliberate attack on innocent civilians for political, social or religions goals. Terrorism in all, embodies violence, the desire for publicity, political, religious etc motives aimed at civilian populations. Terrorism is a form of covert attack directed at targets that are outside a certain range of clearly defined military targets. Terrorist acts often involve a small group, united around a particular cause, unleashing violence against society in order to frighten the populace and demoralize the leadership to achieve set goals (Ogwu 2001). Terrorism come in different forms such as those controlled or directed by a government or involve nationals from more than one country.

Terrorists can be nationalists, separatists and ideologist Lakghman Kadiraamar in a lecture in the Chatham House on 15th April 1998, as captured in Imobighe and Eguavoen 2006 gave a broad definition of terrorism as “the use or threat to use serious violence against persons or property, or the use or threat to use any means to disrupt vital computer installations or communications, to intimidate or coerce a government, the public, in order to promote political, social, ideological, religious or philosophical objectives. Terrorism involve the following;

1. Premeditation – decision by a perpetrator to commit an act of terror.
2. Motivation or a cause – may be political, religious, economic, cultural etc.
3. Targets – usually non-combatants like political figures, bureaucrats or innocent by standers.

4. Secretiveness – where perpetrators belong to a clandestine group or are secretly sponsored by states.

Terrorism can also be economically, religiously, psychologically, ethnically or radically motivated. Terrorism is a mode of response to a conflictual relationship, manifested in, as hostage taking, assassinations, plane hijacking, the detonation of bombs and explosives or release of nerve gas, suicide attacks etc. According to Chaturvedi 2006, terrorism is a violence of a random and arbitrary kind. Moghaden 2006, see terrorism as an outcome of a rising unmet expectations and increasing frustration among millions of young people who feel they have no voice, no hope and no possibilities for a brighter future. For him, terrorism is a form of rebellion risk taking behaviour.

Terrorists can be classified as;

1. Revolutionaries
2. Insurgents
3. National Armed Forces
4. Nationalist and Ethnic Groups
5. Other State Security agents (Imobighe and Eguaven 2006)

Terrorist Groups include:

1. Abu Nidal Organisation ~ (ANO)
2. Al-Qaeda-Sunni Islamic fundamentalists – operates in 65 countries
3. Hamas-Sunnis Islamists Palestine Nationalists Group, established in 1987
4. Harakat UI-Mujahidin (Hura) Pakistani Militant Group, 1985
5. Hizb-UI-Mujahedin Kashmin Militant Group.
6. Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) (Army of Mohammed) Islamic Terrorist Group based in Pakistan. Formed in 2000.
7. Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) Established in Khan 1977
8. Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) Currently the Kongra-Gel (KGK)
9. Kurdish Marxist-Leninist Group. 1982 in Turkey
10. Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LET) A Pakistani-Sunni Muslim Religions Organisation
11. Lebanese Hizballah Radical Shi'ite Organisation. 1982
12. The Pakistan Islamic Jihad (PIJ) 1970s
13. Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and al fatah
14. Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine (PFLA). A Marxist-Leninist Palestinian Nationalist group 1967, but later joined the PLO in 1968
15. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) in 1968, opposed to the PLO
16. Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) 1919
17. Revolutionary Organisation. 17 Nov. (N17) Greek Leftist Group 1975
18. Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Shi'ite Muslim Umbrella Organisation in Iraq. 1982 (Byman, D. 2005 pp. 330-339)
19. The Islamic State of Iraq and other states Isis's.

Many of the groups listed above are religious terrorists' groups ranging from totalitarian sects and cults to broader movements with religious ideologies. According to Johnson, 2009, Terrorism is not a clash of civilians in which the Islamic world confronts the Western world, but it is a clash between Moslems with a modern and progressive outlook, and those with a medieval belief. It is a clash within a civilization that has been on in Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan, Syria, Somalia etc.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frame to elucidate the extent of religious fundamentalism in terrorist is Constructivists theory. Constructivism generally maintains that ideas are the main elements in the building of international relations theories. Constructivists emphasize the impact of ideas, language, social discourse and culture as factors that determine how States and other Actors define their interests. According to the constructivist's ideas and norms, not only constrains, but actually construct how Actors define their interests, because peoples understanding of their interests, depends on the ideas they hold. To the Constructivists, power comes from the influence of ideas, and not just from military forces as stressed by the Realists theorists. For the constructivists, identities and images of the world from how people think of themselves, who they are and what others in the world think of them, can alter the world.

For the constructivists socially accepted ideas, norms and values held by powerful states and Non-State Actors are seen as making difference in constructing an international consensus about the rules that should govern the international society. Individuals popular ideas shape people's self-image, sense of identity and expectations about the purpose and roles in life. For the world at large, leading ideas condition prevailing beliefs in each age about the global condition and prospects for humanity. When a new consensus materialises about norms, the modified shared global culture prepares the way for a transformation in world politics. Constructivist theory reminds us that shared images influence the ways Actors in the International system see themselves and behave. The collective norms and cultures of people and State Actors define their perceptions and influence their relations in the world stage. Actors behaviours are shaped by beliefs, identities and social norms (Mingst pp.74-77).

It is the ideas that terrorists hold that spurs them to act. Religious beliefs, zeal and convictions, however distorted or manipulated is the foundation of most of the terrorists acts in the international society. Hamas, Hezbollah and other seemingly politically motivated groups have the foundation of their philosophical goals and tactics on the Moslem ideology. According to Smith 2008, in providing its adherence with a sense of conceptual order, religion often deals with the fundamental problem of disorder. Religion according to him, although often brings comfort and a sense of universal meaning to individuals and society, it also features a darker violent side. Religion as a well spring of hope, life and virtue, stirs deep passion that sometimes lead to violent action, to war and even terrorism. Anything that a religious believer perceives to be a challenge to his belief can constitute an existential threat and will be met with drastic or deadly responses.

Religious Fundamentalism and the International System

Religious conviction and zeal, however distorted or manipulated is the foundation of most of the terrorist acts in the international society today. Hamas, Hezbollah and other seemingly politically motivated groups have the foundation of their philosophical goals and tactics on the Moslem ideology Al-Qaeda under Bin Ladin though was inspired by the withdrawal of the U.S forces from the Middle East, was also inspired with the zeal to replace secular regimes in the Middle East with religious based governance. According to Smith 2008 religion is a belief structure that addresses the sense of disorder that many people perceive in their lives. In providing its adherence with a sense of conceptual order, religion often deals with the fundamental problem of disorder. In his thoughts, although religion often brings comfort and a sense of universal meaning to individuals and society, it also features a darker violent side.

Religion as a well spring of hope, life and virtue stirs deep passion that sometimes led to violent action war and even terrorism. Anything that a religious believer perceives to be a challenge to his belief can constitute an existential threat and will be met with drastic or deadly responses. This is the idea of Islamic jihad which is a defensive effort to protect the Islamic faith and tradition. Islam's jihad is essentially a doctrine religiously sanctioned by leading Moslem theologians that fought against perceived "aggressors, tyrants and way ward Muslims". This is the idea of a Salvation Army in Christianity, but not with the much doggedness of the Moslem faith because of differences in their ideological concepts and zeal.

The Dal Khalsa (Army of the Faithful) in Sikhism are used to characterise a disciplined religious organisation. The Christian ideological fight, brought about Millennial terrorism, though not in the fierce of Islamism. Millennialism is a cross-cultural concept grounded in Christianity. It is the belief expressed in the Bible. It is the belief in a coming ideal society, specially created by revolutionary action. According to Smith 2008, Millennialism can be described as the belief that human suffering will soon be eliminated in an imminent apocalyptic scenario that will ensure that the collective salvation of man is accomplished. Millennial movement is any movement that anticipates collective, earthly, imminent, total, supernatural salvation. Terrorists motivated by religious millennialist ideology may seek to bring about their course by violence or force. Millennialism is associated with Messianism.

Messianism is the belief in the coming of a Messiah that will save his people or group politically, Messianism is the belief that a cosmic figure will soon appear to re-establish order, and restore justice. Messianism stems from messianic beliefs characterised with the vision for a day in which history or life on earth will be transformed totally and irreversibly from a condition of perpetual strife to one of perfect harmony, (justice). This belief is the foundation of Islamic fundamentalism. The founding father of Islamic fundamentalism Sayyid Quth's beliefs and ideologies focused on the catastrophic nature of contemporary life that employed the weapon of terror. Millennialism combined with religion and the urge of nationalism may explain the religious violence in the Middle East from the assassination of Anwa Sadat in 1981, the Jewish debacle, the religious violence and even the killing of the Palestinians seen to be desecrating their sanctuary.

Cosmic struggle is a characteristic of religious fundamentalism. Aum Shinrikyo Japanese cult like religious organisation was responsible for the 1995 Tokyo subway attack. Aum saw their struggle in apocalyptic terms. Some anti-abortion activists in the U.S have also engaged in somewhat cosmic war. Aum successor organisation's religious orientation was grounded in Buddhism with strong mixture of Eastern and Western mystic beliefs including the works of the 16th century French astronomer Nostradamus. The Christian identity movements established in the U.S after W.W. II by a network of preachers and writers targeted the Jews who they saw as the “literal biological offspring of Satan, the descendants of Satan's sexual seduction of Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Religious extremists see violence as a sacramental act or a divine duty. According Peter Chalk, an Associate Editor of studies in conflict and terrorism”, religious terrorists' primary goal is to inflict as much pain and suffering on an enemy that is fundamentally evil and beyond all redemption. Religious terrorism seeks a systemic change in the system of governance. It questions the very foundation or rationale for the state. Al-Qaeda issued a Fatwa in 1998, a legal decree that urged Muslims to kill Americans anywhere and everywhere and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it. This was a declaration of war by a non-state actor against a state.

Al-Qaeda and the international Islamic Front were products of both historic and more contemporary trends that has shaped militant Islamic ideology. Two outstanding events that gingered Islamic radicalism were the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan. The Iran Scenario was the deposition of the “corrupt and tyrannical” Shah, supported by the U.S and the creation of an Islamic state, and the rise of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. According to Richard Clarke, 2004 the Iranian revolution and the Soviet Afghan invasion were events that dramatically increased the power and influence of militant ideologies. Both events rekindled the radical movement of Islam and also drew America further into the realm of Islam. The Afghan experience produced thousands of newly radicalised militants, the “Afghan Alumni”, the emerging international salafiti movement al-salafiyya al-jihadiyya from which the al-Qaeda organisation evolved. They are known for their strict fundamentalism.

Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya was a great Islamic thinker in the 13th century that laid the intellectual foundations for Islamic extremism. The Mongol's invasion of Iraq in the 13th century seen as a threat to Islamic civilization by Al-Qaeda and other likeminded extremists is same role to currently played by Western Civilization. In Islam, apostasy (abandon the true faith) is seen as a grave sin. Arab regimes and individuals in league with the U.S are considered apostasies by Al-Qaeda. The Afghan alumni are not identified with any particular state or movement, but rather expresses a radical religious-cultural trend that believes in the relentless struggle of Islam against heretic Muslim regimes and adverse cultures. Their channels of activity revolve around:

1. Incorporation of the activities of radical Islamic organisations in their native countries (Egypt, the Maghreb states, Jordan) etc and the leadership of these organisations.

2. Establishing new terror organisations such as Al-Qaeda under Bin Laden's leadership.
3. Establishing independent terror cells without a defined organisational links or affiliation while sustaining co-operation with other Islamic terror organisations.
4. Joining areas of conflict involving Muslim populations e.g. the Balkans, Chechnya, Kashmir, Tajikistan and others (Shay, 2007).

Al-Qaeda is an organisation without a clear graded structure. They operate in cells and groups spread all over the world, and sustains conceptual and organisational links with countries that support terror as well as Islamic organisations that hold similar world views like Sudan, Iran and also sympathetic radical Islamic regimes. The nomadic nature of Bin Laden's terror network including all its branches, enables it to sustain all the blows from the coalition forces but continue to operate. Even before the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan and with greater intensity since 1996, hundreds of young Muslims from all over the Muslim world as well as other countries worldwide including Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia, North America, Australia and Africa, have undergone training in guerrilla warfare and terror, and sent back to their own countries. This has created a pool of trained terrorists loyal to the concept of global jihad of Al-Qaeda. These terrorists were assembled in terror cells, with each cell composed of a small number of activists to perpetrate terror attacks against Islamic foes. The exposure of terror cells in Europe (Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Asia – the Philippines, Malaysia, India, Indonesia and Singapore). The Middle East has Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Lebanon, Israel etc. North America, the United States, Canada etc. Thus, before and after the 9/11 modus operandi, intentions and targets shows the inherent dangers that they pose. Since 9/11, Al-Qaeda has operated the following:

1. The bombing of the Synagogue at Djerba, Tunisia.
2. A Nightclub in Bali, Indonesia
3. The French Oil Tanker in Yemen
4. The Paradise Hotel, Mombassa, Kenya.
5. Targets in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Casablanca, Morocco
6. All the attacks at the government of Ahmed Kwarzai, Afghanistan (Shay 2007)

Islam's ideological concepts are centered on:

1. The obligation to fight and overthrow any leader who does not govern according to the Sharia of Allah.
2. Democracy and Islam are antithetical and thus can never exist.

Befriending believers and battling infidels are critical pillars of a Muslim faith and failure to uphold this fundamental pillar is an access for the enemy to penetrate. Islam is submission and Muslim is who has submitted (Ibrahim, R 2007). Islamist is a Muslim who regards Islam as a body of ideas, values, beliefs, and practices, encompassing all spheres of life including personal and social relations, economic and political. It is the means to be used in achieving these Islamic goals that is where, and the various Islamic group's part ways; creating the Moderate and Radical Islamists.

Organisational Structure of Militant Islamists Group

1. Cross-national Islamists movements that became increasingly nationalists and nationalised. Example, Hamas in the Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon, recently, we have the Islamic States groups of states like the Islamic State of Iraq, Syria, West African Province, etc.
2. Non-nationalists transnational Islamist movement active in a regional context. Example, Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia.
3. Islamicized ethno-separatist groups example in the North Caucasus.
4. Islamicized National liberation groups example, the Iraq insurgency since 2003.

The Sunni Islamist group; Hamas grew out of the Gaza branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. It emerged as an autonomous part of a cross-national Islamist network. The radical Shia group Hezbollah (party of God) emerged in response to Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 as a transnationally oriented movement inspired and sponsored by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's revolutionary Iran. Hamas initial focus on social and religious dimension has been supplemented by armed struggles and increasingly political activism. Hezbollah's original task of armed resistance was later reinforced by socio-religious and political aspirations.

Their respective structures are no doubt complex, thus reflecting their multifaceted nature that combines elements of social organisational forms, including religious, military, social and political. The process of the nationalization and politicisation of the Proliferation of Shia movements was promoted by Hassan Nasrullah after he became Hezbollah's Secretary-General in 1992. Since then, the movement has become an essentially part of the Lebanese political landscape. Resort to nationalism and a significant degree of nationalization play an essential or even decisive role in leading radical semi underground movement to a point where they start acting as political representatives of their ethno-confessional or social communities. Operating in weak fragile or embryonic states, these movements may fill the vacuum of state power and increasingly and effectively assume some quasi-state functions. Both Hamas and Hezbollah now pose as quasi-state actors. Al-Qaeda has a quasi-religious nature that merges radical political, social and cultural protest (Stepnova 2003).

The consequences of all these ideological operations make the fight against terrorism more complex. Al-Qaeda has come to symbolize the globalisation of terrorism in the twenty-first century. According to Martin 2006, Al-Qaeda is seen by many to represent a quint essential model of small groups of likeminded revolutionaries waging transnational insurgencies against strong adversaries. Al-Qaeda exist as a loose network of relatively independent cells that has evolved into an ideology and a fighting strategy that has been embraced by sympathetic revolutionaries throughout the world. Al-Qaeda for Martins 2006, has become a symbol of global resistance against its enemies, whose underlying commonalities appeal to motivated Islamist activists. The 9/11/2001 terrorists attack of Al-Qaeda on the U.S. homeland, marked a turning point in the new international terrorist environment in which terrorists are, and willing to use weapons of mass destruction to inflict unprecedented casualties and destructions on enemy targets using asymmetrical methods. Religious

terrorism occupies the last phases of terrorism from 1979 Al-Qaeda and other Islamic fundamentalists (Jihadists) launched a war against the U.S in the 1990s. By 1998, Bin-Ladin in a press conference openly called for attacks against American interests and issued a Fatwa to justify himself.

Conclusion

Advance in technology has enhanced communication that is propagating the spread of religious ideologies. As a unified system of beliefs and practices, religious convictions and zeal, however distorted or manipulated have been the foundation of most of terrorists in the international society. Religious extremists see violence as a sacramental act that drive them with the primary goal to inflict as much pain and suffering on all enemies of their faith. Religious extremists seek a systemic change in the system of governance. Sayyid Quth's beliefs and ideologies from the foundation of contemporary Islamic fundamentalism. Millennialism combined with religious nationalism may explain religions violence in Isreal threatening peace in the Middle East.

Al-Qaeda's Fatwa of 1998 that urged Muslims to kill America anywhere everywhere is also heightening tension in the Middle East and the world over. Al-Qaeda has masterfully exploited the internet to advance her agenda, because terrorism is well aided by communication. Terrorism capitalises on fear and fear must be transmitted through the communication infrastructure. Religion as a well spring of hope, life and virtue steer deep passions that sometimes lead to violent action, war and even terrorism. The complex nature of the international system with multiple Actors especially in the highly interconnected and interdependent world of today has facilitated terrorism with their various ideological inclinations. Al-Qaeda with her fast-spreading radical religious ideologies is obviously a top security challenge.

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