The Reality about Islam and Terrorism

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Abstract: This article explores reality of issues in terrorism, and the misconceptions, stereo-type and frame up of Islam. It traces the nature of Islam and Muslims, and the western negative stereotype of Islam in relation to terrorism, and uncovers the causes of terrorism in the world. This study used secondary and historical documentation sources of data collection, reviewed related literature and qualitatively analysed the data. Accordingly, it is not possible to end or optimally contain the terrorists and terrorism by merely making policies, framing up others, and or mere states cooperation. Rather, the root causes of terrorism must be objectively understood and curbed, and the foreign policy of the states, especially us and the west must be redesigned to minimise external intervention in other states and religious affairs. The world would continue to experience acts of terrorism despite all the measures put on ground unless the root causes of terrorism are uncovered and fully addressed. More individuals, especially the youth and across religious divide are likely to be engaged in terrorism, including suicide bombing because of the negative indoctrinations, and multi-dimensioned injustice to many individuals, states, and religions. The article concludes that Islam neither accepts nor harbours terrorism; associating Islam with terrorism is as a result misconception, deliberate frame up or negative stereo-type. The solutions to terrorism in the world lie in dispensation of justice to all, objective foreign policies making and implementation, non-interference in other states’ affairs, sound religious and inter-faith education, alleviation of poverty and unemployment, objective image projection and proper information dissemination.

Keywords: Islam and Muslims, Misconception, Misinterpretation, Stere-Type, Terrorism, Terrorists

1. Introduction

Islam, so far the fastest growing religion in the world (Fardila, Imamah&Dewi 2020), has ever since the time of Prophet hood of Muhammad (SAW) in Mecca one and a half millennium ago, been undergoing various trials, tragedy and dilemma – the persecutions and torture by the Meccan non-believers and forced migration to Abyssinia; the assassinations of the first three of the four righteous Caliphs (Khulafaurrasheddun); the leadership succession crisis of the Banu Umayyad and Abbasid Dynasties; and the fall and disintegration of the famous Ottoman Empire, among others. In all these and other scenarios, Islam and the Muslims have seen triumph, dilemma and tragedies which have influenced their progress and development. With the fall and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire on one hand, industrial revolution and evolution of industrial states and societies however, the significance and influence of Islam and Muslims suffered setbacks, especially in West where Muslims and Islam come to be framed, misperceived, misconceived, and negatively stereo-typed as wary and violent, blood shedding, abusive of fundamental rights and amputations of human organs (Hudud and or Quisas) by Sharia laws; the Palestinians and Israeli issue; pathological obsession between Israel and Arabs; the political economy of oil and security in the Gulf and Middle East, among others (Meierrieks&Gries, 2020). At a point, both Islam and the Muslims became prey for many competitors and opponents – the non-Muslims, the Western world and United States, misinformed elements, the opportunists, and the US and Israeli ‘special relationship and support’ among others (Meierrieks&Gries, 2020).

In sight of Allah (SWT), the essence of creating humankind and life in this world is solely for worshipping Him alone; and then to put the humankind to test (Al-Qur’an 67:V2). Thus the tragedy upon Muslims in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire; Muslims in Cambodia and Vietnam in the 1970s; the Bosnian Muslims in the 1990s; the genocide and continuous persecution against Rohingyan Muslims of Myanmar from 2017 to date; the wrecking mayhem and hidden atrocities against the Muslims in Northern Nigeria; the persecutions in concentration camps and systematic assimilation of Muslim minority Uighurs/Turkic in China; the civil wars in Yemen and Syria; Afghanistan; insurgency and or terrorism in Somalia, Algeria and Nigeria are all part of the trials to believers from Allah (SWT) to test their faith (iman).

In these multi-faceted scenarios, any succeeding attempts by the Muslims to assert their natural rights to religion, canvass for justice to themselves and others, make attempts to fulfill their religious duties and or obligations, or speak out against injustice meted out to them have generally been seen and framed as threats to others (individuals
and states) or considered as fundamentalism, extremism or terrorism. Suffice to say there are many among the Muslims themselves, who misconceive the religion (Islam) and do many things in ways which are neither ordained nor accommodated by Islam.

Things would certainly not be easy for the Muslims and Islamic world once it has to do with the cause of Allah (SWT); it shall not be endearing or easy to the Muslims – the Prophet (SAW) aptly describes the world as a ‘prison’ to the believers and the hereafter as their ‘Paradise’. More so, Allah (SWT) has promised to taste believers and their faith in this world through various means – calamities, afflictions, poverty and wealth, hunger, strength and weakness, but He would certainly protect His religion Himself. Surely, believers would also be tried by Allah (SWT) to test the strength of their belief (Qur’an 67:V2). Regarding true obedience by the Muslims, Allah (SWT) says ‘… Whatever benefit that comes to you O people, it is by Allah’s grace; and whatever loss you suffer, it is the result of your own doings …’ (Al-Qur’an, 4:79). This means whenever the Muslims deviate from the cause of Allah and follow their desires, they would be faced with sufferings in different forms (Al-Qur’an 66:8; 5:39; 42:25; 2:222).

Despite all these trials undergone by the Muslims, narratives, frame up, conspiracies, bullying, stereo-types, and provocations and incitements by some states and major media outfits, especially those controlled by the West and their allies continue to label and portray the victims (Islam and Muslims) as both the perpetrators and those to blame, in addition to soiling the name of the religion. These have come in multitudinous ways with reports, suspicions and proven cases (Holloway, 2008:1). Then comes terrorism over which politics, research, response to and management and many other things regarding Muslims and Islam have significantly escalated after the 11 September 2001 (9/11) attacks, and the nexus between religion (especially Islam) and terrorism has become an area of special study and controversy (Hanson, 2020; Okamoto & Marta, 2011). Islam and Muslims are wrongly seen to be united in the hatred of US and West, and ‘thirsty for revenge’ with violence (Keen 2011:368); with ‘stereotypical assumptions’ rather than ‘empirical facts’ linking the Islam to terrorism (Haner, et. al., 2000; Kavakli& Kuhn, 2020). There are also direct interpretation of the Holy Qur’an in areas of violence without recourse to the technical meaning and circumstances (Keene, 2011:360-361).This article reiterates the reality of issues in terrorism in relation to misconceptions, frame up, and stereo-type of Islam and Muslims. It is a qualitative with secondary sourced of data and historical documentation in the review of related literature and qualitative analysis of the data.

2. Statement of the Problem

The world is plunged into the ages ‘deception’, ‘frame up’ of information and ideas in relation to terrorism (El Baradai 2011; Feste 2011; Meierrieks&Gries 2020), and there are ‘mistaken’ and ‘stereotypical assumptions’ against Islam, rather than ‘empirical facts’ (Haner et. al. 2000; Al-Quaderi&Habibullah, 2012; Azmeh, 2016; Foley, 2010) among most persons, places and situations – public officials, traditional and the social media, politicians (Watson &Riffe 2013; Kubrin 2015), which results in increase and escalation of terrorism that is associated with Islam and Muslims, especially after the 9/11 attacks. Since then, there has been new wave of anti-terrorism with laws, surveillances, migration policies, control on religious activities (propagation, knowledge, teachings, funding) as well as a ‘mistaken perception’ of Islam and Muslims and prejudices which make Islam and Muslims targets and victims of both terrorism and anti-terrorism (Haner, Sloan, Cullen, Graham, Jonson, Kulig&Aydın, 2020; Zouhir, 2019). Muslims and their states, especially the Arabs and Africans are being singled, excluded, victimised and systematically targeted by the US and the West, with policies against Muslims and immigrants which conflate Islam and terrorism (Stephenson & Becker, 2016; Onwudiwe, 2005:6; Haner, et. al., 2020). Ahmad (2009) also observes ten basic misconceptions about Islam as: Islam means and is religion of peace; Islam denies human rights; women are low-graded compared to men; Islam is the religion suitable to the Arabs only; Jesus is rejected in Islam; Mohammed (SAW), a man is worshipped by the Muslims; Islam accepts bloodshed (terrorism, Holy Wars, cruel justice system); Islam does not tolerate and or honour other religions; Islam harbour racism; Islam produces and encourages indolent state and or society.

Within the academic circles, US and the West factors are more or less overlooked, the blame put on Islam, Muslims and their states. The US and the West could not ‘contain their anger’, especially after the 9/11 attacks and have delved into acts threatening and or undermining Islam and the Muslims (Munir, 2012: ix; Feste, 2011:15-16; Onwudiwe, 2005:4). There are dangers of ‘executive abuse of powers’ in US and West against Islam, Muslims and their states and lands – occupation, ‘partriot Act’ (Mayer 2003:4) as well as ‘demonizing’ with ‘racial profiling’ the Muslims involving ‘the use of race as a vital consideration in suspect profiling or other police procedures’
(Onwudiwe 2005:6), the recent ban on some Muslims and Islamic states travel to US. Stereotypically negative, substantial blame (funding, training, personnel, and arms) of terrorism is put on the Muslims and Islamic states, despite the world powers involvement in terrorist acts – US (Central Intelligence Agency, CIA), Russia (the Russian Federal Security Service), Mossad, MI6, the French General Directorate for External Security (DGSE) (Maniscalco& Christen, 2002:3).

3. Theoretical Framework

Several theories have been proposed and used in studying terrorism and each theory has its base, relevance, focus and target. However, there can hardly be any one best theory to study terrorism (Jongman, 2011; Schmid, 2011:1-2 & 11). Situations, approach, types and sources of literature and or data obtained largely determine the appropriate theory to use. This study is premised on ‘structuration’ theory which considers ‘structures and agents’ in relation to one another for the purpose of study and analysis (Cassell, 1990; Stones, 2005:4). As a theory, it conceives structures and agents through the use of ‘phenomenology, hermeneutics and practices’ and then builds on existent inter-relations and interdependencies (Giddens, 1979; Giddens, 1981). Individuals, organisations and states take actions with the intention of bringing and effecting change. Therefore, reactions such as terrorism are intended to cause changes and effects as a result of earlier acts and instances - injustices, denials, provocations, maltreatment, stereotyping, exclusions, which altogether result in volatility, hostility, and or ‘forceful responses’ (Bauman, 2003).

4. Conceptualisation and Review

The history of terrorism is traced to antiquity, but only came to be used as a political strategy in the 19th Century (Laqueur, 2001). It was originally associated with the religious and historical contexts and convictions of the ‘Zealots-Sicarii (Jewish group); the Assassins (Ismailis-Nizari); and the Thugs (in India)’ who relied on and used ‘primitive weapons – daggers, swords, noose’ to eliminate others (Hanson, 2020; Stern, 1999:15). Later, terrorists and terrorism were introduced, presented and used from about 200 years ago to first, to refer to the post French Revolution violence (Jenkins, 2003; Laqueur, 1987; Geifman, 1992). Terrorism is a term that has defied any single definition or meaning among all its stakeholders, including the terrorists themselves (Held, 2008:16). For the US Government Agencies, there are four different definitions and each is used in operations (Schmid, 2004). It is thus a ‘buzzword’ with no universal definitional acceptance and used in an unsteady global environment (Loan &Refhat-un-nisa, 2018; Lutz & Lutz, 2005; Schmid, 2004). Its definition is both ‘slippery and ever changing’ (Onwudiwe 2005:5), hence an ‘elusive’ terms (Tofangsaz 2015), accompanied by confusions (Wilkinson 2006:1), variably used for both good and bad purposes, and also labeled against opponent or enemy to win them, including in the aspect of public relations (Richardsion, 2006:4). Therefore, between 1936 and 1981, 109 varying definitions of terrorism were provided (Laqueur, 1987:143; Schmid&Jongman, 1988). The definitions focus on the ‘techniques, purposes, perpetrators’ of terrorists and the terrorism (Stern, 1999:11-13). Hence definitions depend on circumstances, attitudes, perception, interest, stereotype, and values. It is also seen and defined in the contexts of ‘environment, communication, politics, warfare, crime, and religion’ (Dekmejian, 2007:15-19). As such, there are no universally agreed features of and or what circumstance warrant terrorism, against whom it is carried out, the motivations, intentions, and who the targets and or victims are (Tofangsaz, 2015).

States, individuals and organizations view terrorism and terrorists relatively as the case of Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the sight of British (as a terrorist group) and for the Americans (as freedom fighters) (Mahathir in Makaruddin, 2003:30; Yungher, 2008:6-7). Academically, there are different frameworks for the study of terrorism - communication, warfare, politics, crime and crusade i.e. Jihad (Schmid, 2011:1-2).

Terrorism is defined as ‘an act or threat of violence against non-combatants with the objective of exacting revenge, intimidating, or otherwise influencing an audience ’ (Stern, 1999:11-13); any deliberate act meant to cause death or injury to persons not involved or connected with it in order to force or threaten government or those concerned to act or not to in a certain way (the United Nations, UN, (1999 [Article 2 (1) (b)])); the intentional use of violence by individuals, groups to achieve social and or political objectives using violence, threat, coercion and damage that is not limited to the immediate victims, but the larger society (Enders & Sandler, 2012:4); ‘deliberately and violently targeting civilians for political purposes’ (Richard, 2006:4); the deliberate and retaliatory actions by individuals intended to create and instill long lasting fear in others that is enough for the perpetrators to achieve their objectives (Van Fleet & Van Fleet, 2006:764); the usage of threat of violence or combat means, inhuman and cruel means to instill fear in others (victims and the general public) in order to achieve definite
There are for Saul (2006), controversies surrounding the motives behind terrorism, their justification and or legality in various circumstances - self-determination, national liberation attempts, rebellion and duress or necessity, on which there is also no agreement on whether terrorist-type of conduct or the use of violence are excusable, unlawful and unjustifiable, unlawful but justifiable or even lawful. Thus Neuman (2009:14) identifies what he calls ‘old terrorism’ characterised by hierarchy of command and structures, struggle around a geographical point; and ‘new terrorism’ characterised by personal relationships, with no standing and firm rules and has cross borders operations. Although they were terrorist attacks on both Muslims and non-Muslims alike by various states and organisations in the pre-9/11 era, US and the West particularly regard the 9/11 as the hallmark of terrorism and terrorist acts against them, hence, 9/11 has made terrorism an upper political agenda for the world (Keene, 2011:360).

5. Islam and the Muslims

Religion has been a significant player in humankinds’ affairs. Religion in the sight of Allah (SWT) (Islam) is what He has decreed through his Prophet (Muhammad SAW) as the only ‘true religion’ before Him (Al-Qur’an, 3:85; 3:19; 48:28). Islam means total submission to the wills of Allah (SWT), the Creator and Sustainer of everyone and everything. In it, there are six articles of belief (Shuruthullman) - belief in unity of Allah (SWT), all His Messengers, all his revealed Books, destiny (Quadr) whether good or bad, His Angels, and the last day (Yaumul-akhir). As a divine religion, it is built on five main pillars of: Taheeed – unity of Allah (SWT) and Muhammad (SAW) is his Messenger; Salat - observance of the five daily prayers; Saum – fasting during the month of Ramadan; Zakat – compulsory charity giving upon meeting the conditions; Hajj - pilgrimage to the Holy land (Makkah) for those who can afford. Every Muslim must make total belief in and submission to all the six articles of faith. From the religious rites to the daily relations (Mu’amalat) of individuals, communities and states, Islam is complete and has left anything to chance or unattended and unguarded (both spiritual and temporal) - Mu’amalat, Quisas, Hudud, Quiyas, among others. Hence, in Islam, there is no separation of religion from politics and or separation of state from religion. The two go hand in hand. Thus Gupta (2008:103-104) notes that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was not like the other preceding Prophets and or other religious leaders- He was the king (leader), commandant of his troops, lived a family life and came with an established ‘Penal Code’ (Sharia) - the Qur’an, Hadith which cover both spiritual and temporal life.

Islamic message has consistently been the same among all the divine Prophets who came along the same line, restated the belief and teachings, preached and practiced monotheism, ensured justice, and enjoined good and prohibited the bad among their respective peoples and nations (Lane &Redissi, 2004:57; Sohail, 2002:1). This is in line with essence of creating humankinds by Allah (SWT) and appointing them as Allah’s viceregent to carry out His will and commandments on earth (Al-Qur’an, 2:30). Therefore, for the spiritual and temporal life, nothing is left out of the Holy Qur’an. However, there is no compulsion on any and every one to join Islam (Al-Qur’an 2:256), but for Allah (SWT), He has chosen Islam for mankind as religion.

6. Islam, Misconceptions, Frame Up, Misinterpretation and Stereotyping

Islam is a complete (spiritual and temporal) religion - everything is under the provisions of Sharia. The essence of the Sharia itself is basically the preservation of faith, family, human intellect, sanctity, and property of the society. However, many, particularly, the non-Muslims and some others who misperceive, misconceive or stereo-type Islam and its essence, view it as a conservative, dogmatic and wary which does not conform to dynamism, but only emphasises bloodshed through Jihad (violent spread of Islamic gospel and killing all non-believers, Hudud, Quisas (amputation of hands, legs, stoning to death, whipping), so also the Muslims seen as wary elements following wary religion (Achebe, 2012:74). In the current global order, Islam remains the most popular, fastest growing (especially across the Europe), and also controversial religion (Caldwell, 2009; Bawer, 2006). These arise from several factors and instances, including the uniqueness of Islam in Sharia with no space for human manipulations; the misconceived true nature, character, mission and methods of Islam; the deliberate manipulation in order to denigrate Islam and advance anti-Islamic causes; the deliberate frame up of Islam and Muslims to soil both; the actions and reactions of some of Muslims mainly born out of misconception or ignorance of Islam, and socio-societal, political and
environmental pressures. Many factors account for the stereo-typing and misconception of Islam and Muslims, the key of which is the poor or wrong understanding and interpretation of Islam and the Muslims, especially by the Non-Muslims with Western orientation, as applied to the Middle East which has been identified and stereo-typed as the ‘most unstable and strategically alarming region’ of the third world (Halliday, 2003:11).

In such, Keene (2011:360, 366 & 368) maintains that organisations such as A-Quaeda have become synonymous with ‘Islamic terrorism’ and ‘new terrorism’, Muslims and Islamic affiliations with terrorism, attacks on some innocent Muslims and labeling some Muslim states as terrorists. Some younger Muslims also misperceive Jihad as struggle against the anti-Islamic West. Thus Munir (2012: ix) laments that although the 9/11 was carried out by some Muslims, the anger and outrage of the Americans resulted in negative statements and misperceptions against Islam and Muslims. There are many non-Muslims, states and writers such as Gigantes (2003:220) who erroneously cite the Holy Qur’anic verses on (death in the cause of Allah, Allah knowing and controlling everything, rewards in paradise for martyrs) and then stereo-typing the Muslims with terrorist related acts, especially in their view of the West and particularly the US as ‘the Great Satan’.

Furthermore, there exist opposing stands between Islam as a complete religion on one hand, and the other religions, states, organisations and individual actors opposed to Islam. As such, Halliday (2003:108) observes that Islam threatens or is being threatened by ‘the history of conflict between the West and Christianity’ on one hand, and Islam on the other which affirms the Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilisations. Similarly, the West accuses some Muslim states and individuals of tacitly approving and supporting terrorism (Pech & Bret, 2006:18). Many wrongly label Islam and or Arabs as ‘foreign religion’ and people with terrorism or as terrorists (Mayer 2003:58), just as Whittaker (2007:154) notes that Muslim states such as Syria alone has for over 30 years welcomed and or hosted 16 terrorist groups - Hamas, Hezbollah, the Palestinian Liberation Front, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Islamic Jihad, Al-Qaeda, among others; many and more non-Muslims are involved in terrorism of different and worst dimensions; Islam abhors terrorism; terrorism should not and must not be linked to any particular religion, region, race or creed (Mahathir in Makaruddin, 2003:8-9). Hence, Whittaker (2008:70) asserts that Islamic fundamentalism must not be confused or associated with terrorism, maintaining that each religion is characterised by a unique type of fundamentalism and fundamentalists such as the ‘Mormons, Quakers, and Hassidic Jews’, yet no one confuses them with act of terrorism. All the trends affirm the ‘Realism frame’ which views and treats life as a continuous battle in which choice policies are moderated by power for the attainment of self-interests, and therefore states, frame up power, politics, relations to suit their interests (Fester, 2011:35).

7. Why Terrorism?

The causes of terrorism are also a subject of controversy, confusion, varied interpretations and understanding based on circumstance, geo-political, religious and power interests, the terrorists among others. These lie in involvement of innocent people, fear of generating sympathy for the terrorists, and the factors seen to influence terrorism – poverty, religion, politics, etc., which do not adequately clarify it (Gupta, 2008:64). There is also the significant impact of ‘resource mobilisation theory of terrorism’ in which Corte (2007) emphasises that terrorism occurs largely because the terrorists are able to mobilize primary resources – political space, money, technology and weapons (Hanson 2020), and loss of lives and properties are the greatest evils of terrorism, but Pedahzur (2005:5) observes that death ‘is not the only fate of terrorism victims. It cast its long, dark shadow on the terrorists themselves...’

The causes differ in perspectives – legal, the terrorists themselves, religious, realist, liberal, racial, etc. Using the ‘structuration and memetics theories’, the major factors that instigate terrorism are arousal, anonymity, and diffused responsibility, which result in ‘lowered inhibitions’ and a ‘heightened possibility’, and leading to acts based on ‘impulsive’ and ‘anti-social manners’ (Pech & Bret, 2006:8-11). The legal perspective in particular remains also controversial for the varying opinions on the ‘motives and criminal culpability’ and the ‘existing criminal laws’ (Tofangsz, 2015). Therefore, Moghaddam (2006:7) laments that terrorists are portrayed by the Western media as ‘enemies of peace’ and their violent acts daily reported, but for the terrorists, there will be no peace unless justice (which may not be in the interest of the US and the West) is dispensed to all. This explains why although the acts of terrorism are generally considered immoral, crazy, and suicidal from the other perspective, but the terrorists view themselves as same and moral (Moghaddam, 2006:1).
Similarly, poverty, lack of freedom, geography, state failure also influence terrorism (Gupta 2008:65-70; Hanson 2000), but Richardson (2006:44-57) identifies the causes as: defenders and aggressors; leadership and followership; state (through sub-state agents and agencies); religion; globalisation; and poverty and inequality which increase the tendency for terrorism. From the macro level, Scheuer (2004:11-13) and Reeve (2000) identify other causes as: occupation and or dismembering of Muslim lands, attacking the Islamic faithful and their resources, challenging God’s words, as the view points of the US actions against the Muslims, the Arab and Islamic world. Thus, Laqueur (1986) asserts that terrorism is a normal response to prejudice, inequality, cruelty and persecution. So also Whittaker (2007:5) notes that there are those who earlier viewed the imminence of ‘a second cold war’ between the rich West against the Muslim Eastern states who live and suffer in poverty, autocracy and religious intolerance.

Characteristically, there are increased attacks against US and the West over the years as they become increasingly and unjustifiably involved in other states affairs (Zinn, 2002:9). For example, before and during the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, there were no evidences to prove that Iraq was funding, supporting terrorists in the world, especially that which the US claims to fight against (Friedman 2003:92), in addition to the subsequent lies fabricated by the Bush administration on Iraqi possession of weapons of mass destruction (Holloway 2008:6; Majid 2012:139; Riedel 2008:2; Mahajan 2003:118; Whittaker 2007:172) just as the US used the 9/11 attacks to justify its unrelated attacks and war in Iraq (Holloway, 2008:31). In addition, through the orchestrated Gulf-war, the US establishes a permanent military presence in the heart of Islam, Arab world and the Middle East (Mahajan, 2003:21). The subsequent roles played by the US and the Allied Forces in attacking Afghanistan in October 2001; the attacks on the leadership of Al-Qaeda and Taliban, and their ejection to Pakistan had fuelled further terrorist attacks on the US (Shahzad, 2011:1-3). The US also used the Guantanamo as a mechanism to respond to 9/11 attack against the US by detaining many without trial and or trial by Military Commissions (Roach, 2011:198, 292). This resulted in the unjust detention and torture of many and mostly Muslims with neither trial nor humane treatment. The US role in creating Christian dominated East Timor from Muslim Indonesia and backing Israel against Palestinians are sparkers of terrorism (Scheuer, 2004:13). The US has been a major target of terrorism because of its involvement in the global affairs, selective and realist choice of allies for its own interests (Feste, 2011:43).

It is noted by Enders and Sandler (2012:29-30) that liberal democracy promotes terrorism in its bid to foster freedom – speech, association, movement (within and across borders), restraints on search, seizure and arrests, and democracy itself (proportional representation and or majoritarian rule), and as such, framing up Islam with terrorism is used to ‘repress or weaken’ (Kavakli & Kuhn, 2020). Some other, but related have to do with the feelings and concern that the foreign policy of the US and West, especially in relation to and against historical injustices to Muslims and Islam have resulted in terrorism (Pech & Bret, 2006:18); the US propping up of corrupt Arab regimes; the presence of the US troops in many Muslim countries; anti-Islamic US and the Western values (human rights, gender equality, sexual freedom, individuality, materialism); the Israeli continuous and illegal occupation of Palestinian lands and territories (Mayer, 2003:5; Majid, 2012:xii). Furthermore, Muslims are not comfortable with the Western ideas, belief and attempts to transform their religion (Islam), and thus Harris (2004:152) asserts that if there were to be any sustainable peace and security to be achieved between Islam, US and the Western world, the relationship must be changed.

As causes of terrorism, Gupta (2008:103) also identifies blind followership to religions and clerics and further observes that blind interpretations of the Holy books and clerics results in blind obedience without reasoning, and also illogical obedience, thereby resulting in violence. Terrorism is, therefore, also motivated by religious, ethnic, and or regional motives (Katz & Marks, 2012:4). Another principal cause of terrorism in the world is the Palestinian issue with large number of Palestinians being killed with impunity, their lands seized, and no independent state (Mahathir in Makaruddin, 2003:35). While the world is watching all these and the perpetrators and promoters of such are known, it is certain that a cause for retaliation is nursed. In other parts, the way Muslims are ill-treated by some states and societies, such as the Dutch ill treatment to Muslims after the murder of Theo van Gogh in November 2004 accompanied by harsh state policies and hate speeches (Pech & Bret, 2006:9). Some summarily believe that the use of violence is an effective medium for delivery of messages of anger, instilling fear, compelling the target to act in a certain way and or a religious doctrines, but all dependent on the specific objectives (Pech & Bret, 2006:18). From the Islamic and Muslims’ perspective, there are the injustices meted to the Muslims and their lands in favour of others by the US and the UN in Chechnya, Croatia, East Timor, Palestine and Israel, Myanmar, Georgia, Kashmir; occupations of Muslim states of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and the Middle East generally (Scheuer, 2007).
8. Features of Terrorism

Terrorism has no universally agreed features (Tofangsaz 2015) as its various stakeholders identify its features variably (Stern, 1999; Enders & Sandler, 2012; Wilkinson, 2006; Keene, 2011; Fester, 2011; Fleet & Ella, 2006). For Stern (1999:11), there are two main distinguishing features of terrorism as: it is aimed at non-combatant, civilians and people; and involves the use of violence usually to implant fear and terror in the targeted population; while for Enders and Sandler (2012:4), terrorism has two basic features of presence or 'threat of violence' and political and social motive. In an elaborate characterisation in both empirical and conceptual contexts, Wilkinson (2006:1) notes that terrorism is characterized by premeditation and design to create a state of extreme fear; involves attacks at and on casual and or symbolic targets; it is meant to influence political behaviour of governments, etc.; it is societally abnormal and violates the conventional disputes, protests dissidences and their regulations; and it is intended against wide victims, including and apart from the immediate victims.

For Yungher (2008:6) and Harmon, Pratt and Gorka (2011:6), the features are that: terrorism has some political goals that it wants to achieve – change in regime, people in power, social and or economic policies, etc.; it is an act of terrorism; carried out against innocent people who fall as victims; and intended and directed to frighten the larger people. Highlighting the features, Richardson (2006:4-6) maintains that: it is also politically inspired; involves threats of and actual violence; its aim is not to defeat the enemy, but send a message; it is an act of sub-state groups, i.e. states do not directly engage in acts of terrorism; difference between victims of terrorism and the audience intended to be reached; and deliberate targeting of the civilians.

9. Who Are Terrorists?

While all terrorism is violence and violence is political (Hanson, 2000; Held, 2008:16), Loan and Refhat-un-nisa (2018) assert that ‘no one is born as terrorist, terrorists are created’. Accordingly, religion, race, or country cannot be used to identify and label terrorists, but by their acts (Mahathir in Makaruddin, 2003:39). All the same, potential terrorists are bred and sustained on three main stands of Susceptibility – vulnerability and acceptance of such acts; Resonance - blend of character of terrorists and terrorism; and Fidelity - loyalty and commitment to cause (Pech & Bret, 2006:16). Likewise terrorism can be state-sponsored - organised and or undertaken by both states, individuals and other groups depending on the interest (Martins 2006), but the involvement and or participation of states in terrorism has made it more complex to both study and handle (Hanson, 2020). Therefore, Fleet and Ella (2006:766-767) identify categories of terrorists as: ‘political terrorists and religious fanatics; average citizen turned terrorist; criminals acting as terrorists; insane terrorists; and internal psycho-terrorists’. Terrorism is not limited to individuals and organisations, states are also directly and indirectly involved (Katz & Marks, 2012:9) while the rhetoric of martyrdom in terrorism (wrongly associated with Islam) is also applied to other states and organizational terrorist acts (Whittaker, 2007:131-132).

Similarly, and as Mahathir (2003:13) observes, in most of the instances, Muslims labelled as terrorists are actually not as there are those who carry out acts of terrorism such as the - ‘ethnic Europeans, intolerant Christians, Jews, Buddhists’, but those are not linked to their respective religions, except the Muslims just as the Christians and Jews terrorists’ acts against the Muslims are not being mentioned. In a study, Joseph R. Carlson, (1995:75-81 & 83) traces the US profile of potential domestic and foreign terrorists groups, especially within the US and identifies them as the ‘Anti-abortionists, White Supremacists, Middle East Terrorists, Black Militants, Latin American Terrorists, European Terrorists, Puerto Rican Separatists, South American Terrorist Groups, Anti-Castro Cubans, Jewish Extremists, and the environmentalists, and animal rights activists’. However, it is mostly the names of Hizbullah, Hamaz, Muslim Brotherhood and other Muslims, Middle-Eastern, Islam related groups and organisations that are prominently associated with fanatism, fundamentalism, terrorism, and thirsty for revenge against the West and US (Whittaker, 2007:120; Keen, 2011:368).

10. Methods and Targets of Terrorism

Terrorism and terror attacks are now parts of global politics (Holloway, 2008), thus terrorism involves ‘politically motivated violence, perpetrated by individuals, groups, or state-sponsored agents, intended to bring about the feelings of terror and helplessness in a civilian population in order to influence decision making and to change behaviour’ (Moghaddam, 2006:9), and to achieve their targets, terrorist engage in various and nefarious acts – theft, extortion, robbery, gun running smuggling, human trafficking (Bovenkirk & Chakra, 2004). There are numerous
methods used by terrorist around the world – ‘Arson, bombs and threats of them, car bombs, chemical substances, hijacking, kidnapping and hostage taking, grenades, guns (small and automatic), knives and machetes, letter bombs, mortar and rocket launchers, stoning, suicide, vandalism’ (Whittaker, 2007:144-145). While the main targets of terrorism and the terrorists include: ‘Aircraft, airports, banks, business, buses, diplomats, embassies, government personnel and offices, hotels, markets, military personnel and installations, religious figures and buildings, railways, roadways, shopping facilities, subways’ (2007:144-145).

Individuals, including suicide bombers are lured and made to prepare themselves to die for certain causes in addition to killing others (Pech & Bret, 2006:8). Terrorists therefore, carry out their acts in different ways and for varying reasons, but they all have a general feeling of impel to carry out the act (Whittaker, 2007:5-6). In addition, just like defining and why terrorism, it is also both difficult and controversial to have an agreed stand on how terrorists and terrorism are funded across the globe. From the US and the Western perspective, all the operations (funding, training, personnel, and arms) and then the blame come from and is put on the Middle East and linked to the Muslims, Muslims and their states, and not minding the atrocities of other non-Muslim states such as US, the West and their state and non-state agents (Maniscalco & Christen, 2002:3).

11. Types of Terrorism

Schmid (2011:6) identifies ten different types of terrorism as: ‘religious and millenarian; ethno-nationalists, separatists and irredentists; racists and right wing; revolutionary left wing and anarchists; vigilante and paramilitary death squads; state sponsored; criminal organisations employing terrorism tactics; single issue; psychologically disturbed and copycat; lone wolf and leaderless resistance’. However, through the realist approach of world order, misconceptions, stereotypes, frame up of ideas and information, and other anti-Islamic undertones, defining and classifying the terrorists and terrorism have been given a negative interpretation and linked to the Muslims, Middle-East and Islamic states. For example, from the 1950s to the year 2000 and beyond, about 7 states have been marked to be active sponsors of terrorism in the world – Libya, Iran, Lebanon, Iran, Syria, Sudan and North Korea. Of these, only North Korea is not a Muslim dominated or Islamic state (Whittaker, 2007:152; Hanson, 2000). The US, Russia, Israel, etc., are conspicuously ignored, overlooked or excluded from the current fight against terrorism despite the sponsorships, arms provisions, funding, and covert and overt terror activities they carry out in various parts of the globe (Whittaker, 2007:5-6; Harmon et al., 2011:7). States are engaged in and sponsor terrorism using various forms against other states and individuals, and especially against internal and external oppositions with both domestic and foreign targets (Dekmejian, 2007:14). There are also identified future terrorist threats as - nuclear terrorism, eco terrorism, cyber terrorism as some of the future terror threats and tendencies before the world (Whittaker, 2007:173-176), hence, the global community is compelled to developing new strategies to forestall such (Katz & Marks, 2012:129).

12. Islam and the War against Terrorism

From the onset, Islam as a complete religious does not in anyway, approve, accommodate and or encourage terrorism in its entirety. Various verses of the Holy Qur’an have made it clear that any act of destruction to humankind, whether on lives and or property is Haram. Where a life has to be taken, strict conditions are provided by Sharia which among others involve Hudud, Quisas. Even that case, it is not an individual that decides when, how and or whose lives are to be taken, but an authority established and guided by the Sharia. Therefore, the Holy Qur’an makes clear provisions and gives warnings on unjust taking of human lives without recourse to the Sharia, whether by terrorism, hatred, enmity or any otherform. Enmity and hatred must not be used to do injustice to others and killing one unjustly is like killing all humankind (Al-Qur’an, 5:8 & 32); killing of anyone in whatever form is forbidden, except for just and legal cause and by an authority and no one human shall bear the load of another Alqur’an (6:151; 35:22). In all, Allah does not like transgressors.

The global trend on terrorism indicates that terrorist attacks in the 1970s targeted the Western Europe more; then Latin America in the 1980s; and as well, Middle-East and the Persian Gulf in the decade of 2000. All through, the terrorist attacks reached their peak in the early 1990s and through, and declined before 9/11 attacks. It however, escalated following the 9/11 attacks on the US (LaFree & Dugan, 2009). The war against terrorism has itself, been controversial and complicated to the various American regimes, thus changing code names as ‘War on Terror, Overseas Contingency Operation, Countering Violent Extremism’ (Katz, 2012:15-15). This war is however, not going to end in near future for it has numerous directions to evolve and may probably result in ‘implausible best case,
implausible worst case, plausible good case, and plausible bad case’ (Katz, 2012:5). This is because unlike the conventional wars, the war against terrorism is neither straightforward nor easy to conduct for it involves groupings of states vs non-state actors, and also involves some states and their sponsors as targets whether direct or through proxies, i.e., the non-state forces (Wittig, 2003:3).

13. Islam and the Objectives and Dimensions of Terrorism

Terrorism has political and emotional charges and therefore, has to do with and is related to power (Kraft & Marks 2012:3-4), and hence, terrorist’s objectives are political (Neuman, 2009:15). Similarly, through terrorism, the terrorists achieve some attractive and material advantages, try to weaken their enemy through slow destruction; gain much and wider publicity and attention; inflict hatred and reprisal on their enemy; secure release of culprits, fellows, followers, etc.; secure advantages, including cash for ransoms, hostage taking, compensation, settlement, meeting up with their demands, etc.; and it is a low-cost, low risk and high yield method of struggle (Wilkinson, 2006:7). The various objectives of terrorism, therefore, range from ‘revenge, expressing violent opposition and striking the ‘other’, and others as ‘overthrowing a government or getting colleagues released from prison’ (Katz & Marks, 2012:4). Likewise, the major dimensions of terrorism are identified with ‘the degree of harm associated with the fear and stress that the terrorist intentionally creates; the victim(s) who will be sacrificed to help achieve the terrorist's goals; and the nature of the terrorist's goals’ (Fleet & Ella, 2006:765).

14. Conclusion and Implications

Islam and Muslims are deliberately and erroneously being framed up, stereotyped, misperceived and or made the major victims of terrorism and also blamed in a game of ‘blame the victim’. Although some Muslims are involved in terrorism, Islam clearly abhors it. By definition and dimensions of terrorism, the Muslims and Islam have analytically been the major victims through various varying ways – discriminations, stereo-typing, accusations and detentions without trial (Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib), special and an in-depth questioning/interrogations, enacting the ‘Patriot Act’, systematic exclusion and targeting, anti-Muslims and Muslim states migration policies, increased use and abuse of executive powers in the name of anti-terrorism laws, dismembering Muslim from their lands, and attacking the Muslims and their resources. Terrorism has become a tool and is used in disguise by the major powers to control the political-economy of some other countries, especially the Middle East, Maghreb and North Africa, and the Sahel, and also limit the extent to which religions, especially Islam can preach and be practiced. Terrorism is wrongly equated and or associated with Islam, while other religions and or terrorists and their acts are not negatively labelled in the same way as Islam and the Muslims

Impliedly, terrorism has escalated in the post 9/11 years due to many factors - states’ inability to provide the needful and regulate their citizens, the nature of responses of US and the West have further intensified terrorism due to dominant and hegemonic tendencies, discriminatory domestic and foreign anti-terrorism policies, among others. The hope that terrorism could be checked by both individuals and states is dashed largely due to the frame up, misconception of Islam and terrorism, and the unfavourable anti-terrorism policies against Islam and the Muslims. The world may continue to encounter more terrorist acts, especially from those who perceive, undergo, and or are victims of injustices resulting from among others, the anti-terrorism laws, policies and reactions, ignorance of religious provisions, state and non-state sponsored terrorism. More terrorists groups and or their apologist may spring up in reaction to several identified factors. The youth who are volatile, vulnerable to new ideas can be easily recruited are more likely to be involved in terrorism.

15. Recommendations

This article recommends that leadership with justice should paramount; there should be proper conception of terrorism, and its general and the peculiar causes; the media should be focused and objective; states authorities should ensure effectiveness maintenance of law and order so as to secure a stable society and also guarantee rights of the citizens, rise up to defend their sovereignties, resist foreign interventions, military bases and other disguised forms of foreign control; sound religious and interfaith education and dialogue among peoples and citizens; states should invest in, explore and harness the potentialities in their youth population; enforcement of laws prohibiting negative stereotyping against all religions and their followers; Muslims should hold onto the original provisions of Islam; the fight against terrorism should focus more on institutional prevention, rather than defensive policies and mechanisms.
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