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Karl Marx on Religion: The Perspective of Boko Haram in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

One memorable quote from Karl Marx's conception of religion is, "religion is the opium of the masses." By this, he critiqued religion as an analgesic that dulls the senses, thus inducing a false sense of satisfaction, and preventing the oppressed from revolting against the grubby socio-economic system. As the sigh of the oppressed, religion makes them to resign to fate since it only gives an unrealistic eschatological hope. Rather than conceive religion from this prismatic way, contemporary events have shown that relig-

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ion has become an amphetamine or a catalyst for revolt, not only at the global but also national level. This work argues that religion is used as an amphetamine, an energizing pill, to pursue other goals than religious as depicted in the activities of Boko Haram sect, which has raised security challenges in contemporary Nigeria.

Introduction

If Karl Marx were to be alive today, he might have been forced to change his view about religion particularly as it relates to conflict and violence. This is so because recent global events have demonstrated and continue to demonstrate that rather than conceive religion as an opium, it is really an amphetamine of conflict and violence. Marx had thought that religion muffles the mind of people, especially the oppressed, from being active, with particular regard to inciting and prosecuting violence that could usher in social change. The dose of eschatological hope, of what is theologically referred to as paradisiacal bliss, stimulates obedience to hegemony of the bourgeoisie. He therefore concluded that the death of religion would be a positive sign for the freedom of the proletariat, however, through violence.

This work will briefly show that though Marx had his argument about religion generally, his generic use of religion cannot be for all time and all religions. Global and national events with reference to religion, particularly radical Islam, have continued to deconstruct his thesis. It is this latter view that we are committed to arguing in this work in view of how Boko Haram Islamic sect in Nigeria is using religion as an amphetamine of violence.

The Projection of Religion by Karl Marx

The main thrust of Marx's philosophy is social change. But the idea of social change had been on for a long time before the sociological postulations about it by Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. Two Greek thinkers, Parmenides and Heraclitus had conceived a philosophy of change. While the former conceived the world as indestructible and a motionless continuum of matter and space thus making change an illusion, the latter thought that the world is in a state of flux, and continues to develop and change imminently. It is the latter view that gains more paradigmatic attention in scholarly circles. But the place of religion in the context of change has become a contested one. For instance, Comte's theory revolved around the twin pillars of progress and order, and change and stability. This is possible, according to him, only if humanity outlives the metaphysical and theological instincts and clings to positivism. This has been given a more philosophical extrapolation by such philosophers as David Hume, John S. Mill, Bertrand Russell and A. Y. Ayer, who argued that religion and its language are meaningless in human society insofar as they cannot be empirically verified. They propounded scientific empiricism or logical positivism that theoretically ousted religion from the framework of meaningful discourse or construct.¹ Comte criticized religion by saying that it does not give freedom to people. According to him, religion is a collective delusion or symbolic thinking that involves incorporeal objects of powers. These do not answer practical or existential questions that steer man at the face, but move them aside and offer false hope. It is this social dysfunction of religion that makes Comte to describe religion as an expression of immature thought. Religion with its supersensible reference, therefore, is an antithesis of social progress.²

Marx's thesis can be best described as a syncretism of Georg Hegel's dialectical understanding of history in which change is conceptualized from the working out of contradictions present in situations and Ludwig Feuerbach's materialism that opposed Hegel's idealism. Marx added English economics and salted it with French socialism. With the collaboration of Friedrich Engel's communist ideology, which virtually criticized capitalism, Marx succeeded in constructing "a heady brew that intoxicated many European intellectuals."³

Marx thought that Hegelian materialism was idealist simply because it "knew nothing of class struggles based on economic interest, production and all subordinate elements in the industry of civilization."⁴ Marx believed that historical materialism must be conceptualized within the conflict that arose in the struggle between historically developed classes namely, proletariat and bourgeoisie. The conflict between the classes can best be understood from the prism of factors of production and mode of exchange. The economic or social structure that derived from this materialist conception of history can again be appreciated against the backdrop of the lopsided nature of the distribution of wealth. Engels argued in this regard that distribution of wealth stems from production and exchange of products which in turn form one social basis of social structure. It is this that divided every society into classes that depend on "what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are (appropriated and exchanged)."⁵

Ted Peters views this materialist conception of history in the relationship between the developed and developing worlds. According to him, the main thrust of capitalism is "surplus value", that is, the excess value that results from mass production. The conflict between classes in every capitalist society arose as a result of management or administration of this excess value. In fact, the industrial revolution Europe, North America and Japan have been in possession of global excess value. By this, they were able to assure themselves of constant supply of raw materials from the developing world and developed "peripheral markets" around it so that the surplus value can flow back to them while buying raw materials cheaply.⁶ Carmody and Carmody recognized this Marxian material dialectics but the Marx's prediction that the proletariat or the developing nations would become so "immiserated"⁷ as to resort to revolt and form classless society or world still begs for fulfillment. More importantly, religion, which Marx saw as a bane to the realization of this philosophic vision, is covering much space among the proletariat of the developing world. And in many instances, religion, especially in the form of prosperity gospel, is empowering the poor to a greater extent. That brand of religion is growing increasingly in the global south where concern for the poor is taken as a pious act. And Nigeria is not left out.⁸

However, what is the role of religion in Marxian dialectical theory? Marxian materialist ideology conceives of salvation as "the satisfaction of economic needs and triumph of the oppressed class over bourgeois exploitation."⁹ The greatest sin of humanity, according to this thought, is the commission of economic injustice; this is the abandonment of faith. Just as believers in God conceive Satan as the greatest adversary to their ultimate salvation, Marx argued that religion *qua* religion is the greatest adversary to the economic liberation of the proletariat. Marxian dualism is obvious here: God and Satan, rich and poor are in constant struggle. As believers in human society, a pragmatic approach needed to be instituted to overcome whatever opposed humanity's freedom. Marx identified religion as a clog in the wheel of the desired revolution. This is so because religion is an illusion; it is a body of myths that tell fairy tales obscuring reality – oppression and exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeois.

Marx further argued that in order to strengthen the structural dualism, the bourgeois evolved the concept of religion. This is borne out of the extraction of the self into some form of abstraction. This was borrowed from Ludwig Feuerbach's atheism that God is man. The imaginary God elsewhere, according to Feuerbach, is illusory and diversionary. Therefore humanity must take its destiny in its hand.¹⁰ According to Marx, "man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed the self-consciousness and self awareness of man who either has not yet attained to himself or has already lost himself again."¹¹ In Marx's thought, religion is an integral part of capitalist ideology. As a powerful superstructure, religion creates "an illusory value system to keep the poor in their place by teaching them to be submissive, obedient and resigned to their lot in life."¹² In other words, religion as a product of the genius of the bourgeois encourages them to accept their deprivation, prompts them towards "illusory realization of human ideals, which provide men with compensation for surrender"¹³ so that the *status quo ante* could remain.

'Religion as an Opium'

The foregoing conception of economic injustice, according to Marx, required violent change, which could be championed by the proletariat. But the desired change was impossible because religion generally, and theology in particular, that is, the "formal study of God," the "worst enemy of the spirit"¹⁴ had become a powerful sedative that makes the proletariat to slumber. As a consequence, they painfully endured their condition. Marx saw religion as capable of uniting human beings together but silent on "the historical forces that have separated them"¹⁵ *ab initio*. Attempts by religion to forget the antagonistic stage that resulted in alienation of man for his labour were also calculated to further immiserate the proletariat.

For Marx, religion originated from base aspects of humanity. Its God, if he existed, he contended, breeds his kind as demonstrated in the bourgeois, who oppressed the proletariat. This conception of reality would mean that the world lacked order and purposiveness. The doctrine that this disorder should be allowed to stay unchallenged and proffer unreal hope was the worst form of injustice and suffering that religion could inflict on humanity. According to him, "religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."¹⁶ This being so, religion must be abolished in order for the world to be purposive. As he put it, "The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo."¹⁷

Marx was not alone in constructing religion as an opiate. In fact, Bertrand Russell gave it a philosophical support. According to him, it was the prevailing social conditions that gave birth to the concept of religion. When religion became organized, it became dangerous to humanity, particularly the less privileged. That is why he described religion as "the principal enemy of moral progress in the world," which is "a disease born of fear and a source of untold misery to the human race."¹⁸ A distinct manifestation of this could be seen in the Inquisition. It is a creative genius of the oppressors. As Niccolo Machiavelli agreed,

Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative men rather than men of action. It has assigned as man's highest good, humility, abnegation and contempt for mundane things. This pattern of life, therefore, appears to have made the world weak and to have handed it over as a prey to the wicked, who run it successfully and securely since they are all aware that the generality of men with paradise as their goal, consider how best to bear, rather than how best to avenge, their injuries.¹⁹

Lenin also described religion as terror-inspiring social machine at the hands of the oppressors to perpetually check the oppressed. Grounded in this thought, like Marx, he argued that the eschatological hope that religion promised is a diversionary strategy of the oppressors. This is why he reasoned that religion is an escapist device.²⁰ If paradise existed it should exist on earth and not in fantasy as religion offered. For preventing the earth-based paradise, religion therefore is an opiate, "a spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capitalism drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of men."²¹

Lenin's efforts to transmute 'Marxist social construction into a political program' led to the combination of "dialectical theory with revolutionary practice that forged disciplined, ruthless central authority to control the proletariat."²² His sanctioning of violence as the heart of all change made Marxist ideas politically effective but also restrained many would-be followers because of its "ruthlessness, lack of more scruple, and hatred of religion."²³

However, Alec R. Vidler argued that despite this highhandedness of Marxism-Leninism against religion in Russia, the social laboratory of their ideology, religion still influenced the people. According to him, the conception of religion as being a perquisite of the ruling class to bridle the oppressed did not completely reflect the true position in Russia. He wrote,

Whatever justification for this view there may have been in Western Europe, it was far from being realistic in Russia where the Orthodox Church was essentially a Church of the people and the ruling classes were for the most part alienated from it. Whatever measures the communists adopted to extirpate religion would not hit the ruling classes but the peasants.²⁴

The point being emphasized here is that communism became in essence an ideology that oppressed the oppressed beyond what Marxism-Leninism accused religion of. If religion as they conceived it denied freedom to the oppressed, their alternative, as Vidler argued, did more to further deny them freedom to be human. It is indeed religion that provided a bulwark against the extremism of Marxism-Leninism.

Religion as an Amphetamine

It can be argued that religion as an amphetamine is an antithesis of Marx's thesis that religion is the opiate of the people. If Marx conceived religion as opium that makes the masses surrender, one would be forced to argue that such philosophy was time and space-bound. It is time bound because it seems not to adequately reflect the recent global events which religion is championing, especially the extreme form of political Islam. It is space bound because it does not enjoy universal appeal. Even where it operated, it has been found that religion rather than be

a socio-economic construction of the ruling classes was indeed an energizer of the oppressed against the oppressors.

Marx's opium theory appeared to be grounded largely against Christianity particularly the Catholic Church that was widespread in his time. Some Islamic scholars have argued that Marx and Lenin generalized the concept of religions without giving credence to distinctions among them. Islam, as will be shown shortly, encourages violence to effect a social change. As Marx conceived,

The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submissiveness and humbleness, in short all the qualities of the rabble, and the proletariat, which will not permit itself to be treated as rabble, needs its courage, its self-confidence, its pride and its sense of independence even more than its bread. The social principles of Christianity are sneaking and hypocritical, and the proletariat is revolutionary.²⁵

Andrew N. Wilson apparently trying to buttress Marxist position of the opium theory ended up presenting religion as truly an amphetamine. In his caustic criticism against religion, he left no one in doubt that God rather than religion is the worst enemy of humanity. Since it has been historically proved that religion generates and sanctions wars, strife, tyrannies, oppression, suppression of the truth and the like, it stands to reason that its functions are unfavourable to human peaceful co-existence particularly in an unequal society. Thus, "it might be truer to say that the love of God is the root of all evil."²⁶ Consequently, Marx's conception of the opium is not completely true about the possibilities of religion. In Wilson's words, "Marx described it as the opium of the people; but it is much deadlier than opium. It does not send people to sleep, it excites them to persecute one another...."²⁷ Marx's aversion to, and the strong belief that religion would die off naturally upon the defeat of capitalism must have blinded him to this truth.

Samuel Huntington's controversial article, "The Clash of Civilisations" which was expanded later into a book raised critical issues that pushed public debate on the pertinence of religion in political economy or foreign policy. According to him, "the fault lines between civilizations will be the battle line of the future." Rather than being driven by ideological prowess and economic puissance that determined the prosecution of the Cold War, Huntington argued that the fundamental source of conflict would be based on culture. The seven or eight major civilizations that would influence the world include: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African. The kernel of this future inevitable conflict between Western civilization and Islamic world is hinged on religion because civilizational categories are mostly defined in terms of, and by, religions. The isolation of Islamic category is instructive for Huntington because its clash with the Western civilization will be vitriolic. According to him, "Islamic civilization will be the most violent civilization and the primary threat to the West in the post-Cold War era."²⁸

Ali Shariati argued that Marx was bereft of the true nature of religion generally, and Islam in particular. According to him, Marx who was supposed to be "a learned philosopher" changed to "a propagatory orator or a sophist politician" because he allowed his private, passionate hatred for religion to be the ground of his philosophical or scientific method. It is true that "Marx's private life and his unsuccessful love caused by Christian priests"²⁹ must have made great influence on him. Yet, this should not have led to his generalization of religions. As

Shariati observed, Marx would not have heard so much about the basic doctrines of Judaism, nor Islam, which clearly teaches “God’s assignation of free will to men, that they might struggle in his earthly life and search for his own liberation.”³⁰ Marx made a betrayal of his thesis in his recourse to the Promethean faith in Greek mythology, and generalizing it inadequately with the Eastern religions. Whereas in Greek religion there is usually a conflict between god and man over mundane issues, Eastern religions present God as sympathetic to human plight. Consequently, that Marx said “philosophy is allied with the faith of Prometheus, in short; I hate Gods, all reasons denoting God’s existence”³¹ betrays him. That is why Shariati remarked,

Therefore, it is not strange while Marx, ‘a scientific philosopher and dialectician’ in scientific combat against religion, substitutes the ‘historical and social role of religion’ for intellectual and scientific truth of religion’ and tends to prove the falsification of it, which is not an easy task, through condemning it.³²

Hamid N. Rafiabadi added that Marx was not only bereft of the knowledge of religion generally but his historical contextualization of Islam was suspect. That Islam originated within socio-economic context of Arabia, or that the Arab Caliphate transited from primitive communal system to a class society under the “feudal theoretic state” or that “Islam was an ideological reflection of these processes” depict that Marx and Lenin were “completely ignorant about Islam, hence their criticism it (sic) seems to be merely hypothetical in nature rather than empirical.”³³ Rafiabadi further contended that if Marx and his school of thought had understood Islam and its teachings, they would probably have thought differently of religion being an opiate. The argument that religion engenders subordination to exploiters or submission to fate, abhorrence of resistance to evil of any system, aversion to violence, passivity, or endless patience for paradisaical bliss, obstruction to revolutionary struggle against exploitation, etc. are un-Islamic. As he put it,

All this criticism ... of religion is not in any way applicable to Islam as Islam does not preach subordination to the exploiters. On the contrary, it exalts people to safeguard their genuine rights. Islam does not preach passivity rather prepares people to be conscious enough to get their rights safeguarded. It permits fight against oppressors.... Muslims must have been ordered by Islam to fight on the side of the oppressed.... In this way, Islam becomes a revolutionary programme for the toiling masses and the oppressed people of the world.³⁴

Rafiabadi’s argument highlights the limits of Marxism-Leninism. If they thought that religion opiates or ‘boozes’ the people from revolutionary proclivity or tendency, it would mean that they did not consider the possibilities of Islam, which perhaps might have little influence on Europe at their time. If this argument is considered pedestrian, the recent global occurrences termed ‘new terrorism’, and the Nigerian Boko Haram experience will be good hypotheses.

Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

Many views have been canvassed about Boko Haram as a violent sect of Islam in Nigeria, especially since its spiral attacks in 2009. In the same vein several suggestions on how best to tackle it have inundated the tabloid. While there have been arguable causes and implications of its emergence in depth historical and sociological study has not yet been available.³⁵ This may

be why the recommendations and the tactics of the security operatives have either not been able to arrest the situation or escalate it.

However, Eskor Toyo's "Boko Haram and Western Education: A Comment" throws some historical insight into the understanding of the phenomenon. Toyo's work is premised on the historical dialectic between capitalism and socialism, which he thinks reflects on the activities of Boko Haram. According to him, "Boko Haram's attempt to deride the values of Western education is borne out of a genuine ignorance of the enemy – existing capitalist system of exploitation."³⁶ Thus, beyond the literal meaning of Boko Haram being "Western education is sinful or evil,"³⁷ Toyo underscores a political economy of the concept, which may either justify or condemn its violence. In this sense Boko will reflect "fakeness, deceit, sham, counterfeiting, make-belief, falsity or what Nigerians in the street would call 'wayo' [deception] or 'four-one-nine'" while Haram will mean "masquerading is rejected."³⁸ In this reasoning, to insist that Western education is the target is "a case of mistaken enemy"³⁹ because the real enemies are those who use Western education in an unethical way such as exploitation, oppression, corruption, etc.

Western education historically functioned to dislodge "religious obscurantism, transcendental and traditional powers" which opposed true human freedom. With the rise of rational philosophy and modern science, and even within Christianity, reason in the service of humanity became obvious. This again does not mean that reason has not or cannot be used to pursue spurious logic to distort facts or tell a lie. But in essence, such distortion would be "a defect of education not due to reason itself."⁴⁰ From this foregoing, Toyo argued that "if Boko Haram was against science, it was simply primitive or mistaken" however, "if Boko Haram attacked Western education or culture and identified industrialism as such with that culture in terms of the origin of that culture, it was right."⁴¹

These conclusions, Toyo maintains, are based on the fact that capitalism is a product of Western education, which breeds inequality, corruption, oppression, unemployment, etc. Viewed from the perspective of Western liberalism, the distorted logic of democracy, which opposed the fact of power deriving from the people, as imposed on Africa and Nigeria in particular underlies the activities of Boko Haram. What is practiced as democracy in capitalist countries, he argues, is plutocracy, the government of the wealthy. In contrary, "democracy was not a gift from the kings, dictators and their governments. It was imposed on them by the people."⁴² The absence of true democracy is therefore a catalyst for violence as Boko Haram is deploying. But again to generalize the West as guilty will be a mistaken reasoning. Even though the West is generally considered to be capitalist, the examples of North Korea and Cuba, under Fidel Castro and his successor with socialist ideology, negates the lack of distinction. While it is true that these exceptions under capitalist regimes were "a rotten hell for the people" they are at present "the nearest thing to heaven for the people."⁴³ This resulted partly from their humane educational policy and people-focused economy. With this, Toyo admonishes, "As for Boko, since non-socialist civilizations have been predatory and corrupt and need to cover up their antihuman heart with human face mask, it is Boko par excellence"⁴⁴ and as a fake or masquerading bride, it must be completely rejected, perhaps through violence. Toyo writes,

If capitalism nevertheless exists, it is not because the human conscience does not reject it; it is simply because material wealth is powerful in many ways. It is only when one is prepared for death, as only communists today are prepared for, that

one can really have the courage to fight against slave owners and slave users with a view to abolishing modern slavery and its abominations.⁴⁵

But as lucid as Toyo's arguments seem, the question he failed to raise and answer is whether Boko Haram is a communist or socialist movement. This is important because for whatever reasons, he deliberately devoid Boko Haram of being religious or theological. According to him, "there is no evidence that Boko Haram itself had theocratic views."⁴⁶ If this view is true (of course it is not), Toyo will identify Boko Haram with socialist or communist ideology, which rejects religion. However, ample and substantiated evidence suggests to the contrary: Boko Haram is theocratic; it is not socialism-oriented even though Islam does not prescribe any particular form of governance. Boko Haram position on this is unambiguous.

We want to reiterate that we are warriors who are carrying out jihad in Nigeria and our struggle is based on the traditions of the Holy Prophet. We will never accept any system of government apart from the one stipulated by Islam because that is the only way that the Muslims can be liberated. We do not believe in any system of government, be it traditional or orthodox, except the Islamic system and that is why we will keep on fighting against democracy, socialism and whatever. We will not allow Nigerian Constitution to replace the laws that have been enshrined in the Holy Quran. We will not allow adulterated conventional education (*Boko*) to replace Islamic teachings. We will not respect the Nigerian government because it is illegal. We will continue to fight its military and the police because they are not protecting Islam. We do not believe in the Nigerian judicial system and we will fight anyone who helps the government in perpetrating illegalities.⁴⁷

What is implicated is that Islam makes no distinction between the secular and religious. Boko Haram's real name, in Arabic, *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* meaning "Association of Sunnis for the Propagation of Islam and for Holy War" or "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teaching and Jihad"⁴⁸ sums up the theocratic leitmotif of what has been christened Boko Haram.

Like Shehu Sani has shown, Boko Haram under the leadership of late Muhammad Yusuf did not hide its puritanical, fundamentalist and theocratic contours. In fact, that the state responded later than expected implies the insensitivity of the security operatives to threats to national security. This is because Boko Haram trend followed a similar route like the Maitatsine uprising in Kano in 1980. Yusuf envisaged a return to the Medina Order and actually achieved it by setting up a parallel state within the Nigerian state on the basis of Sharia. Sani reveals that Yusuf "set up *lagnas* (departments), had a cabinet, the *Shura*, the *Hisbah*, the brigades of guilds, a military wings (sic), a large farm, an effective microfinance scheme, and late Yusuf played the role of a judge in settling disputes. Each state had an *Amir* (leader) including Amirs in Chad and Niger that gave account of their stewardship to Yusuf directly."⁴⁹ And finally, the *fatwa* (command) issued by the sect condemning the constitutional democratic government and all Western investitures, and a call to full Islamization of the country tells much of its theocratic agenda. The alternative to capitalism – socialism also appears not to be compatible with Islam.⁵⁰ The cross-fire between the two competing ideologies has left behind throes of suffering and pain.

With the chronicles of the violent activities of Boko Haram since 2009,⁵¹ the idea of jihad⁵² which is now not as a concept of "spiritual purification of conscience"⁵³ but a physical de-

ployment of violence against perceived enemies, call for critical examination. Although those concepts have not been given an in depth analysis, what has been paramount in people's minds is how quickly to end the violence the sect is perpetrating.

This expectation apparently includes the political economy that undergirds Boko Haram activities, granted that the sect as many commentators have suggested, protests against the economic injustice of the Nigerian state. Surujdeen Mudasiru,⁵⁴ Freedom Onuoha⁵⁵ and Sylvanus Okoro⁵⁶ have argued that poverty is a key factor in Boko Haram activities. Underlying the structural-functional reason is the argument that violence of this nature is part of the nature of a society. It has the propensity of inspiring guiding moral principles for a society. While crime (or violence) may have its positive side, it becomes dangerous when it turns uncontrollable as evident in Boko Haram. This latter situation obviously leads to normlessness, and also requires deliberate state action to combat it.⁵⁷ While it is true that poverty is a prominent cause in security challenges generally⁵⁸ the hope of an immediate end to it may be in the balance because, as it stands, there appears to be no virile agenda to address this root cause. Not even in the face of fierce, sporadic attacks that leave scores of deaths behind them will poverty eradication policy work. But this does not lose sight of a religion-inspired violence against a capitalist state contrary to Marx's thesis. In fact, it has added a new dimension to it.

Boko Haram and 'New Terrorism'

The year 2001 was a watershed in the history of global terrorism. One of its outcomes is the re-conceptualization of terrorism, a term, which on its own is problematic. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have redefined existing relations differently prior to this time.⁵⁹ The global and national security problematic has resulted in securitization.⁶⁰ The concept of new terrorism is a by-product of 9/11. It differentiates from the 'old' terrorism which is generally described as anti-capitalist imperialism, anti-national oppression and pro-people power, pro-socialism, etc. But new terrorism is anti-imperialism or anti-America or Anti-West, "but not anti-capitalism."⁶¹ While the 'old' was secular in nature, the goal of the 'new' is the enthronement of sharia through jihad of the sword. The 'new' is grounded on religious fault line because this is its major motivational amphetamine. The point that needs to be made very quickly is that the nationalistic agenda of 'new' terrorism as widely represented by radical Islam cuts across the Muslim world, especially those who share this vision.

It is in the context above that one can explain the jubilation of some Muslims in northern Nigeria at the event of 9/11. This implicates what Toyin Falola refers to as "transnationalization, denationalization and deterritorialization" of borderless globalization.⁶² It is also within this framework that we can understand the political ideology of Boko Haram as couched in al-Qaeda objectives in Africa. According to Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda aims at four things. One, liberating African Muslims from the apostate state regimes in North and West Africa, especially those with close allies with America and Israel. Two, al-Qaeda encouraged jihad against those committed to the restoration of peace in Sudan and Darfur and Somalia. Three, it refers to such countries as Nigeria as being 'ripe' for infiltration, not only because of the population of Muslims in the north but also as a strategic tool to destabilize the flow of natural resources supplied to its key enemies in the West. Four, as an effort to achieve a global borderless Islamic nation, al-Qaeda believes that Africa must be adequately mobilized. In order to achieve these aims, it has affiliated with Ittihad al Islam in the Horn of Africa as well as the Algerian-based Salafist Group for

Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in trans-Saharan areas.⁶³ The conception and deployment of violence in Nigeria as *halal* (permissible) must therefore be viewed from this perspective. This is important because as it has been widely suggested, dealing with Boko Haram as a hydra-headed sect, requires a determined, focused tactics. Two broad suggestions are made in this regard. The first has to do with the political aspect while the second focuses on the political economy of the problem.

The first has to do securitization as reflected in new terrorism. Basia Spalek says that “‘new terrorism’ has helped to securitise Islam as a religion, where securitisation might be thought of as the instigation of emergency politics: a particular social issue that becomes securitised is responded to above and beyond established rules and frameworks that exist within what might be termed ‘normal politics.’”⁶⁴ In this kind of emergency politics, what is paramount is restoring peace by deploying necessary security apparatuses. In order to achieve this there must be counter-insurgency measures i.e. “all measures adopted to suppress an insurgency” where insurgency means “a struggle to control a contested political space, between a state ... and one or more popularly based, non-state challengers.”⁶⁵ It is only when the sect will have been disarmed that the state can focus on its grievances from the root.

The second approach is also complex because of the widespread corruption in the system. Corruption has been the bane of development in Nigeria. It also accounts for why reforms are not deep-rooted.⁶⁶ Aside this all important social problem is the suggestion of *Almajiri* school system because it is from this pool of deprived children that Boko Haram has been recruiting its army.⁶⁷ But there must be massive investment in formal education to replace the *Almajiri* schools which enrolment is “about seven million children”⁶⁸ who are given the religious amphetamine. This political economy aspect of the problem has always left religion at the hands of its manipulators to negotiate their personal agenda, settle their political score or avenge their political failure.⁶⁹

Conclusion

We have argued that religions must be viewed from their contexts instead of gross generalization as Marx and his school of thought have done. Marx’s generic use of religion is limited by Islam. Radical Islam has shown that such broad categorization could be incorrect. The practical demonstration of this has resulted in the concept of ‘new’ terrorism which is propelled by radical Islam. With the democratization and globalization era, religion, particularly Islam has vitrified the long held Marxian thesis that religion is an opiate. Global reality shows that religion plays integral part in the new world order. This is why the mission statement of the American Academy of Religion becomes relevant. It says: “In a world where religion plays so central a role in social, political, and economic events, as well as in the lives of the communities and individuals, there is a critical need for ongoing reflection upon the understanding of religious traditions, issues, questions, and values.”⁷⁰

The Nigerian Boko Haram experience shows that religion is not an opiate of the people but an amphetamine which excites its members to violence, not only against the generally perceived political issues and political economy realities that have been suggested to underlie its activities, but also its spiral attacks on Christians who are equally faced with the same political economy challenges. It is the latter that makes Boko Haram issue peculiar, a theocratic regime, as it differs from the ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms of terrorism. It is within this context that “emer-

gency” political strategy is required as a first step to combating the phenomenon. That is why the declaration of state of emergency in the affected states in northern Nigeria is a step in the right direction. Negotiating with a sect that demands that the whole multi religious entity be converted to Islam will not do the country any good. For instance, would the elected governor of Borno State resign from office as demanded by the sect, as a prelude to dialogue? The possibility of securing a deal with a sect that in principle and action rejects and vitiates the constitution of a state is difficult. Intelligence gathering should be a critical aspect of the state of emergency. In fact, all the relevant security outfits should be overhauled and reengineered to function in this respect. Nigerian government should take serious advantage of listing the sect as an international terrorist group. Finally, corruption, poverty and political factors identified as causal to the escalation of the heinous activities of the sect must be deliberately and forthrightly addressed.

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