

DRAMA AND COUNTER TERRORISM IN NIGERIA: THE EXAMPLE OF YERIMA'S *HARD GROUND*

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Abstract

Nigeria, the most populated country in Africa, and the supposed giant of Africa is blessed with enormous mineral reserves, yet many Nigerians are yet to benefit from the dividends of her huge mineral resources, as the country's fragile democracy is challenged by a lot of problems, most of which are as a result of poverty, hunger and starvation. This has made the clamour for resource control a prominent issue on the front burners of social discourses, and has given birth to many forms of violence and terroristic activities in the country. In the same vein, drama serves as a powerful tool for entertainment, information and education, and a means by which man is warned against acts that impede his progress and development, as well as that of the society. The foregoing is the aim of this study as this research examines the role of drama in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria, using Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* as a case study. The study employs the descriptive and analytic methodology of the qualitative research method to realise set objectives, and observes that negotiation instead of violence is the best means to seek redress or resolve dispute. The study recommends that more plays that discourage terrorism and the use of violence by extremist groups to actualise their pursuits be written.

Introduction

The Nigerian nation has been bedevilled by a lot of challenges that continue to threaten its peace and economic stability, despite its huge mineral resources and place as the giant of Africa. The increasing rate of poverty in the land has made the clamour for resource control a prominent issue on the front burners of social discourses. Some Nigerians, in reaction to the economic woes facing the country, have resorted to the use of arms and other terroristic activities to draw government attention to their plights, for example, the Niger Delta militancy/insurgence, the Boko Haram insurgence, and the most recent, the Herdsmen and Farmers conflict, amongst others, found in virtually every geo-political zone of the country, and the cumulative effects of these is stagnation in the socio-economic growth of the nation, and untold hardship on Nigerians.

In the case of the Niger Delta insurgence, one can say that their fight is for resource control. In this regard, Kimiebi puts forth that, "whereas the oil produced in the Niger Delta is the life blood of the Nigerian economy; oil has failed to translate to regional prosperity and development in the Niger Delta" (cited in Emasealu and Mark 2).

This has led the youths of the region to fight government forces, go into hostage taking, carry out lethal car bombings, sabotage oil installations, and so on. In the same vein, the Boko Haram insurgents, which are deeply rooted in religious fundamentalism, are a terrorist social movement meant to subvert the Nigerian system of government in the Northern part of Nigeria through unbridled religious dogma, unmitigated terror and criminality. According to Antigha,

At its outbreak, Boko Haram Insurgency represented what Combs describes as “as synthesis of war and theatre, a dramatisation of the most proscribed kind of violence – that which is perpetrated on innocent victims – played before an audience in the hope of creating a mood of fear, for political purposes (*vanguardngr.com*).

Antigha also opines that,

the strategic end state of the insurgency is the establishment of an Islamic State in the Sahel covering parts of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, in the likeness of what ISIS envisioned for Iraq and Syria. Without doubt, 2011-2014 was Boko Haram’s most active and successful years. During this period, the public lost confidence in the ability of the military to defend Nigeria’s territorial integrity (*vanguardngr.com*).

In the case of the Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers clashes, tracing the genesis of the conflict, Ahmed-Gamgum observes that insecurity in the context of herdsmen and farmers relations in Nigeria dates back to when in the first instance the Fulani began to feel insecure in their place of origin and began to search for solutions outside their place of origin. According to Ahmed-Gamgum, insecurity arose amongst the non-Fulani farming communities when the Fulani arrived their communities and engaged in activities that pointed to attempts at dislodging the indigenes of the communities from their natural rights as land owners. Culturally, Fulani herdsmen are nomadic livestock breeders and in pre-colonial times, their place of origin was the Sahel and semi-arid areas of Fouta Djallon Mountains in West Africa, but threat from climatic changes and population growth made them to move to the savannah and tropical forest regions of Southern West Africa and far Northern Nigeria. Their migration into far Northern Nigeria dates back to the 13th and 14th Centuries, and after the Uthman Danfodio jihad, they began to integrate with the Hausa and non- Hausa ethnic groups of the middle belt, especially during the dry season, when the number and menace of tsetse flies are reduced in the middle belt of Nigeria. Ahmed-Gamgum further avers that whereas, on the one hand, crop cultivation and livestock farming are both agricultural activities among local communities for the purpose of food and protein for mankind, on the other hand, the nomads specialise in livestock breeding, particularly cattle breeding; without crop production (37).

In the view of Ahmed-Gamgum, differences in climatic conditions and changes in the North propelled herdsmen to move across regions, especially from the North to the Central and then Southern Nigeria to access better grazing resources in order to ensure

quality food security for their herds. This often occurs during crop cultivation season. While driving cattle across regions, sometimes, destruction of crops occur and becomes a source of conflict between farmers who claim customary right over land and herdsmen who are regarded as strangers. The introduction of the *Land Use Act* in 1978 by the Nigerian Government was to make it easier for non-indigenes of a particular area to apply and secure land on lease in their host communities, as well as provide opportunity for natives to apply and be given Certificate of Occupancy; to lay claim of the ownership of their ancestral lands. However, most Fulani herdsmen, who are used to migrating from one place to another, did not take advantage of this. As a consequence, they lacked where they could lay claim as their grazing routes and grazing lands. Their increasing movement from place to place in the eyes of the modern law amounted to trespass and encroachment of the properties of others.

Over the years, this brought conflicts of interest on land in some places. The Federal Government of Nigeria then identified areas to be known as grazing routes and reserves. This did not solve the problem because there was no compensation, as required by law to customary land owners, and herdsmen deliberately stray out of grazing paths into cultivated lands. Nevertheless, they co-existed and from time to time traditional rulers come in to adjudicate, to ensure that whoever was found guilty paid compensation. However, at the time, when there were wild animals, herdsmen carried sticks to defend themselves and their animals against wild animals, but they now carry sophisticated guns, not to attack animals but fellow human beings, even in the face of alternative peaceful dispute resolution methods. They even justify their carrying of guns; that it is for the protection of themselves and their animals against cattle rustlers (37).

Ogbeide recounts that until recently, the conflict and subsequent clashes were confined to the North Central zone of Nigeria, pitching the Berom farming community in Plateau State against the nomadic herders; but this has since spread to the North Central state of Benue, South East state of Enugu, South-South state of Delta and South West states of Oyo, Ondo and Ekiti, resulting in the loss of lives and properties. The massacre of some hundreds of people, destruction of properties and thousands of people internally displaced have become a usual occurrence in the affected communities (54). Mikailu adds that,

the continued effect of climate change on pasture lands also forced the Fulani herdsmen to move further southwards, in search of grass and water, and has widened the scope of the conflict with deadly incidents increasingly reported in southern parts of the country, raising fears that the violence could threaten the fragile unity that exists amongst Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups (cited in Ogbeide 54).

The Nigerian Government has at various times attempted to address the terroristic activities of these groups that have continued to destabilize the social dynamics of the nation, but all attempts have not yielded positive results. In a similar vein, the Niger Delta militancy has attracted a lot attempts by the Nigerian Government and concerned groups to restore peace to the Niger Delta region but these have not brought a

lasting solution to the problem of militancy in the region. The foregoing is the purpose of this study as this research examines the role of drama in the fight to counter terrorism and restore peace in Nigeria, using Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* as a case study.

Drama: A Definition

The word 'drama' is a Greek word that means 'to do' or 'to act' (action). Action in this sense means imitation or mimesis. Drama, therefore, can be defined as the imitation of human action before an audience. Aristotle (384-322 B.C), in his *Poetics*, classified different kinds of poetry based on some features he believed were unique in their composition. For Aristotle, drama refers to poetic compositions that are acted before spectators in a theatre. According to Okoh, "the concept of mimesis is essential to the core meaning of drama, and for Aristotle, the element of imitation is inherent in man from childhood" (21). She further notes that "drama is also a method of expression for the playwright, who tries to give order and clarity to human experience. It can be presented as a dialogue either on stage, television, and radio" (Okoh 21). A play (drama) is simply a dramatic composition in the form of a scripted dialogue, made up of characters, which is meant to be performed on stage before an audience. Azunwo defines a play as, "a creative and an artistic letter composed by the supposed conscience of the theatre" (the playwright), "first and foremost to the director, actors, and other members of the production crew, informing them of his current ideological standpoint, vision and positive commitment to the development of his society" (52).

The Dramatist and the Society

A dramatist is a person who crafts or writes plays. Another name for the dramatist is a playwright. The dramatist does not just write because he wants to express an idea, all too often plays are meant for the society. Plays reflect the tastes, attitudes, lives, anomalies, needs and aspirations of the society, and are written with the aim of informing, entertaining and educating the masses. Drama has been described as a mirror that reflects back society to itself. As such, the dramatist is a watchdog meant to observe, document, and warn society against inimical attitudes and behaviours that can stampede and impede its growth and development. Plays should engineer the people towards social change. Thus, drama should reflect the dominant worldview and lifestyle of the age in which it is situated, and provide tangible solutions to the societal problems of its time.

Over the years drama has been used by playwrights to make constructive statements on events in the society, so as to effect positive changes in man and the society. Eboh believes the dramatist is the gadfly God attached to the state to arouse, persuade and reproach it for good (108). The dramatist therefore acts as a watchdog of society as he uses drama as a tool to effect changes in his environment. For Obadiogwu, the dramatist aims to show his own stand in his society (112). The dramatist cannot only effect changes in the society by recreating these changes through play texts; he can also serve as a visionary who can predict the future by utilising recent experiences as perspectives on both the present and the future (Dandaura 179). Hope Eghagha, commenting on the role of the dramatist in Nigeria, submits that,

because popular theatre (drama) has the capacity to reach all strata of society using a simple language, a simple method, its outreach could be the tonic the nation needs for the change in values which both the leaders and followers of the country are currently clamouring for (210).

As such, “a dramatist is able to achieve his intended aim through his play because he is a member of the society” and “his artistic sensibilities are shaped and sharpened by the socio-economic contradictions and political happenings of his time” (Dandaura 179).

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism in Nigeria

The word terrorism refers to any use or threat of violence by a person or a group of persons to intimidate civilians or generate an atmosphere of fear for political or religious reasons. Majekodunmi observes that from the etymological concept, the word ‘terrorism’ comes from the Latin and French words: *terrere*, and *terrorisme*, meaning, “to frighten,” and “state rule by terror”, respectively. There is no generally accepted mode of operation of terrorists; also there exists no generally accepted definition among terrorism experts. The English word ‘terrorism’ was first recorded in English Dictionaries in 1798 as meaning “systematic use of terror as a policy.” The *Oxford Dictionary* still records terrorism as, “Government by intimidation carried out by the party in power in France between 1789-1994” (129-130).

According to Majekodunmi, Walter Laqueur, a renowned scholar of terrorism, contends that a comprehensive definition of terrorism does not exist nor will it be found in the foreseeable future. Terrorism can be explained as the use or threat of violence by an individual or a group, whether acting in opposition to established authority or not, when such action is designed to create extreme anxiety or fear including effects in a target group larger than immediate victims with the purpose of coercing that group into acceding to the political or religious demands of the perpetrators. The critical elements here are violent activities intended to create an atmosphere of fear in order to further an interest (130). Whereas, Adeyemo argues that terrorism can be likened to genocide, and defines it as, “the deliberate and systematic destruction in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious or national group” (cited in Majekodunmi 130).

Steward observes that terrorism does not discriminate between races, cultures or faiths. So, pervasive is terrorism with its attendant casualties that it has become a growing scourge and threat to local and international peace and security. By whatever means it is carried out, acts of terrorism most times do not affect the enemy directly; rather, innocent victims are made to pay the unsolicited price of terrorist attacks. Such victimisation often fuels emotions that are capable of exaggerating perceptions about the degree of the attack via rumours and heightened fear that spreads like wild fire. The implication of the ensuing pervasive fear is the waning of public confidence in the government’s ability to ensure their security and the magnification of the feeling of vulnerability and insecurity to the joy of the terrorists. Victims of terrorist attack are, therefore, the necessary means to the ends of publicity and widespread anxiety (cited by Mohammed and Abdullahi 3). According to Jacob Omede and Andrew Abdul Omede, the people who embark on acts of

terrorism are known as terrorists. They identify the following as characteristics of terrorism:

- Use of unlawful violence, believing that violence will usher in a better system.
- Use of unlawful and assorted dangerous weapons.
- Motivated by goals that might be political, religious or ideological.
- Secretive in membership recruitment and locations of residence.
- Fewer in number comparable to the larger society they attack.
- Have strong will and could die for the cause they uphold.
- Most times, operate as syndicates.
- Derive financial and military support from national and international loyalists.
- They are militant; use coercion, intimidation and instill fear in people.
- Their tactics involve:
 - Suicide bombing, car bombing, rocket propelled grenades, assassinations, abductions and kidnapping, disguising and hijacking.
 - Their targets are extermination of human lives and destruction of properties. These are achieved by attacking:
 - Public squares, government buildings and installations, churches and mosques, schools, bridges, police stations, military barracks and installations as well as market squares and prisons to free inmates, particularly their members incarcerated (121).

As observed earlier, the Nigerian nation is challenged by terrorist activities that have created fear, suspicion and distrust amongst the many ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian polity. Edward advances that “ethno-religious cleavages created in the past, conditions that resulted in violent sectarian and inter and intra communal clashes in several parts of the country, from the civil war, which by far was the most, is recurring in this century”; and “Nigeria’s unity has always been fragile” (cited in Mohammed & Abdullahi 5). Already, prominent religious leaders have begun calling for the division of Nigeria along religious lines. In 2013, the President of CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria), Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor declared that Boko Haram is an organised attempt to foist Islam on the secular Nigerian state; a move which in his own words amount to “a declaration of Jihad against Christians” in the country (cited in Mohammed & Abdullahi 5). Udama identifies some kinds of terrorist activities in Nigeria, thus:

- *State Terrorism*: This is characterised by systematic and massive criminally repressive insidious policies, implemented by the State through its agencies or even direct attack on the citizens to instill fear or inflict pains or cause deaths.
- *Group Terrorists*: These are groups that carry out terroristic activities against the State for one reason or the other. Some of these terrorists are faceless and their motives are beclouded by uncertainty, while some are not and their motives are well known to the public (103-106).

In the same vein, there have been attempts by the Nigerian Government to counter the activities of terrorists in Nigeria. Counter terrorism refers to all attempts or strategies by the government to prevent and combat terrorism through the military, law enforcement, business, and intelligence agencies, including attempts to counter the financing of terrorism. According to the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) of Nigeria, counter terrorism is defined as “operations that include the offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, pre-empt and respond to terrorism” (NACTEST 1). It also defines insurgency as, “an organised armed struggle by a group aimed at weakening the authority of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in order to force a political change through the propagation of extremist ideology, under the guise of politico-economic marginalisation”; and counter-insurgency as “the range of military, political and socioeconomic measures adopted by a State in response to the outbreak of insurgency” (NACTEST 1-2). The NACTEST is organised around five work streams, each with its key objectives and success indicators. The five work streams are:

- *Forestall*: To stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
- *Secure*: Strengthen protection capacity against terrorist attacks.
- *Identify*: Pre-emption through detection, early warning and ensuring that terrorist acts are properly investigated.
- *Prepare*: To mitigate the impact of terrorist attacks by building resilience and redundancies to ensure continuity of business.
- *Implementation*: A framework for the mobilisation of coordinated cross-governmental efforts (NACTEST 2-3).

However, in spite of all these measures, the fight against terrorism in Nigeria has remained one of the biggest challenges threatening the country’s peace and stability. The Nigerian Government still faces a lot of dilemmas in its fight against terrorism.

Synopsis of *Hard Ground*

The play chronicles the life of Nimi, an eighteen year old boy, a militant, who drops out of school and takes up arms to emancipate his people. Things go bad when the table is turned against him, Nimi is accused of masterminding the deaths of the Don’s boys, his Master, and for this reason the Don is after Nimi’s life. His parents, Mama and Baba pay for his ransom. Mama, Baba and Nimi’s uncle, Inyingifaa, enquire from Nimi the real nature of what happened in the creek. Nimi affirms that he is innocent and accuses Kingsley, a Reverend Father, of revealing the secret that led to the death of the Don’s boys.

Alabo and Tonye, the chiefs of Nimi’s community and a crowd of people come to honour Nimi with gifts and drinks, for his efforts in fighting for the rights of the people. Alabo is disappointed when Nimi tells him that they want a revolution. Alabo tells Nimi that the world does not listen to young men in headbands, with AK47 guns from the swamp. Alabo leaves in disappointment while Tonye calls Nimi their new hero, Mama shouts at the villagers and they exist. Inyingifaa brings news that the Don has

agreed to see Nimi, after which Nimi collapses from the effects of a poisoned drink given to him by chief Tonye, while Mama is overtaken by an epileptic attack.

Tingolongo, a fearsome masquerade comes to take Nimi's life, Nimi pleads and Tingolongo warns him of his wicked acts against humanity. Nimi asks for forgiveness and swears to change. Inyingifaa brings news that the Don gave orders that Pikibo, Nimi's girlfriend, who is pregnant for Nimi be killed with the child for revealing the secret that led to the death of the Don's boys. Nimi, angered by this, decides to go back to the jungle and avenge the deaths of Pikibo and his unborn child. Father Kingsley reveals that the Don would be visiting and Mama tells Nimi that his father, Baba, would not be there to meet with the Don as he does not trust what would happen when he (Baba) meets with the Don face to face, and so he leaves money with Mama, instructing that the Don be entertained properly. Nimi says that his father has failed him and decides to kill the Don by himself. The Don visits, Nimi strikes him and discovers that the Don is Baba (his father), he screams at this realisation, while Mama collapses from the shock.

Counter Terrorism in *Hard Ground*

Counter terrorism as defined earlier, refers to all strategies adopted by the government and interested parties; including theatre artists to prevent, deter, pre-empt and respond to acts of terrorism. This study will however be limited to the role of drama in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria, using Yerima's *Hard Ground* as the primary text for analysis. This study will attempt to examine the solution provided by the playwright to counter, discourage and fight terrorism in Nigeria. However, the focus is on the causes and effects of the Niger Delta militancy, which is the thematic thrust of the play.

The first scene of the play begins with Nimi, the main character, an eighteen years old Niger Delta militant, whose life is in danger because the Don, his boss, has placed a death sentence on him, after he was accused of masterminding the deaths of his colleagues in an operation that saw them in open confrontation with the Police. His father, Baba, his uncle, Inyingifaa, enquire from him to know what really happened at the camp, and who revealed the secret about their operations to the Police, having paid a fee to rescue him from those who want to kill him, especially the Don, because they feel he betrayed them. Nimi speaks thus:

Nimi: I did not ask anyone to rescue me. Now, I shall be labelled a vulture. And any child with a knife can butcher me, tear me apart, or even hang me by the neck till life drips out of my body like river water, and I shall be left to die a slow and painful death. Ha, Ibinabo! They should have left me to die with my friends for the sake of the land. Huum, I smell now, like a bad rotten fish, I smell. Tamunoe!... I smell the stench of a coward in the swampy forest of green leaves and black oily soil. I smell. They shall smoke me out like they do all vultures. They shall track me down and steadily, I will be chased like a trapped rabbit. They shall fling me to the wolf boys who will spit on me first, like hungry crocodiles, their watery fangs shall await the bitterness of my flesh. Oh god! Why did they rescue

me? I should have been allowed to be shot and die for the glory of the land like my six brothers...the true warriors of the land (Yerima 9).

The above lines reveal the wild, animalistic, savage and gruesome nature of the Niger Delta militants and their lives in the creeks. Nimi knows that his life is in danger because of the circumstances surrounding the deaths of his fellow militants, and as their leader, he laments the impending consequences. We also learn that Nimi is called the Scorpion in their camp, which is typical of militants to use names of wild animals to identify themselves. Baba informs Nimi that 20 people were killed in the camp and everyone is pointing accusing fingers at him. From the words of Mama, Nimi's mother, we learn that Nimi was sent at a young age to the village to learn their language, so that he would be brought up properly, but Nimi ended up joining a militant group, which is common of most militants. Some of them drop out of school at a tender age to embrace militancy as a source of livelihood. Nimi defends his choice of joining militancy thus:

Nimi: There are younger boys and girls than me in the struggle. Children who believe in the cause. First, you listen to what the elders say about the struggle. Even when in primary school. You live in pain, and then it sounds right to join the struggle, first as a boy of a group, then as the eye or spy. By the time you are half way through primary school, you carry guns for the boys, and by the time you are eleven, in these days of automatic guns, you become an expert. You see people die every day. Either of hunger or just death, so it means nothing to you... (Yerima 11-12).

It is typical of Niger Delta militants to operate and justify their actions based on extremist ideologies in their clamour for resource control. They believe that fighting the government and foreign nationals through violence, is the only way for them to be heard and their goals met. This is displayed in scene two when some Niger Delta chiefs and people come to thank Nimi with gifts for his fights in the so-called Niger Delta struggle. One of the chiefs addresses Nimi:

Alabo: (*A well-dressed chief is standing addressing Nimi. The others look on, clapping.*) We are happy we met you at home this morning, this means Tamuno is with us. My son told us what you have done for the dream state, and how you have saved him on several occasions. I myself wanted to meet you for a proposition. To this effect, I decided to bring this little token of my gratitude. (*He hands him an envelope of money. The others clap at the point of the presentation. Nimi collects it.*) (Yerima 33).

Nimi tells Alabo that whatever he and his boys did was for the good of the people. He thanks him for the gifts and says the struggle continues. Another chief, Tonye, speaks to Nimi:

Tonye: It was the way you handled the removal of Chief Tomfort that amazed us all. He was a middleman who enriched himself rather than taking care of his people. As long as people like him were the power brokers, there was no future for the youths (Yerima 33).

The above statements justify why politicians are one of the targets of militants because they pretend to speak for the people with the government, but only use this as a means to siphon public wealth for personal aggrandisement; leaving the masses impoverished. Most of them even buy arms which they give to small boys to fight and die, protecting them (politicians), while they send their children abroad. Nimi, now tipsy from the effect of the drink given to him; as part of the gift items brought by the Chiefs, speaks of their activities as militants:

Nimi: (*Takes a sip.*) I was a little man in trenches, planning the attacks of blocking the oil wells in trenches, finding how well to kidnap Whitemen, explorers of our nation state, and making their hearts feel our pains. Little man, me? They dress in fine clothes at weekends in the cities after exploiting our oil, dancing to town in their helicopters and jeeps, to exploit our women and girls. Me, a little man? No more!...(Yerima 37).

Speaking of their anger against politicians, Nimi says:

Nimi: They created us. They gave us the reason to find our place... First we were errand boys, and so we got guns and money. We started to ask questions, they had no answers. We all knew what they looked like before they got into power. We dumped them. They gave us no respect, because of the crumbs they give us while they keep the chunk. Now we listen only to the people. We fight only for ourselves. Our lives in our pockets. Our songs are for ourselves, not for any hero who feels we smell of poverty. (*He breaks into a war song and dances.*) Oh, my blood boils, I long for the smell of the swamp. Breaking up this country is our next agenda (Yerima 37).

Nimi's submission underscores a major characteristic of terrorists, which is to topple government, undermine its authority, engineer civil war or influence regime change. Chief Alabo tells Nimi that he believes in the Niger Delta cause and wants to put money into it, but asks Nimi if they will succeed. Nimi tells him that they will succeed more if he gives them more money, which they would use to buy more weapons, employ more boys, get more gadgets, feed the poor, and he (Alabo) shall be a great donor, a humanitarian, a philanthropist and a fervent believer in the Niger Delta cause. He will have their protection, and no man, born of man can harm him. Nimi's adds that:

Nimi: As long as people all over the world have started talking about it, then we have started to succeed. For now, this is the only way we know how to achieve what we want. Shed our blood and shed theirs too...(Yerima 38).

Chief Alabo is disappointed and he responds to Nimi:

Alabo: Have we not learnt anything? We must go beyond blood, blood, blood. That was why I turned to you when I was told about you. I thought you would be our new source of hope. Now I am confused. You cannot always wait to be wasted. How many more great men, men of vision must we lose? Death is not working. The world does not listen to young men in head bands, with AK47 guns, in the swamps. They will call them terrorists, guerrilla fighters, and both words mean killers, not heroes to them (Yerima 38).

Chief Alabo later leaves in disappointment. His opinion, which represents the authorial voice, is a clear condemnation of violence as a means of seeking redress. The scene later ends as Inyingifaa comes to inform Nimi and Mama that the Don is coming to see Nimi tomorrow night, and urges them to prepare for his visit. Coincidentally, Mama is under an epileptic attack, while Nimi collapses from the effect of a poisoned drink, which one of the Chiefs gave him. This further complicates the plot and also accentuates the reason why the Niger Delta militants do not trust traditional rulers and politicians.

Chief Alabo's position is further supported in Scene Three, when Tingolongo, a fearsome masquerade, representing the gods, dances in, while Nimi is in a trance, and warns Nimi to stop his terroristic activities and the killing of innocent souls. Tingolongo recounts how Nimi and his boys killed two men in its shrine, who had ran in for protection, burning them alive. It tells Nimi that they have desecrated its shrine. Nimi begs Tingolongo to spare his life, and says the Don, who they regard as their god, calls men vultures. Nimi and Tingolongo retell the gruesome deaths the men suffered in the hands of Nimi and his boys:

Nimi: We did not want to kill them in the shrine. We drove them until they ran in, after two days they got hungry, and one sneaked out to look for food. The boys caught him, and hacked him to death, removing his head from behind as he sped. In the wildness, my boys ran into the shrine, pulled out the second man.

Tingolongo: The way you killed him offended even the gods.

Nimi: A stick was pushed through his anus until it came out in his bowels. We then dragged them back into the shrine, and burnt them. It seemed the best way to dispose of their bodies at the time. Forgive us, oh great one, it was the struggle (Yerima 45-46).

Tingolongo tells Nimi that the Niger Delta struggle will take them all if they do not allow the heartbeat of their brother control their hot blood. It asks Nimi if they are sincere to each other and the cause, and the people, and says:

Tingolongo: ...The gods need the people! When you kill them all, who will worship us? Who will pour libation at the shrines? Who will sing our praises? Huum? You have become a disease which robs the children of the swampy fields of their future, instead of giving them life. Childish fool! (Yerima 48).

Nimi begs for forgiveness as Tingolongo says it is tired of taking innocent souls, cut in their primes in the name of a foolish struggle and leaves sparing Nimi's life. After this, Nimi sees a woman carrying a child. She is wrapped in a white cloth stained in blood. She walks close to him and reveals her face. Nimi screams when he realises it is his girlfriend Pikibo, and wakes up from the dream. At the same time, Inyingifaa brings news that they have found the vulture in the camp, and it was a Police spy living in the camp with Nimi. He adds that the Don gave order for it to be killed, as they first hung it by the neck with a string of wire, after which they cut its skin, slicing it out of the body, piece by piece, so that it could feel the pain of all the lives it had sold out to die. He also adds that the vulture was pregnant, and since the child of the vulture is also a vulture, they cut out the unborn child and beheaded it. Nimi later finds out that the vulture and the unborn child are his girlfriend Pikibo and his unborn child. He screams and eventually collapses at the knowledge of this reality. This reveals not only the brutality of militants and their unforgiving nature, but also lets us know that the wicked also cry. Nimi, who has been killing others without remorse and mercy, has been made to taste and feel the pains and brutality he has been inflicting on others.

In Scene Four, after confessing to Father Kingsley, his father's brother, and asking for forgiveness for wrongly accusing him of being the spy who gave information to the police that led to the deaths of his boys, Nimi decides to kill the Don. The final scene showcases the Don's visit, with Nimi slitting his throat in a swift attack, only to realise that the Don he has killed is his father, Baba. His mother collapses because of the shock of this reality. This final scene further reiterates Chief Alabo's warning and that of Tingolongo that violence is not the best option to seek redress. Nimi ends up losing all the things he cherished the most— his girlfriend Pikibo, his unborn child, his father, and his colleagues killed in the raid by the Police. Amidst these, he also lost his peace from the moment he enrolled into militancy; suffering from psychological tortures and the nightmares of dead souls, and he may likely lose his mother, who may not live long after realising that her son killed her husband right before her eyes.

Although Nimi succeeded in killing his arch enemy, the Don, the rippling effects of this patricide will live with him for the rest of his life. The play therefore ends on the note that, "he who lives by war, would die by war." In the play, all those who were directly or indirectly involved in militancy lost one thing or the other, which shows that militancy may bring some rewards, but the losses outweigh the gains. The play further tells us that the enemy of our peace is ourselves, close to us or within us. The Don, who

was after Nimi's life, whom we thought was somebody far away, was his own father. What an irony! It also points to the insincerity, greed and distrust on the part of the Niger Delta militants, as one can find many breakaway militant groups, springing out on a daily basis, all claiming to be fighting for the Niger Delta cause. More like the case of a house that is divided against itself, it cannot stand. Furthermore, because of the several terrorist groups that claim to be part of the Niger Delta struggle, like a faceless beast, the government is often confused on which group to engage with, in trying to work out modalities for negotiations and peace.

Conclusion

Terrorism is now a global issue and a threat that challenges world peace and stability. World governments have adopted and are rethinking new strategies to counter the activities of terrorists and Nigeria as a nation is not left out in this fight. All with the aim of creating a country and a world where the lives and properties of people are secured, which is necessary for man to thrive, and to ensure the peaceful co-existence of the members of the human community as they interact with one another. Terrorist groups may sometimes appear faceless but are not, because they are organised under clearly defined structures of leaderships and sponsors. While the pursuits of some terrorist groups may appear good, the means to attain or actualise these pursuits is where the problem lies, because of the violent, extremist and anti-government ideologies that govern their operations.

To win the fight against terrorism is one of the top agenda of the Nigerian government, and in realising this objective, it has adopted a lot of counter terrorism strategies through such agencies as the military, law enforcement, business and intelligence agencies, in order to prevent, deter, pre-empt and respond to terrorism, but the fight is far from over. In the same vein, drama exists to entertain, inform, and educate man and the society; as such, it discourages man from acts that are inimical to his progress, and encourages those that will ensure his survival, growth and development in the society. The foregoing is the aim of this study as this research has examined the role of drama as a counter terrorism tool in Nigeria, using Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* as a case study.

The study observed that negotiation instead of violence is the best means of seeking redress and settling dispute. The study recommends that more plays that discourage terrorism and the use of violence by extremist groups to actualise their pursuits be written. These plays should not only be written, but should be performed for the Nigerian audience to see and learn from.

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