

**Boko Haram and counter-ideology method:  
Portrayal of terrorism in Ahmed Yerima's *Pari* as  
socio-political cancer in Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** This paper critically discusses the realities of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria, the attendant consequences, the polemics of casualties, and how portrayal of disenchantment in Ahmed Yerima's drama *Pari* projects nuances of instigating factors and variables. Thus this paper reviews critically the heart-rending questions that regularly pervade the various social communication mediums and platforms in Nigeria and beyond about the frightening complexity of terrorism that envelopes parts of north-east Nigeria. Hence, this paper adds to the existing scholarly efforts towards deepening of people's understanding of the intricate realities – which are perplexing, ugly and incongruous – that appear to instigate, propel and sustain the embers of discord which apparently keeps Nigeria in throes and on the brink. To add intellectual rigor to the scholarly polysemy and interpretation, this paper applies psychoanalytical theories of war according to Joost Meerloo, which espouses several angles to social struggles in which case 'mass discharge of accumulated internal rage' represents 'the inner fears of mankind' dissipated in mass destruction. The intent in applying the mentioned theoretical frame is to provide clear rational tangents that help to advance our interpretive analysis on human drive towards violence when in state of disillusionment and how war instigators use the disillusioned individuals as viable means of achieving their objectives as projected in Yerima's *Pari*. To analyze some trajectories of violence describable as terrorism in selected literature, this paper adopts interpretive analysis approach. The objective behind the adoption of this analytical approach is to

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see how logical deductions through the application of locale specific perspectives can aid towards finding domain specific prognosis to terrorism in Nigeria. Lastly, analytical deductions in this paper, in many ways add dense insight on the perspectives that can instigate an end to the debilitating consequences of terrorism in Nigeria and other similar troubled spots.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, counter-ideology method, political conditioning, terrorism, war

## INTRODUCTION

We learn from history that war, violence and terrorism are among man-made realities that humans naturally dread as well as utilize. Though humanity commonly view violence as unhealthy and terrorism as criminal and evil, yet man has continued tacitly to utilize war filled with violence, which falls within the scope of terrorism to satiate mundane interests. The definition of war continues to remain a matter of debate because it comes in several kinds and manifestations; hence the expression war encompasses more than one thing. Some wars are prosecuted through violence such as terrorism, whereas some wars may not include violence, such as psychological and mystical warfare. In this paper our discussion will focus on ‘terrorism’ as a kind of war. Our observation is that overwhelming volume of scholarly opinions concur that the attendant consequences of war are damaging but at differing proportion, thus, war that involves violence usually generate greater consequences than that which does not.

Though a lot had been said and written on the realities of terrorism in Nigeria in recent times, critical insights on the application of psychoanalytical theories in discussing the recruits/soldiers of Boko Haram as well as the supposed aim of the terrorist group have received less scholarly attention. Therefore, this paper analyzes the significance of psychoanalytical theories in explaining the several sides of the divide in the violent conflict generated by Boko Haram. In addition to the above purview, this paper analytically examines the trajectories to the contextualization of Boko Haram as terrorist organization and the attendant consequences. The aspects to be covered on the contextualization of terrorism realities in Nigeria include the instigating and sustaining factors as well as the conspiracy theories. On the areas to be discussed on the attendant consequences of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria, focus will be on the distortion of social structures and fabrics, increase in poverty, psychological pain and anger. To provide clear insight on this paper’s thematic purview, we

shall first provide an overview of major scholarly positions and perspectives on the various aspects on the focus subject as well as relevant definitions of terms and expressions, such as terrorism, violence, psychological warfare which will be vital in enhancing coherence and flow of our interpretation. In summary, the aim of this paper is to project feasible proposal that will add value to the terrorism rollback and elimination agenda of Nigerian government.

## RELEVANT SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES ON WAR

The scholarly study of war is sometimes referred to as polemology, which is derived from the Greek word *polemos* and according to Siniša Malešević “although the study of war is as old as war itself, there is no universally accepted definition of this phenomenon” (2014, 70). Furthering Malešević observes that “over the last two decades there has been a profound shift in research interests and war has become a central analytical concern for a number of sociologists” (65), such as Mann (1993, 2012), Centeno (2002), Shaw (2003, 2005), Smith (2005), Malešević (2010), Joas and Knobl (2013), Wimmer (2013), and King (2013). Espousing, Malešević notes that “since the 1970s onwards, most empirical, particularly quantitative oriented research on war has tended to revolve around Singer and Small’s (1972) proposition that defines any armed conflict which results in at least 1,000 battle deaths per year as war” (2014, 71). Furthermore Malešević points out that “these studies have provided both theoretical and empirically specific analyses of the relationship between war and society” (2014, 66).

Looking at the contributions of scholars such as Centeno (2002), Wimmer (2013), Mann (1993), and Malešević (2012), who variously discuss the inter-dynamics of nationalism, state formation and war, we see the quest for territory and expansionist tendencies as the propelling factors that instigate war, whereas Smith (2005) and Alexander (2013), focus on the cultural framing and coding of organized violence. More so, King (2013) and Collins (2008), analyze the patterns of group solidarity on the battlefield. Explaining the polemics of war definition, Malešević observes that “[...] the excessive quantification was also highly detrimental for understanding the complexities and subtleties of social changes and the correspondingly diverse historical trajectories of war in time and space” (2014, 71). Therefore, “while battle deaths might be a useful indicator to assess the scale and size of particular wars, they are not comprehensive enough to capture the full dynamics

of social change instigated by specific wars” (Ibid). In line with Malešević, the evident reality is that the manifestations and realities of warfare is changing because the ideologies, tools, scope, duration and resultant damages are changing as a result of social, demographic and technological transformations. Thus the sophistication of warfare is growing beyond the era of hunters and farmers using spears, animal driven carts, bow and arrow, to the use of sophisticated guns and lethal biological, chemical, sonic, ultra violent, cyber and nuclear weaponry (Howard, 1976; Malešević, 2010). Hence, Malešević observes that “the fact that one is forced to use the same term ‘war’ for variety of highly distinct and historically specific forms of organized violence often leads to the misleading strategy that treats all these armed conflicts as if they are the same phenomenon” (2014, 72). Scholars such as Eckhardt (1992), Leitenberg (2006), and White (2013) in their studies attempts to provide numbers as regards to the human cost of wars in the time under review and they indicate that the 20th century was by far the bloodiest and most destructive period in human history. In their studies, they mentioned ‘new’ forms of wars such as global wars, middle range and smaller armed conflicts, genocides, revolutions, pogroms, riots, uprisings, military coups, political assassinations, insurgencies and terrorism.

Furthermore, the study of theories of war have diversified into several trajectories such as ‘Marxist’, ‘psychoanalytical’, ‘economic’, ‘demographic’ and ‘realistic’ theories of war. On the ‘economic theory of war’ as espoused in the works of Johnson and Koyama (2017), Griffin and Feldman (2004), and Hawkins (1997), some wars emanate due to forces and variables surrounding the increase in economic competition that revolves around the quest to achieve economic interests such as attempt to secure or gain access to natural resources and accumulation of wealth. While the ‘economic theories of war’ point at the need to satiate economic needs and interests as the propelling factors, the ‘Marxist theory of war’, which is in many ways similar to economic theories of war according to Einde O’Callaghan (2007) appears to suggest that some wars are quasi-economic. This is because very many modern wars are propelled by competition for resources and markets between great (imperialist) powers, who strive to dominate larger part of the free market. According to Marxist philosopher Rosa Luxemburg, imperialism was the result of capitalist countries needing new markets, and the people in such locale at some point apply projection of subjugation, marginalization and oppression

in the hands of the imperialists as reasons to adopt war as the only way out.

The ‘psychoanalytical theories of war’ according to Joost Meerloo describe that kind of war that emanates as a result of a mass discharge of accumulated internal rage whereby the inner fears of mankind are discharged in mass destruction (1956). Majorly the polemics of unspoken and subconscious frustrations and fears, retribution, revenge, and hate in a climate and atmosphere devoid of functional conflict resolution structures are viewed as abiding stimuli. Other psychoanalysts such as Durban and Bowlby (1939) argue that the possibility for humans to be violent is abiding because human beings are inherently violent, and this susceptibility gets heightened because humans mostly find themselves in environments and situations lacking proactive resolution structures and mechanisms. Thus these scholars contend that these variables, naturally pave way for aggression propelled by negative subconscious perspectives of otherness such as bias and hatred against other races, religions, nations or ideologies. Wars orchestrated by leaders such as Napoleon and Hitler are generally viewed as that which emanated because of negative subconscious perspective variables of otherness as suggested above (Malešević 2010).

The ‘Demographic theories of war’, which is usually grouped into two categories; Malthusian and Youth bulge theories, explain how population variables constitute the central propelling factors that instigate wars. The Malthusian theories according to Safire (2004), and Waugh (2000), illuminate on the various pressures of rapid expanding population and the consequent competition for the available scarce resources as instigating factors of severe violent conflicts and wars. In line with Malthusian theory of war as developed from the ideas of Thomas Malthus (1766 – 1834) who explain that when population grows to the point that available resources are overstretched, the society will begin to witness violent struggles (war) for the insufficient resource, thus nations go to war to get these resources to satisfy the demands of their restive populace to avoid attendant consuming upheavals. The other trajectory of ‘demographic theory of war’ known as ‘Youth bulge theories of war’ according to Moller (1968), Goldstone (1993), Helgerson (2002), Hart et al (2004), Urdal (2004), Hart et al (2005), and Schomaker (2013), extrapolate on how that situation whereby a youth bulge occurs and it’s propensity to instigate restiveness. According to Rahel Schomaker “the term ‘youth bulge’ is

used to define a situation in which the population share of the 15-24 year-olds exceeds 20 per cent and the share of the 0-14 year-olds (often also referred to as the ‘children bulge’ and a good predictor of future youth bulges) is higher than 30 per cent” (2013, 116). Male youth bulge is when 30 to 40 percent of the males of a nation are within the ‘fighting age’ bracket from 15 to 29 years of age (Urdal 2004, Hart et al 2005, and Schomaker 2013). In line with this theory, when there is high fertility rate and rapid population growth which leads to ‘youth bulge’ there is increased susceptibility to socio-economic instability and peace volatility if the youth are not sufficiently engaged economically. The next trajectory is the ‘realistic theory of war’ which according to Blainey (1973), Fearon (1995; 1997), Powell (2002), and Fearon & Laitin 2003, focuses on the cost of war permutations in a bid to illuminate on why in some cases nations strive to avoid wars, whereas others appear to instigate them. According to Anthony Lopez and Dominic Johnson “as a philosophical tradition, realist throughout the centuries have emphasized that states prioritize their own survival, jealously guard their security, and seek to maximize their power relative to other states” (2017, 4). In the analysis/interpretation segment, we shall discuss how these theories explain some subsumed perspectives in relation to inclination and suggestions about terrorism in Yerima’s *Pari*.

## TERRORISM AS WAR AND THE POLEMICS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

According to Carsten Bockstette “the discipline of terrorism research is relatively young and has likewise no generally accepted academic definition for terrorism” and “the word terror comes from the Latin word *terrere*, which means to frighten or scare” (2008, 8). Furthering Bockstette notes that “the concept of terrorism goes back to the 19th century” and that “terrorism as a political-military strategy has existed for about 40 years” (2008, 8).

Looking at the realities of war and scholarly trajectories to its descriptions, we are focusing on ‘terrorism’ as a form of war and The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)<sup>1</sup> report adds that “defining

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<sup>1</sup> The Institute for Economics & Peace is a global think-tank found in 2007 with its headquartered in Sydney, Australia with branches in New York City, Mexico City and The Hague. “The GTI ‘Global Terrorism Index’ report is produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) using data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and other sources. Data for the GTD is collected and collated by the

terrorism is not a straight forward matter” thus “there is no single internationally accepted definition of what constitutes terrorism, and that terrorism literature abounds with competing definitions and typologies” (2016, 6). Thus (IEP) which is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think-tank dedicated to shifting the world’s focus to peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human well-being and progress, in their global terrorism index published in 2016, which is the fourth edition of the Global Terrorism Index which provides a comprehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism over the last 16 years, covering the period from the beginning of 2000 to the end of 2015, observes that the research presented in the (2016) report “highlights a complex and rapidly changing set of dynamics in global terrorism” (2016, 2). However, IEP accepts the terminology and definition agreed to by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) researchers and its advisory panel, which defines terrorism as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation” (2016, 6). Thus, IEP observes that “this definition recognises that terrorism is not only the physical act of an attack, but also the psychological impact it has on a society for many years after” (Ibid). In this regard, Bockstette proposed a definition, stating that “terrorism is defined as political violence in an asymmetrical conflict that is designed to induce terror and psychic fear (sometimes indiscriminate) through the violent victimization and destruction of non-combatant targets (sometimes iconic symbols)” (2008, 8). Buttressing Bockstette observes that “such acts are meant to send a message from an illicit clandestine organization” and that “the purpose of terrorism is to exploit the media in order to achieve maximum attainable publicity as an amplifying force multiplier in order to influence the targeted audience(s) in order to reach short and midterm political goals and/or desired long-term” aims (Ibid).

The above definition present apparent intent driven by political inclination and provides the framework for criminalizing the above mentioned acts as well as the prosecution of individuals who are apprehended for or suspected to have carried out corresponding acts.

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National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland. The GTD contains over 170,000 terrorist incidents for the period 1970 to 2017” (IEP 2019: 2).

Similarly, terrorism according to UN Human Rights Fact Sheet No. 32 is “commonly understood to refer to acts of violence that target civilians in the pursuit of political or ideological aims” (2007, 5). Furthering UN Human Rights Fact Sheet no. 32 in its draft article 2 contains a definition of terrorism as follows:

Unlawfully and intentionally causing, attempting or threatening to cause: (a) death or serious bodily injury to any person; or (b) serious damage to public or private property, including a place of public use, a State or government facility, a public transportation system, an infrastructure facility or the environment; or (c) damage to property, places, facilities, or systems..., resulting or likely to result in major economic loss, when the purpose of the conduct, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act. (2007, 6)

According to the proclamation of the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the document tagged ‘Human Rights, Terrorism and Counter-terrorism’ Fact Sheet No. 32, “the human cost of terrorism has been felt in virtually every corner of the globe” (2007, 1). Thus, we learn from this Fact Sheet that terrorism erodes human rights and in many instances, the methods and approaches by various governments in countering terrorism also erode and impinge on basic human rights. Clearly, IEP report firmly places Nigeria on the global hotspot and watch-list in relation to sporadic and potent zones of major terrorism activities. Hence, the report notes that “the five countries suffering the highest impact from terrorism as measured by the GTI are Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria, which accounted for 72 per cent of all deaths from terrorism in 2015” (2016, 3). Furthermore, the report notes that “only four groups were responsible for 74 per cent of all these deaths” namely “ISIL, Boko Haram, the Taliban and al-Qa’ida” (2016, 3). Additionally, the IEP report indicates that “the global economic impact of terrorism in 2015 was broadly comparable to the previous year, costing the global economy US\$89.6 billion” (Ibid), and “of the last 16 years, the worst year for terrorism was 2014 with 93 countries experiencing an attack and 32,765 people killed” (2016, 4). According to IEP 2019 report “deaths from terrorism fell for the fourth consecutive year, after peaking in 2014. The decline in deaths corresponds with the military successes against ISIL and Boko Haram, with the total number of deaths falling by 15.2 per cent between 2017 and 2018 to 15,952” (2019, 2). Looking at the drivers of terrorism Paolo Maggiolini & Arturo Varvelli view “poverty, unemployment, lack of job



opportunities, juvenile delinquency, trafficking and smuggling, socio-political, economic and physical marginalisation, the role of Salafist ideology as well as the influence of brotherhood networks” as the major factors (2016, 81). The idea here is that “all these elements have been frequently highlighted as elements, factors or drivers that could help explain the dynamics of radicalization leading to active violent militancy under the ideals of jihadism” (Ibid).

### **BOKO HARAM AS A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION**

Boko Haram whose official name is Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati Wal-Jihad which literally means the ‘association for propagating the Prophet’s teaching and Jihad’, came as an Islamic sect in 2002 under Muhammad Yusuf, and its origin has been located in Sahaba Islamic group, formed in 1995 and led by Abubakar Lawan, as documented by Ovaga (2012), Agbibo (2013<sup>a</sup> & 2013<sup>b</sup>), Okoro (2014), Egbegi et al (2018) and Odoh et al (2018). These scholars suggest that under Lawan the group conducted its proselytisation on orthodox Islamic doctrine, whereas the emergence of Malam Mohammed Yusuf, a younger member of the sect as the group’s leader took place when Lawan travelled to University of Medina for further studies and the clerics decided that Yusuf should assume leadership (Odoh et al 2018, 94). Thus, after Yusuf took over, he abandoned the clerics, the orthodox Islamic doctrine and adopted a new radical doctrine, which propagates the enthronement of an Islamic dispensation through jihad and abhorrence of Western education (Ibid). Based on this doctrine, Yusuf founded and inaugurated a new Islamic sect in 2002, which, because of its avowed abhorrence of Western education, became widely known as ‘Boko Haram’, meaning “Western education ... is a sacrilege,” or “Western education is a sin” and ‘Boko’ is the Hausa word for Western education (Ibid). These scholars, Ovaga (2012), Agbibo (2013<sup>a</sup> & 2013<sup>b</sup>), Okoro (2014), and Egbegi et al (2018) agree that Boko Haram has swiftly evolved into one of the world’s most dangerous terrorist group after it began violent attacks in Nigeria in 2009.

According to the IEP report, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) in a comprehensive study analysing the impact of terrorism for 163 countries covering 99.7 per cent of the world’s population, “the second deadliest group in 2015 was Boko Haram, which killed 5,478 people” (2016, 16). Furthermore IEP report indicates that “even though the first recorded terrorist death by Boko Haram was only in 2009, the group

has the second highest death toll out of all terrorist groups since 2000” and that it is “only the Taliban that has killed more people than Boko Haram” (2016, 27). The IEP report also adds that “nearly 90 per cent of the 15,600 deaths by Boko Haram since 2009 have been in Nigeria” (Ibid). This is because Boko Haram is based in Nigeria, where it operates mainly in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, with occasional strikes in Kano, Kaduna and Bauchi States.

According to Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa in his study which touches on Boko Haram’s growing connection to transnational terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab as a form of survival strategy, alludes to the psychological warfare dimension to Boko Haram proclamations. He observes that “the group’s active gnawing at the religious, ethnic, and regional fault-lines of Nigeria not only threatens the country’s peace and unity, but holds serious transnational implications” (Agbiboa 2015, 1). Thus from 2000 Boko Haram arguably became the biggest problem confronting Nigeria with consequences moving beyond security concerns to political and socio-economic upheavals (Ibid). According to Christina Schori Liang, “terrorism is proving to be an enduring global security threat, not least due to the fact that modern terrorist groups have become more lethal, networked and technologically savvy” (2016, 84). Furthering, Liang observes that currently terrorist groups such as “ISIL and al-Qa’ida have the ability to control land and hold entire cities hostage”, hence “this power mainly stems from their ability to generate revenue from numerous criminal activities with almost complete impunity” (Ibid). From the above perspective, it is indicative that terrorism is goal-driven as well as propelled and sustained by ideology. Thus, we see ideology as a subsisting inclination, worldview and philosophy that define and propel a particular line of action by people as individuals or as group. The classification of Boko Haram as violent terrorist group as well as an enemy of Nigerian state is because the Nigeria government is bound by expectation and law to find viable tactics in ending the activities of any enemy of the state.

#### COUNTER-IDEOLOGY METHOD, PSYCHOANALYTICAL THEORIES OF WAR AND BOKO HARAM PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE: CONTRIBUTIONS IN AHMED YERIMA’S PLAY *PARI*

The counter-ideology method is the process of robust countering of an offensive ideology. Thus, we open the discussion on what can be

describes as the most viable counter-ideology methods suitable for countering Boko Haram, given the peculiar situation and atmosphere in which they operate.

In applying counter-ideology method, the content of the offensive ideology need to be properly examined and understood, the atmosphere that nourishes the polemics of ideology needs to be fully appreciated, the subsisting inclination of the targets population of the offensive ideology need to be examined and re-examined to better appreciate their locale specific realities which makes the offensive ideology attractive. The peculiar situation and process of Boko Haram operation include political conditioning for purposes of brainwashing through projection and utilization of faith and religion to create disillusionment.

We are of the opinion that Nigeria's corporate existence revolves around the subsisting 'ideology' which is to preserve, defend and secure the life and properties of people living in Nigeria threatened by any group or individuals whose actions clearly run contrary to this principle. Thus, the ideological agenda of Boko Haram is to suggest that Nigerian government clearly lacks the 'will' and 'capacity' to put to practice this principle. According to Sara L. McKinnon, "most critical theorists would agree that one of the foundational dimensions of domination is ideology, or systems of beliefs that serve as the foundation of a group's worldview and perception of reality and consciousness" and that "these ideas structure what people believe about others and the world" (2009, 238 – 239). Apparently the goal of Boko Haram is to grab political power and the accruable gains, hence their attempt at presenting themselves as agent of change, re-birth and progress. Espousing this context Larry Browning observes that "when structural and dynamical complexity are applied to human systems, we are reminded anew that people are only occasionally logical and rational" (2009, 153). Thus, various methods of political conditioning by Boko Haram are aimed at creating disillusionment which will achieve greater gains amongst the most pliable. Explaining the psychology underpinning political conditioning and counter-ideology method Browning observes that because people "possess imperfect information; they tend to act on the basis of ideology, chance, and perceived individual payoff" (2009, 153). Hence, those projecting any ideology must have sufficient understanding of the philosophical bent and inclination of their targets as well as their targets' intellectualism, worldview and social condition in their bid at adopting the most

functional and result assured approaches at political conditioning. Thus ambiguity, disinformation and dislocation are part of Boko Haram's approach at creating complex thinking aimed at achieving disillusionment. According to Browning "complex thinking is affected by the speed and rate of interpretation" (2009, 154). Boko Haram are very aware that the majority of the target recruits cannot handle complex thinking, thus Browning notes that "low-complexity thinkers are more likely to (a) be satisfied operating with little information, (b) make snap decisions, and (c) dismiss others into an out-group if the information they provide is disagreeable" (Ibid). Hence, "under conditions of complexity, and when creativity is the goal, outsider information increases the quality of decision making because divergent thinkers push against common assumptions" (Ibid). To this end, McKinnon thinks that "the role of ideology, however, is to naturalize dominant structures so that the processes of meaning making and social construction are obscured" (2009, 221).

To examine some of the contexts alluded to in the preceding paragraph; we are using selected character comments in Ahmed Yerima's play *Pari* as focal texts to emphasize the locale specific realities of the Boko Haram political conditioning target population in north-east Nigeria. This is because the play's source materials were generated majorly through robust research which includes direct contact with categories of Boko Haram 'casualties'.

Through *Pari* Ahmed Yerima portrays the kind of anguish and travail families directly affected by Boko Haram terrorist activities go through in parts of Northern Nigeria. Thus, Yerima illustrates the feelings of the 'casualties', their thinking about their government's actions and inactions, the perceived extent of security breakdown and nuances of dysfunctional state of socio-political institutions and structures. The play zero in on a family thrown into massive despair and anguish because of the violent kidnap of their only daughter Pari by the Boko Haram foot-soldiers. The play relays the centrality of religion, poverty and poor governance in the disenchantments that propelled the birth and metamorphosis of Boko Haram. Also the play captures the apparent feeling of helplessness, disillusionment, deceit, morbid fear, brutality and despoil as it concerns the long suffering masses, the government, the government agents, and Boko Haram.

The play indicates how 'everyone' is a casualty, and how the most affected people feel abandoned by fellow citizens and government, which relates the centrality of disillusionment as it affects and drives

everyone involved in the conflict. We are going to concentrate our discussion on the comments made by one of the play's character Ibrahim, who is an escapee Boko Haram soldier in his narration of experience and propelling factors/reasons concerning his joining Boko Haram and his feeling as Boko Haram soldier in his conversation with Pari's parents Tada and Ama.

Ibrahim: It all started the night my mother was buried. I regretted her death more. I blamed myself for her death because it wasn't that I was away when she died. I was there ... useless ... but I was just a dead person there. She needed food and medicine ... and none was within my reach ... so I watched her ... with tear-filled eyes, I watched life ebb out of her veins ... then her eyes closed ... her heart stopped beating ... and she was gone. After her burial, I tried to find a taste to my mouth. I did not cry, I could not cry and I did not even try. Even if I had, there would be no tears. My friends, Zaki and Yakubu, had begged me to join them.

Tada: Join who?

Ibrahim: The jihad. The Sunna Lidda'Awah Wal-jihad.

Tada: Boko Haram?

Ama: Who?

Ibrahim: Yes! Young men living in hopelessness, angry at nothing in particular. All smoking and drinking. Then when we were thoroughly soaked in everything, the talk started. They sounded so wise ... so profound. At the end of the day, between the women and drinks, talk and dreams, I felt I could do something. What it was, I did not even know. All I knew was that I was angry. At everything. (Yerima 2016, 46 – 47)

In Ibrahim's comments, the playwright attempts to present the variables that instigate the youth in north-east Nigeria to join Boko Haram. These variables/factors are mostly poverty, unemployment and poor formal education. These circumstances make them vulnerable and pliable to the political conditioning methods of Boko Haram, hence their recruitment as Boko Haram members are a lot easy. Also subsumed in Ibrahim's comment is the nature of disillusionment that the Boko Haram soldiers do go through. Yerima indicates that it is when Ibrahim was in this state of disillusionment and pain that his friends Zaki and Yakubu began to lure him to join Boko Haram, thus emotional vulnerability is a variable/factor which Boko Haram see and manipulate. The picture projected through Ibrahim's comments is in many ways subsumed in Meerloo's view on 'political conditioning' and 'brainwashing' which he captures thus:

Political conditioning should not be confused with training or persuasion or even indoctrination. It is more than that. It is tampering. It is taking possession

of both the simplest and the most complicated nervous patterns of man. It is the battle for the possession of the nerve cells. It is coercion and enforced conversion. Instead of conditioning man to an unbiased facing of reality, the seducer conditions him to catchwords, verbal stereotypes, slogans, formulas, and symbols. (1956, 30)

Clearly another point we deduce from Ibrahim's comment is that Boko Haram recruits were perpetually feeling vulnerable and disillusioned because of their abject socio-economic condition, which places the political leaders as people to receive the blame. Thus, included in Boko Haram's political conditioning are systemic repetition and emphasis on the recruits' miserable condition before they were recruited. Also the conditioning includes claim that abject poverty in parts of Nigeria will not end because the same 'corrupt' leaders will remain at the helms of affairs, aspect they (the recruits) embrace the idea of toppling them by any means. Thus this scenario lubricates their lure semantics; however Ibrahim notes that when he joined Boko Haram, their indoctrination process made him and others more disillusioned than ever.

It is in this regard that Meerloo observes that "in order to tame people into the desired pattern, victims must be brought to a point where they have lost their alert consciousness and mental awareness" (1956, 30). Meerloo points out that part and process of this mental reconditioning is among other things the denial of "freedom of discussion and free intellectual exchange" because freedom of intellectual exchange hinders political conditioning (Ibid). More so Meerloo notes that when an enforcer is focused on achieving the required reconditioning of the individual, structure will be in place to exacerbate the "feelings of terror, feelings of fear and hopelessness, of being alone, of standing with one's back to the wall" (Ibid). This notion is captured in Ibrahim's comment: "I felt I could do something. What it was, I did not even know. All I knew was that I was angry. At everything" (Yerima 2016, 47). More so Ibrahim's reality is an apt portrayal of Boko Haram mind manipulators as equivalent of Meerloo's conceptualization of the 'totalitarian', who "wants first the required response from the nerve cells, then control of the individual, and finally control of the masses" (1956, 30). Meerloo observes that the process "starts with verbal conditioning and training by combining the required stereotypes with negative or positive stimuli: pain, or reward" (1956, 30). This scenario is what Ibrahim captures in the following comment: "when we were thoroughly soaked in everything, the talk started. They sounded so wise ... so profound" (Yerima 2016,

47). Here, Ibrahim notes that the seductive nature of Boko Haram's manipulators' application of words exacerbates their disillusionment. The idea of seclusion in Sambisa forest and other 'hind-outs' in line with Meerloo's theory is to remove peaceful exchange of free intellectual reasoning/thoughts because it will disturb the conditioned reflexes and is therefore restricted (1956, 30). Again the feeling of emptiness expressed by Ibrahim which is part of varied reaction to political conditioning is according to Meerloo infused in the individual "through interrogation, character assassination, humiliation, mental terror, and demoralization – such as happens in individual and collective brainwashing – man can be so utterly demoralized that he accepts any political system. He is nothing anymore; why should he oppose matters?" (1956, 98)

To Pari, an escapee victim of Boko Haram's kidnap, the political conditioning and atmosphere of the conditioning unavoidably changed her. In one of her narrations of her sparse recollection of some excruciating episodes during her captivity, which still traumatizes her, tearfully relates:

Pari: Hell broke loose. We were really scared, and the hooded men melted our very resistance. Then one day they said we all has to get married. We resisted it. One girl who screamed her refusal was blindfolded and before our very eyes, she was killed. Petrified, we gave up everything. Then they started to rape us. Some of us died from the pain. Some died from the air raids, and some just died of heartache and pains. Those who lived or survived like me were living carcasses from the world beyond. (Yerima 2016, 36)

The above recollection by Pari, encapsulates her moment of disillusionment, morbid fear, and despair which involuntarily propelled her to embrace the faith of her kidnapper, and accepts to become a life partner of her rapist after conceiving and giving birth thereafter from several episodes of rape. Thus, the response of the escapee girl Pari who exhibits signs of post traumatic stress disorder due to her ordeal and brutal conditioning in Boko Haram's captivity creates a situation which Meerloo describes in the following words:

No longer are there any brains, only conditioned patterns and educated muscles. In such a taming system neurotic compulsion is looked upon as a positive asset instead of something pathological. The mental automaton becomes the ideal of education. (1956, 30)

However, Meerloo notes that "as soon as the brainwashee returns to a free atmosphere, the hypnotic spell is broken" and "temporary nervous

repercussions take place, like crying spells, feelings of guilt and depression” (1956, 64). He further observes that “the expectation of a hostile homeland, in view of his having yielded to enemy indoctrination, may fortify this reaction” and “the period of brainwashing becomes a nightmare” (Ibid). Meerloo believes that “brainwashing is an artificial nightmare” which victims at differing pace “can often shed the moment they return to free territory” (1956, 226). However, Meerloo observes that in some victims “it may leave long-lasting scars of depression and humiliation, but gradually the spell subsides in an atmosphere where freedom reigns” (Ibid). The playwright indicates that the direct relatives are not spared the traumatic experience which leads to forms of disillusionment, thus Pari’s mother also displayed signs of disillusionment as regards to her sudden change of faith as she for years waits for the return of her only daughter kidnapped by Boko Haram. The play places disillusionment in the husband in his attempt to find closure in the bosom of another woman, who gets pregnant for him. The playwright attempts to indicate how the activities of Boko Haram instigate deep and painful family acrimony and tension. Thus, the kidnap of an only child leads to the father being propelled by his brother and sisters to look towards another woman, so as to procreate and replenish the supposedly lost child or children.

In their attempt at foregrounding the contexts of Boko Haram insurgency, Friday Raphael Egbeki et al, describes them “as the most vicious and violent religious group ever witnessed by the country” Nigeria (2018, 13). Egbeki et al in their study are of the view that Boko Haram’s attempt at fronting themselves as ‘soldiers of faith’ and proclamation of their intent to introduce strict ‘Sharia’ law across Nigeria and abolish Western education is an ideologically driven attempt at a psychological warfare as a form of political conditioning. Hence, Egbeki et al suggest that there is need for Nigeria to counter Boko Haram’s supposed psychological warfare with robust application of superior ideologically driven orientation. Thus, Egbeki et al (2018, 17) fervently suggest that Nigerian government “is yet to understand that the current fire for fire approach of fighting Boko Haram insurgency is not achieving the desired result”. In response, they aver that “indeed, the war against Boko Haram insurgency can only be won in dream by just adopting the current military fire-for-fire approach” without “sufficient superior ideology” (Ibid). They explain that “the essence of adopting superior ideology is to build trust with



communities through methods of consultation that help to enhance the perceived legitimacy of counter-terrorism efforts” (Ibid). To drive home their point on what constitutes a ‘superior ideology’ they note that “indeed, the Boko Haram group has adopted ideological approach to justify their activities” and “perhaps that is why they receive sympathy and support from some community members in the North-eastern part of Nigeria” (Ibid). As part of their finding they observe that “despite the government fire for fire approach, some community members still see Boko Haram as a legitimate group that is fighting a holy and just war against infidels and infiltrators” (Ibid). In many ways, we agree with Egbebi et al in their submission that it is desirable to apply ‘superior ideology’ to demolish an ‘inferior ideology’, however, we still cannot see exactly how one can know an ideology that is superior to the other before the aftermath, secondly for reasons best known to Egbebi et al they prefer to surround the ‘superior ideology’ they have for the Nigerian government with difficult ambiguity.

## CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that currently the subsisting reality is that there is neither a consensus academic nor an accurate legal consensus regarding the definition of terrorism. However, various government agencies, international organizations and several legal systems apply different definitions. It is indicative that the difficulty and lack of consensus as regards to the definition of terrorism arises because the term is in many ways politically and emotionally motivated. Nevertheless, various attempts at defining terrorism indicate that those actions that are describable as terrorism are widely viewed as encompassing international ramifications, hence the need to have a definition that encompasses universal interpretive community. Another observation emanating from this paper is that Boko Haram group are applying psychological warfare as a means of twisting the minds of the populace, garnering sympathy from the people, and as a means of confusing as many Nigerians as possible. Their attendant goals are to apply religion as platform and as a way of refocusing the minds of Nigerians who are of the Islamic faith as well as to lure vulnerable and pliable youths to sign up. Again our observation is that Boko Haram in their psychological warfare mostly project the ruling class, the central government, and state governments as corrupt, thereby suggesting that the rulers who are mostly western educated are not pure adherents of

Islam, and that they care less of the sufferings of the hard-working and less privileged masses. Here, it appears as if they have a viable point because the economy is bad and socio-economic conditions of very many Nigerians, resident in north-east is particularly miserable and dehumanizing. Thus their blame directly goes to the political leaders who remain very affluent in this state of massive poverty for the majority. However, we observe that these psychological warfares are not based on pure ideology that is in tandem with Islamic tenets. This is because their activities towards the helpless masses and their behaviours and indulgences, such as forceful abduction of married and single women, wanton attack on non-soldiers and their properties are not based on Islamic injunctions. The understanding is that Boko Haram is not adhering to pristine values of their touted ideology. The wanton killing of people and rampant destruction of their properties does not align with the idea of their professed religion. Ibrahim in Yerima's *Pari* provides a metaphor when he alludes to the soldiers constant 'smoking and drinking' which represents illicit stimulants. The handlers of the soldiers consciously maintain the use of these stimulants which increase the delirium and disillusionment of the soldiers thereby twisting their focus. Also the engagement in forceful abduction, rape and coercion of girls into marriage is not based on fairness and justice they claim they will restore when they topple the corrupt leaders. Above all, the idea that 'western' or 'formal' education is 'taboo' is incongruent and illogical based on the premise that the guns, boots, cloths, heavy weaponry, RPG, bombs and transmission systems they regularly use are all products of years of painstaking, diligent research and development within the formal education system. Thus the government counter-ideology effort must include these plausible realities. These realities should be properly crafted and repeatedly presented to the masses in a bid to rollback Boko Haram's political conditioning through meaningful orientation and counter-ideology

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