



Terrorism As An Evolving Strategic Tool For Political Ascension And Imposition: Libya In Focus

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ABSTRACT

The problems associated with terrorism as an unlawful use of instruments of violence and intimidation is not new. What seems to be new is its advancement and global connectedness with nation states as well as easy access to weapons of mass destruction. Over the years, terrorism has been a subject of serious concern due to its rising trajectory and influence in world politics, its threat to the economies of nations and awful extension both to the religious and educational institutions across the world. It is in the light of this, that this paper potentials of terrorism as instrument of political ascension and imposition. It focused on the political climate of Libya under Muammar Gaddafi in juxtaposition with American hegemony and economic interest in Libya under Ronald Reagan's historic regime. An attempt, by extension was also made towards a conceptual clarification of the concepts of State terrorism on the one hand and State Sponsored terrorism on the other hand, with variegated emphasis.

Keywords: Terrorism, State Sponsored Terrorism, Political Ascension, Libya.

INTRODUCTION

The last three decades has witnessed monumental threats of the use of terror force be it chemical, biological and even radiological weapons all aimed at a nation or group that are assuming superiority over other nations or groups. Improvement in information and communication technology has further deepened this uneasy quest by groups and nations to dominate the political landscape of nation states. Mohamad (2003 cited in Pogoson, 2011) submitted that fighting global terrorism is not like fighting a conventional war against a country. You can defeat a country and get it to surrender, sign a treaty and bring the war to an end, but global terrorists belong to no country. Even if their leaders surrender, there is no guarantee that other leaders will not continue their terror attacks. The issue of terrorism becomes more challenging also in the sight of heterogeneous environment surrounding each of the modern states seeking peace, stability and security. Indeed, the threats to any nation's security are diverse both from internal as well as from external sources. So much as the world celebrate globalization of technology and innovations, so in a similar vein we are experiencing globalization of terrorism which tends to be more pervasive and diversified, fruitfully and quasi-successful in creating links within, between and across borders. This has over the years attracted significant improvement in areas of illegal shipment, manufacturing and accessibility to armaments and unhealthy competition in the manufacture of arms by nation states.

It is therefore germane to adequately appreciate the devastating capability of these weapons, emerging terror groups and the security threats in order to take up the onerous responsibility of proactively responding to this unavoidable threat facing humanity and their network of relationships. It is against this backdrop that this paper intends to deal directly with the terror situation of Libya during the political reign of Muammar Gaddafi with great emphasis on the "Vaulting" influence of the United States of America in

its desire to bring Gaddafi's reign to its knees. This in turn necessitated the establishment of United States sponsored terror groups in Libya which acted as willing tools in the political ploy to hijack Libya's economy as well as their political institutions.

Conceptual Clarification

The issue of terrorism which has recently witnessed an upsurge has been a major source of concern to the international community. Terrorism takes different forms. There are individual acts of terrorism such as those carried out by the assassins. There are also instances of organizational terrorism such as those of the anarchists. Today, however the basic controversy is about "State sponsored" terrorism which is believed to pose more difficulty to tackle than the individual or organizational terrorism (Miller, 2001, Usongurua & Udombana, 2003).

Terrorism has long exercised a great fascination especially at a safe distance. It is not an easy topic for discussion and explanation. Terrorism is not a modern concept or invention like computer and space-craft and it has no bright side, it is as old as man. What is new about terrorism is the modus operandi, dimension and attention that it is now receiving from people. It is difficult to define terrorism. No single definition can possibly depict all varieties of terrorism that have appeared throughout history. Terrorism is a conflict method that bestow upon its practitioners the key advantages of surprise, concealment (they neither wear uniform nor carry arms openly, and like other criminals, they hide within society) and full protection of law. Terrorism with its associated violence offers the small and less-powerful nations an option for influencing the policies and behaviour of larger and powerful nations, (Wrights 1984, Shettima, 2004).

Laquer (1977) saw terrorism as the use of covert violence by a group for political ends. It is usually directed against a government or group though less frequent on another group. Writing much earlier, Wilkinson (1974, cited in Miller, 2001) maintained that terrorism came into general use to denote those revolutionaries who sought to use terror systematically either to further views or to govern. Sometimes, it is used to topple an existing government which they view as corrupt and unpopular, (Shettima, 2004). According to Efemini (2017), to cushion terrorism, ethnic violence and other uprising in the polity, it is pertinent to fix first the political system, the political class ideology and the constitutional provisions on politics, vis-a-vis electoral system and reforms. Dissecting further, the implication of this submission is that there tends to be an underlying nexus between the growing level of world terrorism and the political institutions of countries experiencing terrorism.

Drawing from the foregoing, it can be deduced that in all of the definitions that there are certain common factors. Most prominent is the recognition that terrorism involves violence in order to fully become terror and it must have definite political objectives to make people afraid. In other words, terrorism promotes a culture of fear which then becomes an instrument of power for the terrorist. Through such violence, the terrorist acquires some measure of (political) power. Finally, violence becomes terrorism when it is aimed at control. Terrorism hence could be seen as violence for political control through fear. The terrorist employs violence or threat of it and such threat must produce emotional reaction of fear. The terrorist then makes use of such fear to acquire control. By the foregoing, we are led to two concepts that are germane to the terror analysis and these are "State terrorism and State sponsored terrorism"

State Terrorism

State terrorism endures where those who dominate the power structure use terror to secure control over their own citizens, political opponents as well as against conquered people. It is a process through which those who control a state employ the machinery of force to support their administration. After securing political power through possibly rigging of election by the strategic application of force, a state can decide to hold onto power by the subtle application of force to secure, protect and preserve their political positions, (Zion, 2010, 2017).

The application of force is to ensure that the forces of opposition cannot topple the established government. This act of force is repeatedly applied during every turn of election to ensure guaranteed political permanence (Zion, 2017).

State Sponsored Terrorism

State-sponsored terrorism unlike state terrorism which is inwardly directed is outwardly or externally directed. The department of defence, U.S army, posited that terrorist warfare sponsored by sovereign states or organized by political entities to achieve political objectives is a threat to the United States and is increasing at an alarming rate (Wright, 1984:18). For example, Libya, in particular was the focus of the United States of America in this regard and it is because of this that the U.S carried out a damaging raid on Libya. An action that has no parallel in the contemporary history of developed nations. America has an interest here and that interest is to usurp the existing leadership of Libya which does not favour its (American) hegemony, thereby establishing a political leadership that will be more favourable and instrumental to the accelerated achievements of the policies of the United States of America, (The African Guardian, Vol 1, 1986).

Economically, former leader of Lybia, Muammar Gaddafi's commitment to the unification of Arab nations was portrayed by the U.S and other western allies as a threat or jeopardy towards their long standing policy of the polarization of the Arab world (Walter, 1977). Religiously, Gaddafi's policy of making Islam the world religion has in fact brought him into confrontation with America which of course is a Christian-dominated country. Politically, his policies and leadership style were totally at variance with the political obsessions and inclination of the U.S government which at all times tried to control the entire world both in trade, environment, policy superiority and the leading voice in warfare and armament, (Shettima, 2004, Zion, 2017).

The United States wanted total loyalty from Libya and Gaddafi's compliance to their hegemonic tendencies. Gaddafi saw these impositions as practically impossible and opposed to his political style. Nevertheless, the U.S was able to poison the minds of a handful of members of Gaddafi's cabinet which made his government partially unpopular (Enyinnaya, 2014). In summary, however, irrespective of this in-fighting among his key cabinet, Gaddafi retained a firm grip on the loyalty of the bulk of the citizenry.

Evaluation of USA's Intervention: A Contravention of Libya's Sovereignty

The action of the U.S.A in itself cannot be anything short of terrorism in that it did not spring from any military necessity the only object being to terrorize Gaddafi and the entire citizenry of Libya. This of course amounts to the direct violation of act 51 and 56 of the protocol additional to the 1949 Geneva conventions. Put differently, one may argue that the action of the U.S in this wise amounts to terrorism because it was using power differential between itself and Libya to impose political control through fear in the full knowledge that, given the might of the U.S in world politics, nothing could be done legally to bring Ronald Reagan's administration to book. Just as J.F Kennedy said, "those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable", (Zion, 2017).

Thus, under Ronald Reagan, Libya and indeed the Libya leadership knew no peace because Gaddafi's style of leadership did not take into focus the interest of U.S government. Sometimes, terror can be exported from one country to another. Such exported terrorism is capable of liquidating and destroying property and assets of value in the host country all aimed at creating political impression. In the case of America versus Libya, the U.S secretly recruited and trained terrorists in Libya. They were trained to create tension to the government of Libya under Gaddafi and were well funded. Osama Bin Laden's terrorist movement in Afghanistan was secretly funded by American government with seasoned training but at the end turned his terror war on the American people and clime (Walter 1977, Wright 1984).

CONCLUSION

The issue of state terrorism and state sponsored terrorism has a longstanding history with both socio-economic and political colorations. Terrorism indeed has evidently demonstrated in this paper is a tool for

political ascension and imposition. In Nigeria for instance, the issue of militancy thrived and economically flourished because every successive governor, at one time or the other, used existing terror groups or created their own to further their political pursuit, (Gani, 2015). Through this terror tactics of kidnap, indiscriminate killing of members of opposition parties and political rivals, people are made to forcibly cast their votes to terror politicians or and withdraw from political races as opposed to their intentions. Even militant groups who posed much threat to government and oil companies are silenced by counter-attacks by other militant groups who could be operating on a parallel mission through financial inducements, (Hazen and Homer, 2007).

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