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Tendaishe Tlou
Zimbabwe

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Tendaishe Tlou
Researcher and Writer,
Kwekwe, Zimbabwe.

ABSTRACT

The scourge of terrorism has become an international crisis after the 9/11 attacks in America. Terrorism has deeply encroached its claws in Africa on the premise of socio-economic challenges along the clash of civilizations. In countries such as Nigeria, Somalia, Central African Republic, Kenya and the Maghreb region, terrorism is a threat to peace and security, compounded by spiraling youth unemployment rates, the youth bulge, porous borders, poverty, arms proliferation, weak governments, economic problems among other challenges. It is yet to be seen how Africans will unite to deal with this threat to security on the continent given the above mentioned problems. At the same time, one will assess the ramifications, advantages, and pitfalls of the youth bulge and foreign intervention to curb the spread of terrorism towards obtaining sustainable peace and security on the continent.

INTRODUCTION

In this youth-dominated epoch, terrorism in Africa has become a vantage point to express disgruntlement and is a topical issue to the extent that scholars are attributing this phenomenon to a plethora of factors; yet terrorism is as old as mankind itself. Many conflict theories have been suggested to explain this crisis which has become an existential threat to humanity. However, the most earth-breaking theory which has tried to explain the salience of terrorism is the renowned 20th-century 'Clash of Civilizations' by Samuel Huntington. This theory seems more prescient and accurate showing how discord between civilizations is becoming the greatest threat to world security, stability and peace in light of the recent terrorist activities in Kenya, Nigeria, South Sudan, Mali and the Central African Republic and the possibility of emulation of such events in Malawi and Tanzania in the near future against which this theory is going to be tested. The author will also endeavour to prescribe solutions for this scourge.

Keywords: Clash of Civilizations, Youth, Terrorism, Religion, Violence, and Conflict

The 'Clash of Civilizations' is a theory that was formulated by Samuel Huntington (1993) ensuing the end of The Cold War and the triumph of Liberalism over Socialism. Neo-liberal scholars such as Francis Fukuyama traversed it as a moment marking the ultimate end of conflict in the world because liberal democracy had prevailed over dictatorship and tyranny in the world. Just about the same time, Huntington differed and proposed yet another theory that conflict was going to be complex and dynamic because it was going to be rooted in culture and not the conventional sources such as ideological fraternities. The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of yet another conflict. The thrust of Huntington's (1993) argument was that *'the great divisions among mankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. The principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The fault lines*

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between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future along ethnical, gender, racial and most importantly, religious differences. "

This quotation asserts that the aspect of 'civilizations rallying' is the central element in mobilisation for a common cause, being the impetus for conflict including terrorism as it will be shown in this paper. However, I argue that terrorism is perpetuated by socio-economic challenges faced by youths along cultural differences. The means justifies the ends.

There is not one unanimously agreed definition of terrorism. However, for the purposes of this study, Schmidt and Jongman (2005) are of the view that terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated or simultaneous violent actions employed by semi-clandestine individuals, groups or state actors mainly for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons whereby the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. This implies that the violent tactics employed by terrorists are meant to convey a message to the government which will be accused of different laws at different times. In the same vein, Crenshaw (1995) maintains that terrorism is *a conspirational type of violence calculated to alter the attitudes and behaviour of a particular multitude or audience, a government or a community, conveyed through the media so that the intended message is appropriately put across."* (Ignatius, 1992).

According to Lederach (1995) conflict is an intrinsic and inevitable disagreement between two or more parties that is perpetuated by incompatible interests or goals, dissatisfied human needs (poor service delivery), unequal and suppressive political-social structures (structural violence) than can be resolved or can lead to (direct) violence.

Perhaps the importance of the Clash of Civilizations is that its thrust is religion and ethnicity which are arguably at the epicentre of most terrorist movements and violence in Africa and abroad. It is interesting to note that religious clashes are the most obvious examples of the 'clash' traversed by Huntington (1993) and it is presenting the world with great challenges not in the fashion of those incurred in the past due to an ever increasing youth cohort. Coincidentally, terrorism illustrates or provides evidence of competition and conflict between contradicting social, economic, political and cultural ideals (Kristoff, 1997) to the extent of inciting senseless bloodshed and killings.

Thousands of people are dying on a daily basis and ironically, youths are at the forefront in the spread of terrorism traditionally in the Middle East and now Africa. This also shows how the state is losing its relevance in maintaining national security. In the face of globalization, identity politics is prevalent particularly between young Muslims and non-Muslims, especially Christians each becoming the other's "other". Although these elements have been the cause of conflict between humans throughout history, the radicalization of religious beliefs accompanied by an ever increasing youth bulge have since intensified the suspicion, hatred and animosity between Muslims and the rest, hence the term "Islamophobia".

The dynamism and intensification of youth Islamic fundamentalism are the drivers of many relative terrorist attacks, yet the causes are yet to be thoroughly explored. Youths as far as South Africa are fleeing their homes trying to go to Syria to join the Islamic State (ISIS). Terrorists tend also to be vicious and ruthless since fundamental issues of identity are at stake, however, this fanatism is salient among the youth. Although traditionally, relations between Christians and Muslims have been stormy, the current confrontation between them suggests that the 'clash' has apparently reached its peak on the basis of a rapidly growing, energetic, over-ambitious but

unemployed youthful populace. Esposito (1992) is of the view that their (Christianity and Islam) historical dynamics often ind the two communities in competition and locked in a deadly combat for power, land and souls. For example, the Al-Shabaab (which in literal translation means the youth) and Boko Haram want to establish theocracies based on fundamental Sharia law which they perceive to be able to address their socio-economic needs and which they perceive their governments to be failing to resolve, in Kenya, Somalia and Northern Nigeria respectively, bringing to the fore why they are committing atrocities in all the three countries.

I explore the theme that the 'needs' behind these terrorist movements can no longer be disregarded because they are far beyond the red line given the deplorable crimes against humanity they are committing. Hence, in the definitions of terrorism, the act is labelled as idiosyncratic, conspirational or a crime to convey a particular message to change the attitudes or behaviours of the one intended, in pursuit of (unrealistic) social, political and financial goals with the objective of instilling anarchy, fear and panic through violence in a bid to be noticed. Hence, the axiom 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.' In my view, the string of terrorist rampages in Africa since 2010 has sparked pervasive condemnation amongst African populations with unequaled solutions to effectively deal with this scourge. The recurring attacks also show that over the years, Boko Haram has gained confidence, expanded to Chad and Cameroon and is adamant to continue making demands to these countries' governments.

Recurring abductions and violence have put terrorism in a position of strength. In my opinion, this renewed confidence has given more youths an attacking impetus that their ideals can no longer be confined to, for example Northern Nigeria alone, but to the rest of the country and in due course these terrorist attacks might spread to the rest of the region. The more they are not listened to, the more they spread. This possibility must not be undermined because unemployed youths are increasingly becoming disgruntled, expanding in numbers and governments are failing to contain them, let alone curb their violent activities. My view is that if more youths are empowered, the lesser they will see the need to join terrorist movements.

The terrorist scourge resonates that youth poverty is the cause in light of the exponential progress made by smaller terrorist groups in forging ties with the rich Al-Qaeda and ISIS which guarantee youths with both strategic and financial resources. The fight between the West and terrorists is compounded by the fact that the former does not want to relinquish its so-called 'war on terror' whilst the latter's growth is generated by large numbers of both educated but unemployed and disaffected youths who become recruits to fundamental Islamist causes. In my view, this statement implies that the West is actually playing into the hands of Al-Qaeda and ISIS which agitates the formation of an Islamic caliphate throughout the world so that the West, in its delusional objective to end terrorism by intervention, is actually deploying troops and conveying massive financial resources to different parts of the world until it bleeds to bankruptcy, is weakened and forced to withdraw from all regions, especially America, a country which Islamic youths blame for their problems. For example, deploying troops in Nigeria, Kenya, and the Maghreb is exactly what terrorists want so that youths ind a reason to join terrorist cells and fight. Upon joining, youths are promised financial gains so that they can take care of their families.

On the lip side of religious fundamentalism, terrorism is grounded in perpetuating fear. Barber (2001) is of the view that fear is terrorism's only weapon. He continues to argue that fear is a far more potent weapon against those who live in 'hope and prosperity' than those who live in

'despair with nothing to lose.' In this case, the victim becomes the perpetrator. Terrorists instill fear by instigating violence in its entirety which explains their unwavering presence on media platforms before and after attacks. Aziz (1993) raises the ante by arguing that battles for Islam are not won through the gun, but by striking fear into the heart of the (perceived) enemy; fear that youths are constantly living in, (imposed by socio-economic challenges) and the fear of the unknown, which 'justifies' striking fear back in the hearts of others.

The African Union must anticipate and proactively act against the emulation of similar incidences in Malawi, Ghana and Tanzania where there is a considerable concentration and rapidly growing number of young Muslims, Christians and poverty. There have already been some reports of youth violence along religious lines in Zanzibar. A larger segment of Africa's population is between the ages of twenty (20) to thirty five (35) amounting to 65%. This may, therefore, present a case in which alarming numbers of youths are vagabond and destitute (Peters, 2011). This increases the probability of contemplation by many youths to oust their governments by staging terrorist attacks. Annually, youths in this age group are increasingly taking part in violent protests and voluntarily joining terrorist movements, a cause for concern following the Arab Springs. Outstanding examples include the recent capture and interception by Kenyan authorities, of a university student who was allegedly radicalised because she was promised university tuition assistance and medical interns who were in the process of manufacturing biological bombs for anthrax attack in exchange for "good" jobs after completion of their attachments (Winsor, 2016).

To curb terrorism, youth energy has to be redirected to positive outcomes and their ideas and needs have to be taken into consideration. I am of the view that Islamic fundamentalism is the misdirection of energy and radicalisation of religion which is as old as mankind itself. Historically, both Christians and Muslims have been wrongfully massacred for one fundamental reason or the other, but ethical people have always condemned this. This presents the world with an opportunity to work hand-in-hand with peace loving Christian and Islamic people that have dissociated themselves from terrorist movements such as the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, and Boko Haram. Traditionally, all religions co-existed despite their challenges. In Tanzania and Malawi, there are millions of both Muslims and Christians. However, there has never been protracted religious violence since time immemorial.

For example, in December 2015 there was a cohort of Muslims during the Mandera bus attack in Kenya, who stood up for Christian bus passengers under siege and stopped a massacre by saying "kill us all or let them (Christians) go" (The Independent Reporter, 2016). The protagonist Salah Farah who sustained bullet wounds during an altercation with Al-Shabaab militants died in January 2016. He died because he refused to be separated from and tried to save, Christians. He is a true epitome of a 'brother's keeper.' This kind of attitude save lives and presents an opportunity for peace within the clash of civilisations. It must be borne in mind that most Muslims are not radical and they do not justify what terrorist novices are doing.

No religion celebrates the killing of people such as the beheading of twelve journalists in Libya by the ISIS (Al-jazeera, 2015) or killing of humanitarian workers by Al-Shabaab in Somalia. These are just overzealous youths who see no value in humanity and are pursuing self-interests. I vehemently argue that if fundamentalism can be created it can also be disintegrated through peace education in the same way draconian and incomprehensible ideologies such as Fascism and Nazism propounded by Mussolini and Hitler respectively, were condemned in the build-up

towards the infamous 2nd World War. War on terror and using gigantic military firepower is not the answer; it only pushes the world on the brink of a 3rd World War. Humanity will only be doing what terrorists expect of them when governments order and escalate bombings. This century has seen the world making positive strides in peace and human security which entails that terrorist violence has no place in this world. Farah's gesture should be an example to the world to co-exist as one community and promote religious harmony and tolerance. Humanity prevailed before, it will prevail again.

I argue that most learned youths know that violence is detrimental to infrastructure and the economy; hence they prefer to engage in dialogue, diplomacy and negotiations. I argue that many youths now believe in peaceful transitions than the primitive use of violence because it is retrogressive e.g in America, Nigeria, China, India and other States which extensively promote the civil society, infrastructural development, the music industry, sports, entrepreneurship, real estate, tourism, manufacturing, science and technology due to the increasingly shrinking space in the traditional industries. In the new millennium, high youth populations are now viewed as cheap and readily available labour that can be divided towards development (World Bank, 2006). Hence, if the State-youth relationship is carefully and strategically harnessed it can lead to positive than disastrous outcomes.

The world must know that it is battling with an idea that was born out of human disgruntlement and was formulated many centuries ago. This must also be countered by yet another powerful idea. In line with Agenda 2063 that by 2020 all guns must be silenced in Africa, terrorism must be curbed through a pervasive and well coordinated peace education, socio-economic development, and youth empowerment programmes. An idea cannot be defeated through the barrel of a gun. Guerrilla warfare employed by terrorists is some sort of attrition strategy that seeks to divide humanity. In the same vein, Rapoport (1984) argues that out of his study of what he terms 'holy terror', religion provides the only justification for terrorism and in my view it must be used to create opportunities for peace because it unites us all.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the events characterizing Africa in this dispensation illuminates the reality of the threat of terrorism on the continent given the considerable concentration of unemployed youths, Muslims, and Christians. Therefore, African leaders, policy makers, and researchers need to be pragmatic and proactive by formulating interventions to create harmony between religious fanatism and to address youth challenges before the continent evolves into yet another Middle East. Given the fragile political and socio-economic problems in Africa, the continent cannot afford yet another cycle of violent conflicts spawned by religious differences as this threatens to divide it further. Africa needs to take advantage of the lessons it has obtained from the events in the Middle East, Kenya, and Nigeria. Negligence and ignorance are the last things that Africans need on the continent, but cooperation and pragmatism are the only way to tackle terrorism sooner rather than later.

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