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Pascal Amanfo's *Nation Under Siege* (2013) as an ideological discourse in the management of Boko Haram Insurgence in Nigeria

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Abstract: The persistence of violence in Nigeria's socio-political space has called for critical interventions of government and other stakeholders with a view to finding solutions from ideological and combative fronts. Nollywood filmmakers have been consistently intervening in national discourses aimed at ushering in peace and national cohesion through the subject matter and themes of their films. Pascal Amanfo's *Nation Under Siege* (2013) is one of the Nollywood films that have intervened in ideological discourse aimed at sustainable peace in Nigeria. With the tenets of psychoanalysis, the article critiques the film's focus on Boko Haram insurgents. With content analysis, the article found that the film highlights the operative strategies of the insurgents and the ineptitude of the government in the fight against them. The film, however, upholds the view that ideological warfare should also be engaged in the fight against the insurgents as underlined in the characterisation and role of Lina, a prostitute in the film. With the topicality and relevance of the film to ideological discourse, Nollywood has come of age considering the quality of its story and boldness to take risk in the face of state censorship.

Keywords: Nollywood and Boko Haram scourge, Nigeria's security challenges, *Nation Under Siege*

Résumé : La persistance de la violence dans l'espace sociopolitique nigérian a nécessité des interventions pertinentes du gouvernement et des autres parties prenantes afin de trouver des solutions idéologiques et combatives. Les cinéastes de Nollywood interviennent régulièrement dans les discours nationaux pour promouvoir la paix et la cohésion nationale, à travers les sujets et les thèmes de leurs films. Pascal Amanfo *Nation Under Siege* (2013) est l'un des films de Nollywood qui ont influencé le discours idéologique visant une paix durable au Nigéria. S'appuyant sur les principes de la psychanalyse, l'article critique l'accent mis par le film sur les insurgés de Boko Haram. L'analyse de contenu révèle que le film met en lumière les stratégies opérationnelles des insurgés et l'incompétence du gouvernement dans la lutte contre eux. Le film défend cependant l'idée que la guerre idéologique doit également être engagée dans la lutte contre les insurgés, comme le soulignent la caractérisation et le rôle de Lina, une prostituée. Grâce à l'actualité et à la pertinence du film pour le discours idéologique, Nollywood a atteint sa maturité, compte tenu de la qualité de son récit et de son audace à prendre des risques face à la censure d'État.

Mots-clés : Nollywood et le fléau de Boko Haram, défis sécuritaires du Nigéria, *Nation Under Siege*

Introduction

Nigeria, an erstwhile British colony, has been facing series of socio-political and economic violence since the attainment of political independence on October 1, 1960. At the wake of political independence, the country was plunged into political rivalry among nationalist leaders of the pre-independence decades and unfortunately, the new post-colonial entity could not manage the ensued socio-political crises premised on different ideological orientations and political affiliations of the actors. Sadly, the difference in ideological orientations engender varied political machinations with ethnic interests which have caused endemic arson, wanton destruction of lives and property as well as absolute insecurity across the country's geo-political zones. The ideological differences among the nationalists precipitated systemic socio-political bigotry which hampers nationalism and collective consciousness towards the attainment of sustainable Nigerian project. This is because ideology has the tendency to 'rupture' collectivism and communalism thereby replacing such with the individuation of self-will (Terry Eagleton, 1990; Michael Foucault, 1980).

The individuation of self-will heralded country's agitation for political independence as evident in the political activities of nationalist leaders such as Obafemi Awolowo, Samuel Ladoke Akintola, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Aminu Kano, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Herbert Macaulay¹. The ideological differences of these nationalist leaders led to 'ethnic political party formations' with dire effects on national cohesion as seen in 1963 Western Region political crises, January 15, 1966, military coup, the countercoup of July 25, 1966, as well as the Nigerian Civil War that nearly destroyed the country. At the end of the political turmoil and the civil war, a pessimistic feeling began to dominate the consciousness of majority of Nigerian about the sustainable national cohesion of the country. This view aligns with Osofisan's (1998 that:

From those moments, it seems, we signed our covenant with anomy. The primitive shedding of blood, which we applauded – foolishly now, in retrospect – was to be the opening prologue to a series of catastrophic events which would after usher in the Age of Terror, which has now set upon us, and from which there seems to be no immediate possibility of reprieve. Certainly, since that red dawn, violence, callousness and a rampant and predatory cannibalism have become our common, defining traits. (Osofisan, 1998, p. 12)

Following Osofisan's view, one can say that Nigeria has been thrown to the state of anarchy since the First Republic. This anarchy manifests itself in various forms – political riots, religious crises, strikes, police brutality, kidnapping, broad-daylight robbery, and intra-and-inter-party rivalries (Sesan, 2009, p. 171). At a broader scale, this state of anarchy in the country has been aggravated to situations of insurgence, militancy, terrorism and guerilla warfare thereby further threatening the country's fragile unity and national cohesion.

The history and sociology of Nigeria's political independence have been represented in creative arts such as drama and film. In this light and prior to the popularity of Nollywood films as media of social and national consciousness, Nigerian playwrights such as Wole Soyinka have also expressed scepticism about the 'unripe' political independence of the country. Soyinka expressed doubt about Nigeria's political

¹ These names represent nationalist leaders from Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo ethnic groups respectively. These nationalist leaders expressed different dates and years for the country's readiness for political independence. This situation hindered the decolonization process of the country till October 1, 1960.

independence as revealed in the subject matter and thematic foci of his play, *A Dance of the Forests*². He foresees violence, socio-economic and political failure in the new postcolonial entity, Nigeria. His characterization of half-child and the plot on the gathering of the tribes suggest that Nigeria was not ripe for political independence as at the time it was granted on October 1, 1960. The testimonies of Soyinka's predictions in *A Dance of the Forests* are seen in the pockets of political and socio-economic violence that have become perennial in the country. The country has not come out of the trauma caused by the first major political crisis code-named *wet e* (literally mean that pour petrol on your victim before setting it ablaze) in the Western region of the country. This crisis, among other reasons, prompted the military to take over the power in an unpopular coup of January 15, 1966. This coup and the countercoup of July 25, 1966, culminated in the Nigerian Civil War whose memory still haunts the country's peaceful co-existence. After the suspension of the Nigerian Civil War, the contemporary worry of the country is how to curtail Niger Delta militants, Boko Haram terrorists and bandits with kinetic and non-kinetic strategies. Among the non-kinetic approaches to the curtailment of Boko Haram terrorists is the use of Nollywood films.

The ideological differences that caused deformed foundation for political independence and federation of Nigeria has been represented in some Nollywood films such as Kunle Afolayan's *October 1* and *'76*. These two films offer different sociological explanations for differing nationalism among Nigerians across different ethno-cultural backgrounds. Although the two films present historical and sociological experiences of Nigeria as they happened decades apart, they offer prognostic analysis of the unfolding crises following unresolved ethnic issues which precipitated the military coups of 1966 and 1976. The very genesis of the political crises and the eventual military coups can be traced to the activities of the nationalists (from the three major ethnic groups) who did not trust one another and, consequently, they all struggled for positions at the centre. This ethnic mistrust among the nationalist leaders is one of the sad realities that Nigeria currently lives with as evident in the series of ethnic and regional crises such as militancy in the South-South region of the country, banditry and Boko Haram terrorism in the Northern region of the country as well as herders-farmers crises in the South-West region of the country.

Since the upsurge in the Boko Haram attacks in the country, government and other stakeholders have been harmonizing resources to put an end to it. Among the stakeholders in the fight against Boko Haram scourge are Nollywood actors, directors and producers who have put their resources together to make movies aimed at national re-orientation and informed ideological orientation about national interest. Pascal Amanfo's *Nation Under Siege* (2013) is a representation of Nollywood's intervention in the quest for sustainable peace in Nigeria. The thematic focus and subject matter of the film attempt to offer ideological discourse on how to find sustainable solution to Boko Haram scourge in the country.

The name 'Boko Haram' was drawn from the fundamental teachings of Muhammad Yusuf in the early 2000s, where he taught his followers in the city of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State and some parts of Yobe State and attributed the decadence in the society to Western Civilisation (Adebayo, 2017). Nigerian government did not take Yusuf's teachings seriously until the whole situation degenerated to chaos and breach of public peace. Instead of taking proactive step against the activities of Muhammad Yusuf, the state government of Borno State, at that time, enlisted some of Yusuf's followers in

² Wole Soyinka was commissioned to write and perform a play for the celebration of country's independence on October 1, 1960. The title of the play he prepared for the celebration was *A Dance of the Forests*. The play was later published in 1963 with Oxford University Press.

the government's cabinet until the two parties – the state government and the leadership of the sect – had serious misunderstanding. On the commentary on the trend of Boko Haram insurgency, Adebayo writes further that “it was after the death of Muhammad Yusuf in 2009 that the sect gained the attention of the nation which can be attributed to the weak approaches the Federal Government adopted to combat the sect whose strength was earlier underestimated.” (Adebayo, 2017, p. 135). Adebayo's submission reveals the lackadaisical attitude of Nigerian government to some of the critical sociological and political problems that usually cause much physical and psychological damage in the country. Also, most insurgent groups often take advantage of government ineptitude to foment troubles.

Cracks within, State Violence³ and the Art

Pascal Amanfo's *Nation Under Siege* (2013) was first released in 2013 as artistic representation of the insecurity and breach of peace facing Nigeria, a sub-Sahara African country owing to the scourge of Boko Haram attacks in the Northeastern part of the country.

Image 1

The cover image of Pascal Amanfo's "Nation Under Siege" (2013)



Notes: From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Movie_poster_for_Nation_Under_Siege.jpg

The plot of the film presents the story of a newly recruited suicide bomber, Amid, into the fold of Rama Boko terrorists. Amid is to bomb 5000 people attending end of the year and award-giving ceremony of a school. The state is putting efforts in place to stop the scourge of Rama Boko terrorists but with no success because of the internal cracks in the

³ State violence is taken from two ideological perspectives: i. the reaction of the government towards artistic creation in literature and film, ii. The government's [in] actions which have caused and sustained violence in the country. In artistic production such as films, the reactionary measures taken by the government is always punitive to deal with the artists and their arts using the state apparatuses of law.

government circle. Fate connects Amid with a prostitute few days to his suicide mission. From their discussion, Amid is confused whether he should carry on with his suicide mission or abort it. With his current state of mind, he can no longer understand the essence and ideological orientation of Rama Boko terrorists. He, consequently, has a rethink on the need for national interest. Eventually, Amid aborts his mission of bombing the participants at the event and transfers the focus of his terrorism on Jamal (the overall leader of Rama Boko terrorists).

Unfortunately, the film was subjected to state violence at its first release in 2013 as it was prohibited to be screened in Nigeria and Ghana cinemas and the producer/director was fined 2,000 dollars. The film was subjected to the state violence, perhaps, for national interest and security. The state's violence against the film is a replica of Nigerian government's attitude towards committed arts. On this situation, Femi Osofisan (2001, p. 92) interrogates the attitude of state towards artists and their arts. While commenting on the state terrorism against artists, Osofisan writes thus:

Indeed, the artist who is merely truthful cannot but reflect in his/her work, the appalling situation of social and political injustice, but when that happens, the artist treads on the open sore of the rulers, and the latter's response is, predictably, one of repression and persecution. It is at such moments that the quest for relevance is met with terrorism; and the agents of the state become, for the writer, potential executioners. (Osofisan, 2001, p. 92)

In line with Osofisan's submission, the director/producer of *Nation Under Siege* (2013) suffers from economic loss and psychological trauma sequel to series of censorship that the film faced upon release to the market. This reflects state violence against artists and their arts. With this, it can be said that the fate of the film is sealed from the very first day of its release. This is because the film does not gain any popularity just as the other Nollywood films such as Desmond Ovbiagele's *The Milk Maid* on the same subject matter of Boko Haram.

The reason for the difference in the state reception of *Nation Under Siege* (2013) and *The Milk Maid* (2020) might be the gap of seven (7) years in their year of production. *Nation Under Siege* (2013) was produced in the period that Nigerian government had not had 'concrete' solution towards abating the scourge of Boko Haram terrorism. By 2020 that *The Milk Maid* was produced, Nigerian government has been overcoming the menace of Boko Haram terrorism. Also, *Nation Under Siege* (2013) adopted a radical approach by exposing lack of political will and corruption in the government circles as parts of the problems militating against sustained fights against Boko Haram terrorism. *The Milk Maid*, on the other hand, subtly presents how Boko Haram activities affect the peasants and rural dwellers without making any overt reference to the government. Thus, *Nation Under Siege* (2013) is subjected to state violence because it is a committed art which speaks directly to the consciousness of the power. The thematic thrust and the overall subject matter of the film is, therefore, consistent with Oluwole Coker's view that "the postcolonial condition is at the centre-stage of the dramaturgic concern of African dramatists" (Coker, 2021, p. 155). Consequently, the dramaturgic concerns of African dramatists are often met with government resentment with absolute violence. Thus, the position here is that most of the postcolonial government in Africa and Nigeria specifically are often sensitive and reactive to the contents of committed expressive and performing arts.

Image 2

The cover image of Desmond Ovbiagele's "The Milk Maid"



Notes: From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Milkmaid_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Milkmaid_(film))

From a critical perspective, however, the state violence against *Nation Under Siege* (2013) and its producer/director is unnecessary because ideological orientation of the film has the potential to ensure sustainable peace in the face of Boko Haram scourge in Nigeria without tampering with national interest and security. Sadly, this is not the first time that Nigerian/Nollywood films are subjected to state violence of banishment, prohibition and unwarranted censorship. Other Nigerian movies that had faced one form of state violence or the other are the film adaptation of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* which was later released under the title, *Bullfrog in the Sun* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of the Yellow Sun* adapted to film of the same title but with almost different contents. With the state violence against *Nation Under Siege* (2013) and other films, the fundamental ideological orientations of these films are lost. With this situation, one is, therefore, tempted to ask, "is government afraid of naked truth and filmic representation of the lack of political will to solve myriad of political, socio-economic and security challenges facing the country?" Sesan's (2016, p. 164) view on the functionality of arts (literature and film) in ideal republic roughly responds to the question that:

In an ideal republic, literary and film texts are expected to interrogate the vices in the society for practicable solutions. Thus, literary and film texts in the contemporary Nigerian society reveals the problems of corruption, maladministration, injustice and bad governance that confront the country as their thematic concern. There are two critical issues here: (i) the subaltern read these texts with admiration and fascination without having the political and economic might to right the wrong in the corridor of power because they are helpless to help their situations within the matrix of events in the country; (ii) the texts do not get to the privileged that hold the belief that they are at their promethean height. Even when the texts get to them, they feign ignorance of the corruption and injustice projected in the texts. In this regard, the privileged and the oppressor become threatened by the power of literary and film texts. (ibidem)

Sesan's view is consistent with the fate that befell *Nation Under Siege* (2013) at its release. The people at the corridors of power do feel uncomfortable when an artistic production focuses on the lingering sociological and political challenges such as insurgence and social unrest confronting the nation. As at the time of the release of the film, Boko Haram terrorism was among the major internal socio-political problems exposing Nigeria to global embarrassment. The situation debased the country's sovereignty with many countries avoiding bilateral/multilateral economic and diplomatic relationships with the country. Thus, the Nigerian government would not want any publicity of Boko Haram menace through the veracity of Nollywood films such as *Nation Under Siege* (2013) which exposes the complicity of state actors in the management of the terrorism.

The brilliance of the film as an ideological discourse to the quest for sustainable peace in the face of Boko Haram scourge in Nigeria is seen in its characterization, plot and the overall thematic focus. The film underlines the fact that the Boko Haram scourge should not only be tackled from religious fronts, but it should also be seen from ideological fronts with critical attention paid to the psychology of the actors, the government and the victims of the terrorist acts. The present article makes a case for ideological fronts because ideology is about working on mindset towards achieving set goals. Thus, "ideology is a product of a particular period, and is a set of social relations" (Akoh, 2023, p. 15). Based on this, the success of ideology in each society depends on the manipulation of the psychic structure – id, ego and superego – of individual and group relations in a society. As established in the film, *Nation Under Siege* (2013), the leaders of Rama Boko group usually recruit new members by working on their psychic structure of id and ego for subjective ideological formation against Nigerian government.

The dialogue between Baba (one of the leaders of Rama Boko) and recruiting agent while recruiting Amid into the fold of Rama Boko reveals thus:

Baba: I like him. I like the fire I see in him. But now, we must put the same fire in his heart.

Agent: He is ready, Baba.

Baba: There is one thing to be ready. There is another thing to be prepared.

Agent: By the books, I have taught him everything he needs to know.

Baba: Granted. What of things he must not know.

Amid: I am ready. I can do whatever you want me to do (*stabs the agent to death*).

The dialogue reflects the mind game which takes place during the recruitment into Rama Boko sect as presented in the film. The impact of the dialogue on Amid's psyche is a disconnect between id and ego. Amid's id overrides his ego with the manifestation of destructive tendency upon his recruitment into the fold of Rama Boko. This situation in the film is consistent with Ann Dobie's (2009) description of id that:

Obviously, the id can be a socially destructive force. Unrestrained, it will aggressively seek to gratify its desires without any concern for law, customs, or values. It can even be self-destructive in its drive to have what it wants. In many ways, it resembles the devil figure that appears in some theological and literary texts, because it offers strong temptation to take what we want without heeding normal restraints, taboos, or consequences. (Dobbie, 2009, p. 53)

Amid's id becomes untamed after the first killing and he also ruthlessly pursues Rama Boko's course until she meets a prostitute. Id, therefore, is a catalyst for human untamed

action springing from unconscious state of mind. This is not to say that it can be equated with stage of innocence as it is usually the manifestation of personae and prototype self as influenced by the remote or immediate stimuli. A critical stimulus which further immersed Amid into the fold of Rama Boko ideology is Baba's indoctrination as he addressed Amid that "you are only a mark, and you always have a target/aside that you don't exist" (*Nation Under Siege*, 2013).

Image 3

The scene showing the ideological indoctrination of Amid by Baba and the recruitment agent – Baba is at the left, Amid is at the centre while the recruitment agent is at the right. This is the scene where Amid kills the agent to demonstrate his readiness and preparedness to join Rama Boko sect



Notes: From Nation Under Siege (2013)

Baba's discussion with Amid is also consistent with Carl Jung's idea of shadow which usually presents the dark and unattractive aspect of self. In the light of this, Baba wants Amid to believe that he is only living to advance the course of Rama Boko and that all other objects are the targets to be eliminated. This ideological proposition to Amid is antithetical to humanistic understanding of collective responsibilities towards rewarding living.

Rama Boko's brutality in the execution of its ideology creates tensed situations in the country thereby affecting the nation's collective consciousness but with varying degrees. It can, therefore, be said that the government and other stakeholders in the fight against Rama Boko in *Nation Under Siege* (2013) base their actions on different ideological foundations. This is a major problem militating against putting an end to its menace. Also, the difference in ideological orientations of the government and its agents underline apparent cracks in the efforts towards crushing Rama Boko terrorists. Consequently, the cracks have caused absence of political will to achieve common goals of sustainable peace. The situation becomes more compounded with the series of corruption that mar the success of goal-driven operations against the sect. Consequently, "the emerging evidence relating to the magnitude and severity of corruption is mind-boggling, to the extent that some believe that the problem tends more towards national insanity" (Ariyo, 2012, p. 575).

With the corruption and lack of political will, the country has been living in the fear of Rama Boko sects as presented in the film. Lack of political will in the fight against the insurgence is premised on different ideologies of successive governments in Nigeria.

Consequently, ideological differences of successive governments rob the country of the opportunities of continuity in governance. A further deduction from the tensed situation between Rama Boko sect and the government, as found in the film text, is that there is a manifestation of what Jacques Lacan describes as the “dialectical of recognition” which usually interfaces between the imaginary and the real. The political and sociological imaginary of the sect is that the government is deploying the repressive state apparatus to sustainably keep the populace in the abyss of lack and the endemic corruption. Sadly, the Rama Boko’s ideology is antithetical to the socio-political ideology of the country that is in search of unity-in-diversity. Even, Rama Boko’s ideology does not align with Althusser’s (1972, p. 162) conception of ideology that it represents ‘the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.’ To this end, the plot of the film and the characterization of Amid reveals that the sect members live in the illusion of reality caused by religious fanaticism. Also, the film comments on the political ideology of the government. It shows that the government plays politics with the matters of insecurity which has been seen as a political tool to gain public sympathy for re-election. This deduction from the film further shows the lack of political will by Nigeria’s successive governments to address sociological and political problems confronting the country owing to ethno-religious sentiments by political elites. This view is consistent with Prah’s (2009) that:

The African post-colonial elites have consistently failed to provide the sort of leadership which is needed to improve the quality of life of the teeming masses of African humanity. Contestation for resources and recourse to ethnic mobilisation instead of clear ideological positioning reduces politics to egoistical grandstanding and philosophically barren personality rivalries. (Prah, 2009, p. 13)

In the light of Prah’s view, African [Nigerian] successive governments have been subjectively handling socio-political problems confronting the existence of the country. Thus, the following dialogues reveal the situation in the film.

1st Politician: It is important to remember that this is a political problem that requires political solution. His Excellency is abreast with the situation, and he is deeply concerned. And to raise alarm over the state of insecurity in the nation

2nd Politician: And to blow the situation is to play into the hands of the opposition in the forthcoming election.

CSO: And in the meantime?

1st Politician: We do exactly what we have been doing

2nd Politician: And intensify security at all levels.

1st Politician: Dialogue with all ethnic nationalities.

2nd Politician: Roll an intensive media campaign against the face of terrorism.

1st Politician: And by so doing, the President will play his politics right. Whatever happens gentlemen, that election must be won.

The above dialogues reveal the psychology of Nigeria’s leaders and the psychodynamics of leadership in the country. The dialogues are also archetypal representation of the common beliefs of Nigerian government that their mandate should not be compromised for anything. This political mindset of the government does not align with the populist ideology of collective dividends in governance.

Image 4

A scene in the film where two politicians and the security adviser to the President are discussing how to win forthcoming election despite the problem of Rama Boko sect



Notes: From Nation Under Siege (2013)

Consequently, this political ideology of political leaders/government has long-term effects on good governance at all levels of administration. In the light of this, there are ideological conflicts between the government and the masses with consequence upon the internal cohesion of the country. Also, there is ambivalence in the actualisation of ideology of the government in a complex political matrix which breeds insecurity such as Rama Boko/Boko Haram scourge. Based on this, the present article aligns its view with Bercovitch's (1986) that:

There is no escape from ideology; that so long as human beings remain political animals they will always be bounded in some degree by consensus and so long, they are symbol-making animals they will always seek in some way to persuade themselves (and others) that *their* symbology is the last, best hope of mankind. (Bercovitch, 1986, p. 636)

Going by the symbology of Rama Boko sect, they are of the opinion that their activities are the best for mankind on this earth and in the life after. This is evident in the indoctrination of Amid and other sect members who kill people with impunity and conviction that they are carrying out the will of God. The Rama Boko's symbology, however, negates the general understanding of people's religious ethics about lives and living. It is this negation which aligns with people's collective consciousness of insecurity and government's lack of political will to combat the insecurity.

To this end, the ideological relationship between the government and the Rama Boko sect in the film is antagonistic as found in different patterns of violence and killing across the land. The politicians in the dialogues reveal that the government is only ready to engage in a subtle approach to the fight against Rama Boko sect to avoid political scandal which could affect its victory at the polls. Thus, the ideological warfare against the sect is the deployment of media as a tool of propaganda. What is evident, at the level of empirical analysis of Boko Haram activities in Nigeria's real-life experience, is that successive Nigerian governments have been fighting Boko Haram insurgents on the pages

of newspapers and via other conventional media as well as social media. This situation is represented in the film through the dialogue of the 2nd politician that the government will deploy intensive media campaign as a diversionary mechanism. This is evident in real-life situations because Nigerian media have been saturated with claims and counterclaims by Nigerian armed forces and Boko Haram insurgents. Egwuemi and Akoje do the overview of the media propaganda in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents in the country. In their review, they aver that:

According to *Premium Times* of 3 August 2018, at least two officers and 43 soldiers have been killed in Boko Haram attacks on military targets between 13 and 26 July 2018 despite the presence of military special force tagged 'Operation Lafiya Dole'. While the soldiers blamed the incidence on lack of equipment, Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai, accused them of being cowardly. (Egwuemi & Akoje, 2019, p. 11)

Some subjectivity can be deduced from claims by the soldiers and their boss. This shows that the cracks within the armed forces and the entire government have been militating against the attainment of sustainable peace which has been threatened by Boko Haram insurgency and other militant agitations in the country. This situation is also represented in the film with the misunderstanding that occurs between Officer Jane and her superiors especially in the fight against terrorist acts of Rama Boko sects.

Also, the film indicts the country's immigration service of complicity in the persistence of terrorism by Rama Boko sect. As presented in the film, the immigration service fails to have a proper record and monitoring of the land, the sea and the air borders of the country. For instance, Jama, the leader of the Rama Boko sect made several visits to the country for seven times without a proper check at the land, sea and airports. The underlined message here is that the fight against Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria can be won if the government is sincere and demonstrate strong political will to secure the country's borders as suggested in the film text. Besides, the film also indicts the government that the country does not have effective data base to track crimes and criminals. The state security service in the film finds it difficult to gather information on Jama and his cohorts because the officers are unable to access information on the country's data base. Jane, the lead investigator of Rama Boko insurgents, is proactive in the investigation by requesting the tapes and secret intelligent reports on Jama and his group. The intent behind this is to understand some salient features of the activities of Rama Boko insurgents. She eventually gathers information that the sect (Rama Boko) targets seven regions in the country as deduced from the suspect's statement and a senator's statement that the crises in the country are brewing like the rainbow in the sky.

A reflective evaluation of the government's ambivalent attitude towards the management of the insurgency and the tenacity of Rama Boko terrorists indicate that there cannot be homogeneous ideology in a polity. In the process, one ideology interrogates another ideology in a bid to gain dominance. This is just the case in the confrontation between Rama Boko and the government, as presented in the film and the country. In any conflict situation, an ideology with legitimacy, no matter the systemic error, usually gains popular sympathy and acceptability of the masses just as in the case of Nigerian government. Rama Boko's ideology does not have popular sympathy and acceptability, and this explains why state apparatuses are set after the terrorists. Despite all the efforts of the government to deploy kinetic approach of force to deflate Rama Boko's ideology and apprehend both the leaders and the members, members of the sect are waxing stronger in their act of terrorism. The non-kinetic approach of ideological manoeuvring, on the

other hand, brings the expected result by bringing Jama, the overall leader of the sect to a fatal end. This ideological weaponry is a speculative dialecticism (Ryan, 2019; Derrida, 1978; Sartre, 1976) which prompts variegated responses from every facet of the society – the state security services, lowly-placed individuals such as the prostitute, the highly-placed individuals, the presidency and generality of masses – to combine efforts in bringing the menace of Rama Boko to an end.

The Insurgents and the Making of a Hero [ine]

The film text, *Nation Under Siege* (2013), suggests critical issues in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents in the real-life situations of the country. Among the critical issues raised in the film is that the fight against Boko Haram should be ideological/ philosophical involving everybody irrespective of ethnic and political affiliations as well as social status. This position may not be the actual intention of the filmmaker, this paper, however, reads the film from ideological perspective that the filmmaker's message is that we should look outside of the box of religion and state bureaucracy in the fight against the menace of Boko Haram insurgence. Arguing in this direction, this paper, therefore, upholds Adeoti's (2015) observation on the role of a literary critic (and by extension, a film critic) that:

While the writer is free to think and write what he/she thinks is right in the most suitable language and style according to his/her judgement, the literary critic who is part of the consuming audience is well positioned, by virtue of his knowledge and experience of literary aesthetics, to dissect the inter-relations of all the constituents of a literary product. The critic not only attempts an interpretation of the work but also a statement of assessment of its quality. (Adeoti, 2015, p. 34)

As deduced from the film, major state arsenals used in the fight against Rama Boko insurgents are force (kinetic approach) and propaganda (non-kinetic approach). This paper is not arguing against these arsenals. The major problem is that the government has not been critical in the deployment of these arsenals to restore peace in the troubled zones. The force is misdirected and aimless as represented in the film text. The top military and intelligent officers refuse to be critical of Jane's observation that the Rama Boko insurgents target the seven geo-political zones of the country drawing her inference from the repeated use of rainbow by those who are [in] directly connected with the activities of Rama Boko insurgents. These individuals who are fighting against the insurgents also fail to understand that these people [the insurgents] easily "take to arms when occasion demands without considering the consequences of the extremism on humanity and the integrity of the religion, they purport to be holding its tenets" (Sesan & Adenigba, 2016, p. 1024).

The film suggests that the state arsenals of force and propaganda have failed the country in the fight against insurgents. The film, however, offers ideological discourse in the fight against insurgents. This discourse underlines the need for the country to provide social welfare package for all the citizenry and make available the platforms for religious harmony among all the religious groups in the country. This is because Boko Haram insurgence is beyond religious warfare. It is, perhaps, a war aimed as a form of angst against the government and some political class in the country.

Image 5

Jamal, the leader of Rama Boko, expressing his anger against the government



Notes: From Nation Under Siege (2013)

The bitterness of the Rama Boko leader (Jamal) who is in self-imposed exile relates to the unresponsiveness and recklessness of the government in handling some political and economic challenges confronting the country. Jamal can sustain his activities because the government is not proactive in the deployment of ideological arsenals of conflict management in tackling the menace. One can, therefore, deduce that Rama Boko insurgents, as represented in the film, do not have confidence in the co-existence and survival of the nation as represented in the ideological orientation of Kajal, one of the Rama Boko patrons arrested by the police.

Kajal: I know my rights. My rights are to believe what I believe. Yours are to believe what you believe. And what do you believe? You believe in this nation, its leaders, its people, its destiny.

Officer Jane: That and even more. I believe that your kind has no place here.

Kajal: My kind is everywhere. All around you, closer than you can even imagine. And no matter how hard you try, you people cannot stop what is coming...

Kajal's dialogue represents the overall mindset of Rama Boko insurgents that the government is incapacitated by corruption and complacency in the fight against the group. The end of the film upholds his view that the government cannot stop what is coming despite all efforts put in place by Officer Jane Jacky Bantu and her team of anti-terrorism squad. This is because Hamid, a Rama Boko recruit would have blown up his targets if he had not been influenced by the memory of conversations he had with Lina, a prostitute. Another ideological orientation of Rama Boko insurgents, as highlighted in the film is that the recruits, the patrons and all members of the squad see themselves as heroes for killing people as well as for destruction of private and public properties. This is consistent with Lacanian conceptualisation of Real Order which is "the final phase of psychic development, beyond language, resisting symbolization" (Dobie, 2009 p. 66). This view, therefore, redirects this paper's argument towards the search for heroism in the text of the film. As a very quick contribution to the quest for heroism in the film, the present article opts for the ideal of collective heroism because every individual has a role to play at all levels of socio-political interactions. This opinion, however, does not foreclose the fact that some individuals can take a lead or show a way towards the sustainable fight against the insurgents as found in the characterization of Officer Jane and Lina, the prostitute.

Image 6

Kajal undergoing police interrogation in connection with Rama Boko terrorism



Notes: From Source: Nation Under Siege (2013)

Conceptualizing heroism in the film is problematic because “the consequences of misapplication of virtues and blatant exhibition of vices could be very devastating and self-destructive” (Dasyuva, 1999, p. 32). The characters in the film (as individuals or group) play diverse roles that are consistent or antithetical to the attainment of sustainable peace in the country. The Rama Boko insurgents, for instance, present themselves as heroes with the erroneous belief that they fight the just course to force government of the country to its knees. By engaging the armed forces in the fight against Rama Boko insurgents, government presents itself as the hero that is on top of the situation while Jamal (the leader of Rama Boko insurgents) self-ordained himself as the man destined to change the course of history in the country. From another perspective, Inspector Jane and Lina can be seen as heroines of the film considering the overt and covert roles they play in the fight against the insurgents. A critical reading of the film presents Lina (a prostitute) as the heroine of the film because her role presents the climax which eventually leads to the resolution of all the conflicts in the film. In the light of this argument, this paper therefore upholds Dasyuva’s view on heroic that:

[...] the *heroic* is neither necessarily determined by “goodness” nor by some “rare virtues” as we have in the western literature, but by the uniqueness of action (good or bad), and the capability of its prime mover to determine the syntax of action and situations in the fictive world. In this lies the “greatness” of such a character. To the traditional African, it is the “heroic”. (op. cit., p. 34)

Although African society does not honour prostitution as it attracts social stigma for the practitioners, Lina’s role is commendable as her ideological view about peaceful co-existence among all ethnic nationalities and religious groups offers a new ideological orientation for Amid, a member of Rama Boko insurgents on suicide mission. What Lina does for a living does not really matter here but the greatness of her action which eventually costs her life.

Initially, Amid’s visit to a prostitute is a manifestation of Lacanian concept of *jouissance* which literally means enjoyment. The overall outcome of this visit at the macro level of interpretation is the denouement of the Rama Boko’s menace. While having personal enjoyment, Amid is exposed to his own hubris with transcended consequence on his actualisation of imaginary order. With this, Amid begins to have a self-consciousness thereby subtly querying his unmindful involvement in the activities of Rama Boko. Consequently, his intended destructive action becomes a nationalistic action at the end of the film when he eventually bombed Jamal, Rama Boko’s overall leader.

Image 7

Amid and Lina in a discussion which offers a fresh ideological dimension to the management of Rama Boko's terrorism



Notes: Source: Nation Under Siege (2013)

The discussion between Amid and Lina provides a new insight into the psychology of crises management. Lina (although a prostitute) discusses with nationalistic fervour which has proportionate impact on Amid for re-examination of self. Amid's re-interrogation of self, therefore, propels the film to its climax. The following excerpts from the film reveal the ideological discourse between Amid and Lina.

Lina: Religion is nothing, but picture of what man thinks of God, and we all look at this picture in different shades.

Amid: What then is the eternal fate of mankind?

Lina: Fate is what we make from destiny.

Amid: Do you believe in destiny?

Lina: Much more.

Amid: Even the destiny of this dying nation.

Lina: I believe there is a reason why two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups bordered by two protectorates were amalgamated in 1914.

Amid: That for what I know and what I have been taught it is a fact and mystique.

Lina: You just hate to know the truth.

Amid: What truth? The truth of the nation that has lost its purpose?

Lina: In a world of greed and envy where man has become prey to man and people are alleging for selfish reasons. Yes.

The excerpt goes further thus:

Amid: Why? Why do we blame our leaders when we can change the course of our own destinies?

Lina: By what means?

Amid: By every means. Look around you. Look around you. What similarity has the man from creeks from Bayelsa with the man from the Sahara of Sokoto?

Lina: They all have red blood running through their veins.

Amid: Not enough. What conjunction has Islam with Christianity?

Linda: Christianity is the religion of love and Islam a religion of peace.

Amid: Where is the peace and love in this nation?

The underlined message in Lina's dialogues is that the country will only experience sustainable peace if everybody looks beyond religion in an attempt to solve series of problems confronting the nation. The deduction from Lina's dialogues, therefore, is that we should all embrace humanity to solve our problems because religion is nothing but a mark of identity. Interestingly, Lina's message changes Amid's ideological orientation about suicide bombing for the course of Rama Boko insurgency. Although Lina pays with her life, Amid understands the need to uphold peace for national unity and cohesion. Amid has self-rediscovery and executes Jamal through suicide bombing.

Conclusion

This paper's focus on Pascal Amanfo's *Nation Under Siege* (2013) is to critique how Nollywood has been intervening in the national discourse on peace and unity in the country. The subject matter, characterization and thematic focus of the film offer ideological discourse on the quest for sustainable peace in the face of Rama Boko insurgency in the film text and Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. The film's discourse is that all hands should be on deck in the fight against insurgency in the country. The ideological discourse on the fight against insurgency is played out in the characterization and dialogues of Lina, a prostitute who understands the essence of humanity and humane behaviour for sustainable peace in the country. With the suicide bombing of Jamal, it is hoped that the end of Rama Boko insurgents is in sight. Among the basic issues discussed in the film are that both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches should be adopted in pursuit of peace in conflicting situations.

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