

Theatre for Development as Paradigm in Curbing Religious Terrorism in Contemporary Nigeria for Sustainable Development: An Overview of the VICTIMS

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Abstract

The challenge of coping with the beliefs of each religion in our country is an issue that has been giving the nation a tough time especially with the emergence of terrorist/ insurgent that are claiming to be fighting for the cause of Allah in the name of religion. This has made the country to lag behind in substantive and sustainable development. This religious conflict has instill fear and terror on the people living in the society. That is why this paper posits the need for Theatre for Development which can be employed as a dynamic and unitary arts which functions as a means of entertainment, education celebration, protest and discovery. As a discipline, theatre has potentialities of sharpening social awareness and presenting alternative approaches to the problem of the society. In view of this, the play text "VICTIMS" has been carefully chosen to look at the effects of terrorism in the name of religion on our youths and the effects on the development of the nation at large. Relevant literature reviews were considered too to help in giving more relevance to theatre for development in curbing religious conflict and way forward to a better Nigeria were postulated.

Keyword: Theatre for Development, Paradigm, Religion, Conflict, Sustainable, Terrorism and Youth.

Introduction

The problem of religious conflict cropped up from political thugery, continued mas attacks by organization such as Boko-Haram which means western education forbidden, Al-Shabaab, Al-Ogeda and other. Their aim is to have a seizure of the land and flag up their own country and belief. Findings have also shown that unemployment, corruption, insecurity, kidnapping, cultural barrier, low access to education in the north, class disparity and power dominance of one ethnic group over the other has been the reasons behind these insurgence in Nigeria. The youths now become easy target to recruit for criminal activities characterized by loss of lives and properties, economic decline, displacement, distrust leading people to live in clusters. Nigeria seems to exhibit the symptoms of a collapsing state whose citizens are perpetually at war with one another (Jega 2000 in Obidah). These and many more have affected Nigeria as a country greatly. The effects of religious conflict on Nigeria as a nation cannot be over emphasized, you talk of delta group attacks to Boko-Haram, Hausa-Fulani herdsmen, the Jos violent conflict killings everywhere. The claim for justice has been the cry of these groups but come to think of it, is it really justice that they want? Where is justice in the killings of innocent souls? Or it is the dominance of power over the citizenry?

Conceptual Clarification

Theatre for Development: Theatre has always been in the service of man as an agent of change. Its nature, function and aesthetic values are constantly reflective of every changing nature in the society. Since Theatre for Development deals with the performance of drama that calls for conscientization of the people's minds through puppetry, singing and dancing which is also referred to as popular because they are not meant for the educated elite alone but the entire community. It is therefore open to all

members of the society and since the plays, songs and dances are their own and deals with problem they are familiar with, it becomes easier to put up performances as a teamwork. The plays is sometimes performed in the local dialects of the people, and the subject matters are the local problems that every member of the community can understand. This form of drama is therefore very ideal for the illiterate or semi-illiterate Nigerians who is often traumatized by religious bigots so as to free themselves from slavery and be emancipated.

Paradigm: Paradigm is a typical example or pattern of something. It is a great and important change in the way something is done or thought about. So, Theatre for Development is an alternative to different measures that have been taken to curb religious conflict that has now resulted into terrorism in Nigeria.

Religion: The Oxford Advanced Learning Dictionary Seventh Edition (1997), defines religion as “the belief in the existence of a God or gods, and the activities that are connected with the worship of them”. It is undisputable that human existence is premised on religion. In another way, Alanamu (2005) sees religion as the “consciousness of one’s dependence on transcendent being and tendency to worship him”. Religion is belief in an unseen power called supernatural (Ololobou, 1999). In another sense, Frazer says “religion is the propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control course of nature and human life” cited in (Alao, 2015)

Abdusalam (2002) cited in (Alao, 2015) also defines religion as man’s interaction to that which he regards as holy regardless of whether the holy being is supernatural or even personal to the individual. It is a known fact that religion controls man, his value and environment. It is also a known fact that some individual will die for it (Odeh, 2010). Africans particularly Nigerians are generally regarded as committed religious people even if the practice has not translated to peaceful coexistence, harmony and

progressive socio-economic development (Alao, 2015). In Nigeria, the most popular religions are Islam and Christianity. Religion that supposed to promote peace and salvation has been used to mar rather than make our nation Nigeria. This was possible because of the powerful controlling influence that the religion has on human existence. This religion is used as a veritable tool for political mobilization, fulfilment of parochial and selfish interest and ethno-sectional aspiration (Odeh, 2010)

From the foregoing therefore religious values are now manipulated by political anarchists to perpetuate violence and terror by making it as an avenue for expressing socio-economic and political grievances. Dopamu (2002) also pointed out that “the question of personal gain, political selfish ends egocentrism, quest for power to dominate” made their agitations to use religions as a cover.

Conflicts: According to (Aboki, 2004) he defines conflict as a “struggle over values or claim to status, power and scarce resources (Oyesola, 2005) views conflicts as “disagreement disputes held by two or more individual or group. Conflict is about incompatibility among values, where the achievement of one value can be realized only at the expenses of some other values (Schmid, 2000). He further stated that conflict is serious competition between two or more groups each of which aim to gain advantage of power, resources interest, values, need over the other. There is general agreement among scholars that conflict is a normal character in the interaction between human beings whether in their individual capacities or in group (Imobighe 2003). And the aims of the opponent or group is mainly to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals (Bercoritch and Zartman, 2009).

Sustainable Development: Is being defined by the world commission on environment and development as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (Abdusallam, 2010). He see it as the involvement in the creation of conditions that support development in

human natural and economic system while safe guarding resources and opportunities for future generations. It includes the types of means or development offered to individual to provide for themselves food, shelter, confidence and acceptable quality of life in dignity and suitable manner.

It is a means of living or supporting life by meeting individual and community needs in diverse ways. This is concerned with people's capacity to generate and maintain their means of living and enhance their wellbeing and that of the future generation. According to UNDP (2003) these capabilities are contingent upon the availability and accessibility of options which are educational, ecological, social, cultural, economic and political which are predicted on equity, ownership of resources and participatory decision making.

Terrorism: Terrorism is the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims. The greatest peril to a society is terrorism because it infringes on the right of the people and more, it debars people from progress. Terrorism is seen as an act that is concerned to attract attention so as to put people under tension for some reasons best known to the terrorists. The terrorist utilize a strategy of creating an illusion of magnified strength to cause shock fear, distress and phobic avoidance at public places. They inflict pain and anger on people and make it difficult for people to trust one another, neighbours who had lived together in harmony as brothers and sisters have turned against one another with murderous minds. The apparent relative calm that much of northern Nigeria had enjoyed for several years was broken by the violent emergence of Boko-Haram in 2004. Youths are now tools in the hands of terrorists that perpetuate evil in the name of religion claiming that they are fighting the cause of Allah, raping women and killing innocent souls on daily basis.

Synopsis of the Play

"VICTIMS" is written by Tosin Jobi-Tume in 2016. She is a playwright with the passion for the emancipation of the Youths and Women in our society

who are suffering from exploitation by some religious bigots under the pretense of fighting the cause of Allah. There are generous doze of symbolic representations in the play which can be decoded in characterization, costumes, language, music, dialogue, setting, choice of words among others. The play is a tragic narrative of Gimbiya, a village beauty, Nura, her heartthrob and Nura's friend Sule. The three young, promising persons in a typical northern society, Dadinkowa. The trio who are the main character in the play, enjoyed tremendous communal love, brotherliness and kinship before the sudden and tragic incidence leading to the disruption of peace in the village. According to Gimbiya, peace was shattered by overzealous men and trigger happy soldiers who shot indiscriminately at their people whose lives they had sworn to protect. The soldiers impunity eventually led to an uprising of criminal minded, vengeful people who are hell bent on avenging the gruesome murder, killing and maiming of their people. The ensuing development was the emergence of a militant group later known as Boko Haram which absorbed many of the aggrieved elements across and eventually turned the hitherto young, promising and enterprising youth into degenerate members of a killer squad. The large chunk of the youths and teenagers, having lost their parents, siblings and homes to the raging terror, becomes Almajiris or beggars in their own land. Sadly many of them also fall into the trap of ready tools recruited by the Islamic group. The avenging group, unleashed terror in many shades on the innocent and unassuming members of the society women, young and old , mothers and sisters were raped mercilessly, with many raped to the point of death. The few survivors of the raging terror, the teenagers among whom Gimbiya, Nura and Sule found themselves unfortunately in an insurgent's group's hideout.

Nura, being an independent minded and intelligent person, in no time finds out that the claim that the militant group was fighting the cause of Allah is false just as its acclaimed mission to avenge unfortunate souls who lost their precious life to soldiers invasion is falsehoods. He therefore makes strong resolve to back out. But his friend Sule, a gullible greedy and violent person would not support Nura in his quest for revolution against

the insurgents. Sule 's lust for Nura's childhood love, Gimbiya, which make him envious of his friends, goads him more into desiring the destruction of Nura and when the opportunity eventually presents itself at the time Sule catches Nura attempting to steal money from the leader in part preparation for his and Gimbiya's planned escape from the hideout, he didn't give it a second thought to pardoning his friend , but demanded the unthinkable , he would sleep with Gimbiya while Nura watches and also have Nura beg for his life. Nura choose neither of the two bad options and chooses to go down honourably.

Meanwhile, Gimbiya appeal to Sule for sympathy was rudely turned down by him who insists she sleeps with him as condition for guaranteeing her lovers freedom from the hang man's noose. Giving up on everything, Gimbiya opts for a tragic end of the lives of the trio (herself inclusive) by activating the explosives she had worn to carry out her maiden suicide mission in a local market place and the play ends on an overwhelming tragic note.

Thematic Analysis of Victims.

The theme explored in Tume's *Victims* include religious tolerance peace and stability, violence, deceit, lust, love, courage and revolutionary spirit among others.

Religious Tolerance, Detribalism, Peace and Love.

In movement one, Gimbiya's interaction with the audience, ensured through the use of the Brechtian dramatic style which breaks the fourth wall of the proscenium stage by directly addressing the audience, portrays her world, Dadinkowa village as a peaceful, peace-loving and stable society without the unnecessarily social ills of religious intolerance, tribalism, etc. even the atmosphere of the merry making and fun fair created by Gimbiya and her friends while playing the traditional kids games symbolizes this. Another instance is Gimbiya says her father is a northern Muslim while her mother from the east practices Christianity. The society is also devoid of

violence as teenagers of Gimbiya's age, Talatu relate easily. In this part of the play, we find out that peace is guaranteed in a relationship where there is religious tolerance, love thrives in such society while stability and seamless society interaction are guaranteed, hence, Gimbiya describes her world as beautiful.

Gimbiya: I am Gimbiya I was born into a beautiful world, a beautiful nation, a beautiful home ours was a closely-knit family. I had a doting father and a loving mother, wonderful parents. My father was a Muslim from the Northern part of our country, while my mother a Christian hailed from the east. We the children freely practiced both religions without any discrimination from any of our parents. For us it was *Bisimilah* and *Amen* and everything in between. Though they were of different religion, yet the love between my parents was palpable. As children we grew up in that atmosphere of love, respect, and tolerance (Victims pg.1) the world depicted in this movement denotatively represent Nigeria of the 1940s to the early 80s when such social ills of religious intolerance and tribalism has not captured the soul of the nation and shattered our unity. Love between young Nigerians of different cultural background thrived leading to inter-tribal marriages as depicted in Gimbiya's parents union; Peace and security of lives and properties and progress in agricultural ventures were guaranteed under such atmosphere but it is quite unfortunate that things have fallen apart and the centre can no longer hold.

Violence, Religious Intolerance, Greed and Tribalism

From movement two in victims we were shocked with a tragic transition from a peace loving stable and friendly society into a world of hatred, violence, suffering and rejection as occasioned by intolerance in tribal and religious relationship. Nura comes on stage to narrate the tragic development and its causes, some clashes between farmers and herdsmen in the village leading to overzealousness and trigger happy soldiers shooting sporadically at farmers and herders whose lives they are to protect. The ensuing consequence is a social disruption having phenomenal

effect on all the citizenry. The youths are most affected negatively as they become beggars in their own land, took to drugs to control depression and suppress frustrating feelings and eventually took to crime to survive. Nura and Sule, his friend eventually took to stealing and robbing their benefactors who hand out tokens to them as Almajiris. To them these are survival tactics. Gradually, they become drug addicts and this prepares them to become candidates of terrorism as they end up becoming terrorist for reasons ranging from avenging extra judicial killings of their parents by soldiers and merciless destruction of their once stable social fabric.

Greed as a theme is denoted in Sule's parents attitude where his father continue to make his wives produce children that he has no economic power to cater for also Nura's uncle who corners the property of his father and Sends the poor young man to fend for himself at the age of 13. Greed and deception are also depicted in Sule's obsession with a promise of seven virgins in the hereafter as reward for fighting against infidels a derogatory word used by the insurgents to describe Non- Muslims such as Gimbiya's mother . it is also noticed that the theme of deception in the insurgents claim that they fight for allah whereas they are actually portrayed as social degenerate. Who are bent on terrorizing the society for no justifiable reasons. Sule embodies the theme of lust through his untamed lust for Gimbiya leading to his hatred and resolves to destroy his only true and courageous friend Nura. But it is this hatred that destroys him at the end.

Love, Patriotism and Courage.

Both Gimbiya and Nura demonstrate true love for each other, even in the midst of very hostile and tragic circumstances. For instance, through helpless, Nura could not participate in gang raping Gimbiya's mother when his team of terrorist unleashed terror on her family. Gimbiya forgives Nura easily when he explains and pleads with her for forgiveness. Even though, Nura has joined the terrorist group, he still finds himself possessing patriotic zeal and decides to toe the path of honour by denouncing the

group condemning and criticizing its murderous deeds and instigating his friend to support him to escape from the hell hole.

In movement four, Nura challenges the modus Operandi of the terrorists group

Nura: This isn't what I bargained for. Why not go after the corrupt politicians the bad leaders who have made life so difficult for us why have we turned on each other? The people, they are victims as well, we all are victims... I am tired...just tired... totally fed up.

He goes further to fault its claim to fighting for Allah as seen in his dialogue with Sule in same movement.

Nura: I disagree with you, Sule ours is a religion of peace. If we really are fighting for the cause of Allah then we don't need to take up arms. If you think about it logically, you will realize that there is really nothing to fight for our fight is needless.

Sule: How do you mean?

Nura: Allah is greatest right?

Sule: Yes...

Nura: And he created us, not so?

Sule: Where are you going with this?

Nura: My point is that we don't need to fight for Allah. If Allah is the greatest, then he definitely does not need us to fight his battles, the created need not fight for the creator.

Nura's position is though very clear and progressive, but the greedy Sule, overtaken by his own lust for Power and materials things, refuses to reason with him.

Sule: You are making no sense

Nura: (Pleadingly) Sule we can leave now we can surrender our arms and embrace peace.

Sule: Peace...Peace...Peace is a relative concept so is war. Peace and War are symbolic, how do you appreciate peace if there is no war?

Nura: We don't need war to have peace

Sule: Stop your sanctimonious bullshit man. You are as dirty as the rest of us holding the gun in our hand and the Quran in other won't take you to heaven

Nura: (Determinedly) listen to me, Sule I am sick and tired of all these atrocities being committed under the guise of fighting for a religion which advocates peace. I want true peace and freedom I want out Sule.

Generally, the message being passed across by the playwright in *Victims* is that our government and certain negative thinking individuals failure to employ counter measures to tame or stop terrorism in all its facets would destroy our future as it did those of Gimbiya, Nura and Sule when Gimbiya's last resort is to activate the explosives that killed the three of them in the end. The writer is sounding a serious note of warning to all stakeholders in the project of effecting counter terrorism measures to combat the menace of insurgency. The security agents, the government, citizenry and the civil society organizations among others are to rise up to the challenge of positive and proactive steps to nation building and sustainable development so as to save the nation's future from being jeopardized in the present. There is the need to de-radicalize captured terrorist and potential terrorists who have felt disillusioned with the system not working for their positive growth. We have many disillusioned youths in the nation today leading to a sad situation that have made many to join terrorists groups, become armed robbers or sex workers, prostitutes or internet scammers popularly called yahoo boys and some have gone to the extent of committing suicide.

All these youths ranging from 16 to 24 years need urgent de-radicalization and this can be done through the use of Theatre for Development as a paradigm to curb all these vices for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Theatre for Development as Paradigm to curb Religious Terrorism.

Since different measures have been put in place to combat the causes and effects of religious crisis and it is to no avail, more so that it has escalated to terrorist invading homes to cause more havoc than good. it will be advisable to use the Theatre for Development as an approach to tackle the problems caused by religious conflicts on Nigeria soil because drama performances possessed the potential and ability to enhance social development not only that but that plays are put together to capture the life of the people and their problems and for the fact that theatre is a participatory art which allows for live or present communication more than many other medium, it allows an immediate dialogue between the participant where the audience themselves become speaker. (Abah, 2005) He reiterates this when he says that:

TFD has become an instrument for instigating people centre development in the field outside of the academics. An instrument for mobilization and for instigation of participation in the development process. It will interest us to know that what people see, stick longer in one's mind that what you just say, taking theatre to the door post of the people goes a long way in helping the oppressed out of their predicaments.

Iorapuu (2008) even went further to define theatre approach that seeks to make possible development and action from the perspective of the 'people' through the use of familiar cultural and democratic forms. That is to say that an audience of any development programme that embraces the Tfd approach through the post-performance discussion is moved to a new resolve that enables the audience to identify with the open reflection on issues presented and encourage a critical thinking through personal involvement in the analysis of drama episodes. If the play text used in the paper can be taken to youths, it will serve as eye-opener and not only that if the concerned are put at the driver seat of the performances, it will definitely yield results because their minds will have been conscientized.

According to (Boal, 2006) he says that the process of change in behavior feels the mind of the individuals that participate in this exercise becomes open to the new ideas such that people begin to perceive ... a new awareness of the selfhood and begin to look critically at the social institution in which they find themselves. Perhaps this informs why Cornwall (1997) describes Theatre for Development as mode of popular theatre that seek to dialogue and participate with and not just for communities..." Cornwall argues that Theatre for Development allow facilitators and amateurs to take theatre to the people. It is indeed, a practice which is anchored on the grassroots approached to education and development.

Theatre for Development (TfD), as paradigm, has its roots in the philosophy of empowerment. It uses local materials and enables the audiences to make use of the tools, it offers to make sense out of an issue so as to change their realities. Theatre is powerful because it create an aesthetic space in which issues are enlarged and dichotomized. This art can be said to be telescopic because it pulls and brings close things in the distance and enlarges small things. What this means is that TFD does not limit itself to exploring the material aspects of people's lives but provides means of exploring and addressing dynamic issues affecting people. The core issues here is not feeding people with information in top down model of interventions the drama approach to education begins with what people know and works with them as subjects, rather than objects to be handed information.

Participatory performance should be given priority on working with the people and using their own modes of communication to enable small communities look at their own situation to analysing their own problem with the aim of arousing and stimulating target group to take desire steps to improve their well beings.

To this end, the theatrical medium is harnessed to arouse consciousness among the masses or the oppressed at the grassroots who are struggling to draw their attention to the problem and issues at hand like the

case of religious conflict that has grown into a full fledged terrorist attack in Nigeria, can be addressed through the use of TfD. In other words, TfD is a dramatic techniques employed by drama activists in reaching their audience. It is a means of putting across information and development messages. People, through this approach are made to be aware of their situation and to take action towards collectively solving the problem.

Open discussion is also of great importance, with this the audience is made to open up on issues bothering their minds and these are open to deliberate discussions that will lead to possible solution. Drama skit can be developed based on true to life character and experience.

Implications of Theatre for Development Approach

The relevance of this approach as regards enhancing attitudinal change to joining terrorists group among the youths is that it enables youths to have access to accurate and relevant information regarding the effects of terrorism on youths and the nation at large through an informal context that also entertains. More so that the approach through discussion section encourages youths to embrace positive attitudes by empowering them to learn to talk honestly about their experience with appropriate people.

It helps youth to assess their risk of being influenced by negative situation or peers.

It encourages responsible behavior through the analysis of issues and active participation through role play.

Role play is also a highly effective method of training youths in a negotiating for the right decision at every point of their lives.

Symbolic Representation of the Setting

In movement three, (A terrorist camp. The logo of the movement is symbolized by a big black backdrop with white deliberately un-intelligible Arabic-like inscriptions drawn in a circle on it. Lights pick Gimbiya as she comes on stage in a Zombie mood. She sings a melancholic song as she wanders aimlessly about the stage then she sits down unhappily. She looks

totally different from the happy-go-lucky girl in movement one. She has aged a bit her school uniform is now tattered and she has no socks on. She looks dirty and unkempt (victims pg.2)

“The big black backdrop with white deliberately unintelligible Arabic-like inscription is a connotative portrayal of the fact that the terrorists do not truly represent Islam which is a religion they claim to protect, neither do they even understand what the religion stands for in the Quran, Islam preaches peace but the terrorists are violent men.

The use of the religiously deregulatory word: infidel, meaning an unbeliever, to describe Non-Muslims such as Gimbiya’s mother by the terrorists is an extension of this deception and confusion being created by the terrorists. The word infidel as a linguistic signifier which signifies the hatred the terrorists have for fellow human.

Connotatively, certain characters in the play’s structural paradigm signify ideas and concepts. For instance, Gimbiya and Nura are signifiers of true love, courage and patriotism amidst chaos. Sule is a signifier of greed inordinate ambition, lust untamed passion for material possession and unchecked energy for violent actions among other negativities.

While Gimbiya and Nura represent Nigeria promising youth/future who though have been corrupt by the dehumanizing system, but may be de-radicalized and become agents of positive change and progress for nation’s growth and development. Sule signifies the lost generation, the degenerate whose human foibles, largely innately, have made them ready tools for destruction and violence.

Symbolism in Costumes and Props in Victims

The wearing of camouflage uniforms as Costumes, slinging of gun and sashes of grenades across shoulders by both Nura and Sule and looking extremely rugged as seen from movement three of the play and through the end signifies darkness and tragedy befalling a once “beautiful world and nation” in the words of Gimbiya in movement one and contrasts sharply with the peaceful and bright world painted by the innocent beautiful girl

in that earlier movement, who now becomes a frustrated, abused and battered 'adults' in movement three; Nura also wears a Balaclava to conceal his true identity from his love, Gimbiya until she challenges him to reveal himself in movement four. This is an admission of guilt of wrong doing and an indication of emotional torture caused by a damage done under duress to a loved one.

Towards a Sustainable Development in Nigeria.

The concept of sustainable development as earlier discussed has the involvement in the creation of condition that support development in human, natural and economic system whilst safeguarding resources and opportunities for future generation. The vices that are manifesting in the society today such as injustice, armed robbery, ethnic conflict, religious conflict, greed, kidnapping among others are all product of untrained personalities. The current issue of suicide bombings that the country is battling with presently are all manifestation of lack of childhood training. This make people lack respect or attach value to their own life let alone that of others. We can take advantage of the rich elements entails in Tfd through folklore, folktales and drama to instill in the younger one the right attitude of having regard to life, respecting others, being fair, truthful and transparent in all their dealings with others. It is when the country is able to rid of all social vices that is when it could be made safe for living thereby guaranteeing sustainable development.

Recommendations

The stakeholders in policy planning should see to it that development programmes are given laudable support to empower the women and youths in achieving their goals in life.

Government at all levels should pump money into performance arts because it serves as mirror for the society to correct their ills especially religious conflicts so that people can co-exist without bias.

Government should establish a Federal Ministry of religion whose duty is to be educating populace on the principles of equity, freedom of religious, religious tolerance and power of unity and love for another. The commission should also be charged to find out the primary root causes of ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria and find way of eliminating them. They should watch out for any likely issues that will breed crisis and ensure they nip it on the bud.

The terrorist should be apprehended and rehabilitated and be given training in skill acquisition so that they will be self-reliant and be responsible citizens.

Government should endeavor to go to the interiors to build schools that will be at walkable distance to children, so that they will be educated and enlightened, so as not to constitute nuisance to the society.

Job creation should be part of the government goal, because if the youth are gainfully employed they will not be used as political thugs or errand boys for the terrorists.

Conclusively, the Theatre for Development approach is highly recommended for use in the development programmes especially those that involve mobilizing and enhancing attitude change to peer influence among the youths because the approach is a practical approach that confront the menace of terrorism and other vices that can jeopardize the development of the nation Nigeria by actively involving the youth in the drama and not just through passive instruction alone, so that Nigeria can move to the next level like other developed countries.

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