

International response to terrorism in the West African sub-region: a study of the Nigerian state (2000-2022)

Ighoshemu, Benedict Ogheneakpoje

Department of Political science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Sanubi, Franklin

Department of Political Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Orhero, Abraham

Department of Political Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: **Ighoshemu, Benedict Ogheneakpoje**

Abstract : *In recent years, terrorism has become one of the most dangerous global challenges to world order, where no country seems completely free from violent acts of bombing, kidnapping, shooting, armed robbery and hostage taking. Terrorism is the act of indiscriminate use of violence as a means to create terror in order to achieve a political, religious or ideological aim. This paper seeks to know the response of the international community and that of the Nigerian government in combating this terrorist menace bedeviling the country. The study adopted the historical method using qualitative analysis of secondary data, and Frustration/Aggression theory of John Dillard, as expanded by Leonard and Yates as a frame work in understanding the dynamics of terrorism. Despite the response, insecurity, terrorism and violent extremism in Nigeria have not been eliminated due to the lack of strong political will to combat terrorism and religious extremism, the inabilities of the government in making good laws to sanction offenders and the endemic poverty in the country, leading to the spread of terrorism and religious extremism. The study, hereby recommends, among others, the need for government to revitalize the economy to create jobs and provide for the citizens the basic necessities of life. The state should shift emphasize on tackling terrorism and insecurity from not only the military and arms approach but rather to a more humanistic and economic security strategies, and the Nigerian government should identify the role of institutions and intelligence gathering for effective security policing.*

Keyword: 1.Terrorism, 2.Response, 3.International, 4.Insecurity, 5.Religious-extremis

Introduction

This study seeks to introduce, discuss and evaluate the international response to terrorism in the West African sub-region, with focus on Nigeria from 2000 to 2022. Terrorism has become a global phenomenon and a household word, as no country in the world is completely free. Since the end of the Second World War in 1945 and the fall of the Berlin Wall (Cold War) in the late 1980s, the international community has faced a new round of serious security challenges brought on by terrorism, which has resulted in variety of human rights violations. Terrorism in its sense refers to the use of indiscriminate violence as a means to create terror or fear in order to achieve political, religious or ideological goals (Biswapati, 2018). Terrorism is complex because it combines various aspects of human experience, including politics, psychology, philosophy, military strategy and history. Terrorism remains a constant challenge in mounting an effective response, particularly in domestic setting, as Paul Wilkinson noted in Wendy (2017). Terrorism in the other hand in this work is “a coercive method by terrorists who are relatively deprived, neglected and oppressed to vest their frustration on targets indiscriminately, on innocent civilians, military industry using weapons of mass destruction to provoke the state to accepting their demands.

This is reflected in the number of terrorist attacks in the northern region of Nigeria, which have resulted in significant human casualties and property destructions. The source of funding for terrorism in the West Africa Sub-region has been a source of concern for regional governments, particularly those in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Terrorism is generally considered as a recent development in West Africa; however, the use of terror as a strategy is not new. A bomb exploded in Accra, Ghana in 1964 predating President Kwame Nkrumah's assassination, the kidnapping of ten people in the British Consulate in Kaduna by ZANU-PF, the letter bomb that killed renowned journalist Dele Giwa in 1986, and bomb explosion at Ilorin Stadium on May 30, 1995, all of these events point to a growing trend of terrorism in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria. According to Lyman and Morrison (2014), the rise of terrorism in Nigeria is the result of mix-potent of communal clashes, radical Islamism and anti-Americanism which create a black hole for terrorism with negative consequences for Nigeria stability. It has been more than seventeen years since this observation was made, and events of terrorist threat in the country have continue to grow since the return to democratic/civilian rule in 1999, as the government continues to battle socio-economic and political problems, exposing the country to attacks by radical groups such as Boko Haram. It has been responsible for numerous atrocities since its violent uprising in 2002. The Boko Haram organization attacks have been strategically directed at the Nigeria security forces and prominent politicians in the country's northern regions, as well as innocent civilians, media houses, communication centers, hotels, beer parlours, religious houses and public structures. The sects stated mission is to establish a government in Nigeria base on Islamic Sharia law. The international responses have aided and curtailed the rapid spread of the terrorist activities in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria. The Pentagon decision to establish a separate command is a clear indication that the United States of America Military and other branches of the international community regard Sub-Saharan Africa as a growing Islamic terrorist threat (Worcester, 2015).

However, there are ways in which regional and international actors can collaborate meaningfully. The Nigerian military is the largest and most equipped in West Africa, but specialized skills are needed to combat terrorism. The United States Defense Department assisted Nigeria with over \$8 million for the development of a counter terrorism infantry unit, according to lieutenant General Azubuike Ihejirika the then chief of Army Staff in Nigeria that France, United States of America, Pakistan and Britain offered to assist with counter terrorism training (Forest, 2012). Terrorism is a persistent reality in Nigeria with groups such as Boko Haram, banditry and Fulani-herdsmen operating freely in an environment where they can attract recruits, fund, materials and safe havens. To defeat a terrorist organizations such as the Boko Haram, banditry and Fulani herdsmen, attention must be paid to the grievances and aspects of the security environment that allow the organization to operate freely. These terrorist organizations mentioned above are Nigeria entities that will eventually be defeated by Nigerians. The international response to terrorism in West Africa and in Nigeria, lack the nexus required to dismantle these lethal terrorist organizations. The study is to contribute, to revealing the mystery behind the phenomenon that is ravaging the Nigerian State and suggest that acute poverty and relative deprivation are precursor to the serial insecurity and terrorism in the country.

Objective of the Study

The study's main objective is to critically examine the international response to terrorism in Nigeria from 2000 to 2022, and specifically to scrutinize the ECOWAS's response to terrorism in Nigeria, examine the United Nations' response to terrorism in Nigeria, assess the United States response to terrorism in Nigeria, and to critically review the Nigerian government's response to terrorisms in the country.

Theoretical Framework

The assumption that terrorism is a growing phenomenon in international politics has wide acceptance in our present day society. However, the fact that terrorism as part of our modern world is paradoxical, given that one of humanity pre occupation is the maintenance of political peace, stability, socially balanced and economically viable environment in order for humility to surmount the challenges of life. To this end, international relations scholars have long sought ways to reduce and redirect terrorist acts for the benefit of national and international interests. As a result, various theories of international relations have been developed, but opinions on the best ways to combat terrorism differ. However, given the nature of this study, which focuses on international responses to terrorism in the West African sub-region, particularly in Nigeria from 2000 to 2022, the Frustration

aggression theory is adopted in explaining the act of terrorism in Nigeria. When man perceived discrepancy between his value expectations and his value capability persistently, he becomes agitated and continuous agitation will result to frustration-aggression.

Frustration-aggression theory

The frustration-aggression theory was developed by John Dollard (1939) and expanded by Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1980), states that aggression is always the result of frustration. That aggression is derivable from relative deprivation and rising expectation, and the resulting violent behavior is a consequence of an inability to meet needs.

That once expectation does not meet attainment, the tendency is for people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions. The greater dependency, however marginal between what is sought and what seem attainable, the greater will be the chance that anger and violence will result, (Gurr in Onuoha, 2018:35).

Davies, (1980) further observes that aggressive action necessitates four major steps, activation of demand; frustration of demand, mental processes of deciding how to overcome the frustration, and action. It is imperative to note that political terrorism seeks to satisfy desires that the terrorist believes have been denied of him. The denial of those desires leads to frustration which the terrorist believes can be overcome through violence. Most terrorists want to change a power hierarchy in which they perceive a ruling elite satisfying its own desires at the expense of other members of society.

Gurr, (1970) argued in his book that, repeated and prolonged frustration can lead to an outburst of aggression and violence on both an individual and societal level. Terrorism, as experts have correctly observed, pits the weak against the powerful, the challenger against authority, and the established political structure. These analyses explain why terrorist activities are increasing rapidly in Nigeria particularly in the Northern Region.

How has the ECOWAS responded to terrorism in Nigeria?

Perhaps the most notorious terrorist group activities in West Africa in the twenty-first century have been in Nigeria owing to the activities of the terrorist groups, Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen, who are regarded as one of the world's deadliest terrorist organizations (Vision of humanity, 2018). Over the years, Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been one of Africa's most active Regional Economic Communities (RECS) when it comes to conflict solving and dealing with governance. This is evident in the way ECOWAS has dealt with member states on peace and security challenges in the region. Since the rise of the Jihadist threat, ECOWAS has developed a three-pronged counter-terrorism strategy to guide regional action to prevent, pursue and reconstruct violent extremist activities. Beyond the strategy, however, the existing response mechanism is not as adaptable as the threats they are meant to address. This is particularly true of non-military responses. Despite the existence of a regional frame work, therefore, violent activities associated with extremist groups in West Africa continue to increase by the year.

As Nigeria's response to Boko Haram, it has shown that military response to terrorism alone is not sufficient to dealing with extremist groups. For ECOWAS to deal with the threat of religious extremism, it need to adopt existing response mechanisms in line with the fast-changing nature of the threat, as its tested conflict response frame works are not the most appropriate for dealing with Religious extremism. West Africa currently hosts two major non-ECOWAS ad hoc response structures mandated by the Africa Union (A.U) and involving multiple ECOWAS member states. The Joint force of the group of five of the Sahel (G5sahel), the Multinational Joint Task force (MNJTF), both are meant to address violent religious extremism and the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria. The emergence of the two arrangements raises several issues for continental and regional response efforts: first and foremost, their operations add to the already over-crowded security response landscape in the Sahel, where multiple security partners, including United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the French-led operation Barkhane, are present.

The major challenge for ECOWAS in the operations of ad-hoc structures in the region is the overlap of troop contributions by member states. Chad and Niger contribute troops to both MNJTF and G5 Sahel, and to MINUSMA in a region where national military capacities are limited, the inability to properly coordinate existing efforts at the ECOWAS or A.U level, can lead to over stretch. This has implications for overall commitments to emerging regional arrangement, such as ECOWAS standby Force

What has been the response of the United Nations to terrorism in Nigeria?

Over the last decade, the United Nations has built on its previous experience in assisting states in dealing with an evolving terrorist threat that often involves new technologies. UNODC, 2022 report shows that the United Nations is heading in the right direction but much progress is still required to be made at the national, regional and international levels. Individual countries have made big strides in combating terrorism, but success is measured in relative terms and major disparities persist. Preventing terrorist attack is a challenge for everyone including countries with abundant resources and skilled personnel. Most nations' implementation of the long list of the United Nations measures envisioned by Security Council resolutions and the Global strategy will be patchy at best (UNODC,2022). Terrorism remains a major threat to international peace and security, undermining the United Nations' core values.

Nigeria continues to face multiple challenges posed by various terrorist groups, with devastating human cost, in terms of lives lost or permanently altered, internally displaced persons and enormously negative economic and social consequences. Since 2011, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has assisted the Nigerian government and its various relevant ministries and agencies in putting into action the 19 universal legal instruments against terrorism, as well as the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Furthermore, in response to terrorism and security challenges in Nigeria, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNODC), collaborated closely with the Nigerian government to strengthen the role of law-based criminal justice responses to terrorism. They deliver capacity-building support to law enforcement officials, legal advisors, prosecutors, defense attorneys and judges, provide technical assistance to policy makers on the legal and policy frame work related to terrorism and work with local partners to prevent and counter violent extremism in Nigeria (UNODC, 2022).

In a presidential statement approved by all 15 members, the UN Council expressed deep concern that Boko Haram's activities are undermining peace and stability in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria. Despite the fact that the statement was sponsored by Nigeria, the Nigeria representative was hesitant to have the Security Council discuss the Islamic militant group, despite being a member of the Security Council. The Security Council has previously responded to specific Boko Haram terrorist attacks, such as the kidnapping of 276 school girls in Chibok. The Security Council demanded that Boko Haram immediately halt all hostilities, disarm and demobilize. And it demanded the immediate release of all held captive by the group including the Chibok girls (UN, 2015). Despite the challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic, Nigeria enhanced its cooperation with the United Nations Centre for counter-terrorism (UNCCT) who sent its men to Nigeria in the area of capacity building with relevant government agencies such as the defense intelligence agency, the national atomic energy commission, the national authority on chemical and biological weapons conventions, the Nigerian air force, the Nigerian army, the Nigerian navy, the Nigerian immigration services, the Nigerian custom services, the Nigerian police force, the Nigerian security and civil defenses corps, the office of the national security adviser and the permanent mission of Nigeria to the UN in New York, were able to participate in several UNCCT-organized virtual and physical trainings.

The United Nations welcome such engagements which improve Nigeria's knowledge, understanding and implementation of counter-terrorism measures as well as, providing an opportunity to share experiences that may help other states (Edokpa, 2021). The United Nations has assisted in mobilizing Africa and other countries to help Nigeria in the fight against the Boko Haram terrorists. The UN helped in other areas, such as providing shelter, food, drugs and other relief materials to the internally displaced persons by the insurgent. These responses of the UN aided Nigeria a lot in the partial defeat of the Boko haram terrorists in 2015 before the Nigeria general election.

How has the United States of America responded to terrorism in Nigeria?

Nigeria a key strategic ally of the U.S has come under attack by a radical Islamic sect Boko Haram. In January 2012, the group leader Abubakar Sheku, accused the U.S of waging war on Islam. The group largely a product of wide spread socio economic and religious insecurities and its ideology resonates among certain communities of historical narratives and modern grievances in Northern Nigeria. The group has carried out attacks in the north-east of the country against innocent civilians, police stations and patrols, politicians, religious leaders (Christians and Muslims) and individuals whom they perceived to be engaged in an un-Islam activities, such as

the drinking of beer. Boko Haram is the first militant group to embrace the use of suicide bombing. It is in the interests of the US and the international community to curtail the spread of Boko Haram by assisting Nigeria in confronting this complex multifaceted terrorist threat.

Early in 2012 President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in four states of the North, Yobe, Borno, Plateau and Niger in concert with the deployment of armed forces, temporary closing of international borders in the northern region and the establishment of a special counter terrorism force. (Meeham, P. and Speier, J. 2011). United States of America established its Africa command (AFRICOM) in 2007 and focused on assisting African militaries in countering violent religious extremism. The U.S. military presence on the continent has slowly expanded from about 2,000 troops based mainly in Djibouti to roughly 6,000 military personnel by the end of 2017 and raised to 7,200 by the end of 2018. In April that same year, the then defense Secretary of AFRICOM Jim Maltis, had in Nigeria and Niger alone, an upward military personnel of over 1,000 (Lichtenbaum, 2019).

Through U.S. foreign assistance, the U.S. support Nigerian efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, promote good governance, counter corruption, and improve security while addressing the factors that drive conflict and providing assistance to those affected by terrorism. Also, in the area of institutional capacity building, U.S. has provided for health and educational services and increased agricultural productivity and food (Turse, 2022). U.S. has heavily invested in security partnership with Nigeria over the last 20 years, supplying the country with warplanes, weapons, and training to support its fight against terrorist groups and foster military professionalism among its troops (Turse, 2022). In January 2016, United States of America agreed to sell 12 super Tucano warplanes to Nigeria, including thousands of bombs and rockets for USD 593 million in 2017. The U.S approved USD 997 million deals in Nigeria for 12 attacker helicopters as well as related training and equipment. With all these aids and training by the U.S. military to support Nigerian military approach to counter terrorism, it was revealed that more than 200 civilians were killed and many wounded in an air strikes aimed at Boko Haram terrorist in January, 2017. In April 2021 a Nigeria helicopter launched indiscriminate attacks on farm, homes and a school in an effort to strike at bandits (Turse, 2022). Sunday Punch of April 10, 2022 revealed that no fewer than 714 soldiers had been killed by terrorists in the last 18 months, while several others had suffered varying degrees of injury. No fewer than 642 soldiers killed between the fourth quarter of 2020 and third quarter of 2021 while about 75 killed this year 2022 (Punch, April 10,2022).

The United States of America has engaged its military and Nigeria military, the elite unit of the U.S. army to work together to learn from each other, and strengthen their relationship, the U.S. mission in Nigeria is to train Nigerian Navy special operations forces and other units of the Nigerian military on a based range of land-based skills and tactics, such as countering terrorism and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) (Channel TV, 2021). This report reveals that the January, 2017 and April, 2021 air strike were not anomalies. Civilian casualties from such attacks have increased in recent years, which attest to a wide spread news that there is collusion in the military and government of Nigeria with the terrorists (Turse, 2022).

Table 1: US gave ten countries high foreign aids in 2022.

Afghanistan	\$4.89 billion
Israel	\$3.30 billion
Jordan	\$1.72 billion
Egypt	\$1.46 billion
Iraq	\$960 million
Ethiopia	\$922 million
Yemen	\$809 million
Colombia	\$800 million
Nigeria	\$793 million
Lebanon	\$790 million

Source: world population review.com

The table above shows that Nigeria is the highest recipient of the U.S. aid from the Sahel Africa region. What then went wrong that they could not tackle insecurity and terrorism head on in Nigeria? The U.S. government collaborates closely with all branches of the Nigerian military to provide technical assistance, equipment, and

opportunities for professional exchange and training. The United States of America and Nigeria cooperate on maritime security, military professionalization including human rights, counter-terrorism effort against Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa, defense trade, and strengthening governance (Channels TV, 2021). The United States is the largest foreign investor in Nigeria, with U.S. foreign direct investment concentrated largely in the petroleum/ mining and whole sale trade sector U.S. invest over 3.2 billion dollars in 2019, Nigeria is the second largest U.S. export destination in sub-Saharan Africa (U.S. Department of state, 2021). To this end, United States has a vested interest in Nigeria’s security.

How has the Nigerian government dealt with terrorism in the country?

The ongoing battle with terrorists, insurgent groups and continued corruption in the government threaten the stability and political integrity of the Nigerian state. Boko Haran one of the largest Islamic militant groups in Africa has carried out terrorist attacks on religious houses, political groups, police stations, military formations including the Nigeria Defence Academy (NDA), as well as indiscriminate attacks on Innocent civilians in motor parks, busy market places and villages. The attack on a locomotive train along Abuja-Kaduna Railway corridor in March 28, 2022, which left at least eight Persons dead and twenty two kidnapped. (Aytogo, 2022). The abduction of over 200 students from the Chibok girls’ school in April, 2014, drew the attention of the international community to the government’s inability to curtail the insurgent. The rising insecurity in Nigeria, evidence suggests that the government downplay the dynamics of the narrative. According to the UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (CHA), the deteriorating security situation has resulted in a humanitarian emergency, with more than 8.7 million people requiring urgent assistance. The majority of Nigerians describe the Nigerian government’s response to the violent killing of innocent civilians by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, Fulani herdsmen and bandits as carrot and stick approaches or kit Globe treatment, also known as the “flip” “flop” approach.

In September 2021 the government launched anti-armed bandit campaigns in the North West under the terrorist prevention act, the Nigerian government designated bandits groups as “terrorists” in January 2022 (NGCRD, 2022). Due to the loss of grazing land in the north, many ethnic Fulani herdsmen who are mostly Muslim, have been driven south-ward into areas farmed by settled communities that are predominantly Christians. Many bandits groups are formed in response to growing inter-communal conflicts over land and resources. While these groups are driven largely by criminal motives, many bandits of Fulani ethnic grazing on settled farming communities, which escalates ethnic tensions in Nigeria (NGCRP, 2022). The government of Nigeria is struggling to fulfill its responsibility to protect and requires ongoing assistance from the International Community.

Table 1: The States most affected by terrorist attacks in Nigeria from 2011 to 2022

State	Death
Borno State	35,646
Zamfara State	5,747
Kaduna State	5,462
Adamawa State	4,097
Benue State	3,774
Plateau State	3,359
Yobe State	3,176

Source: Statista, 2022: <https://www.statista.com>. retrieved June 21, 2022

Has Nigeria won the war against Terrorism?

The study shows that the United Nations has encouraged the Nigerian state to combating terrorism by enforcing the legal frame work on counter terrorism on one hand, and the use of the internet for countering terrorist activity, human rights law among others. Through various activities, projects and programmes, the United Nations provide leadership, coordination and capacity-building in the fight against terrorism. Recently, UN secretary general Anthonio Guterres, on Wednesday May 4, 2022 reaffirmed the organization’s commitment to supporting Nigeria for the benefit of its citizens (Vanguard, 2022). United Nations also allocated \$13 million from the central emergency response fund to life-saving assistance to over 250,000 people in the north-eastern

Nigeria. The humanitarian response plan for Nigeria in the UN was revised upward by \$51 million and in June 5, 2016 the project called for \$279 million. (UN Cerf, 2016). In New York, Monguno, Nigeria's National Security Adviser (NSA), pleaded with the United Nations (UN) office of counter terrorism (UNOCT) to assist Nigeria in its fight against terrorism and insurgency. The EU is collaborating with the Nigeria authorities to address insecurity challenges throughout the country, including supporting government's effort to combat terrorism, radicalization and religious violent extremism as well as the reforming of the criminal justice system (Chukwulaka, 2022). Despite the efforts by the international community, terrorist attacks is in the increase. Terrorists attacked the Nigeria Defense Academy (NDA) in Kaduna, on August 24, 2021, killing of two officers and abducting one other senior officer (Sahara Report, 2021).

In addition, on June 7, 2022, bandits attacked St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo in Ondo state, over 50 worshippers were killed and over 80 people were injured (Vanguard, 2022), on March 28, 2022, a train bound for Kaduna was attacked by terrorists along the Abuja-Kaduna rail line, killing eight passengers and kidnapping over 50 others (Business day, 2022). From a similar string of attacks, the Kuje Prison in Abuja was attacked by about 300 terrorists, on July 5 2022, resulting in the escape of over 879 inmates, including 150 Boko Haram terrorists held in custody (Vanguard, 2022). Nigeria appears to be a safe haven for terrorists as the Buhari government seems to be overwhelmed by terrorist strategy, with many quarters alluding to suspected collusion of government with the terrorist (The Paradise News, 2022). A Nigeria soldier once boasted on the social media about sharing in the 100 million Naira ransom paid by Deji Oyewumi, one of the adopted Abuja-Kaduna train victims (The Paradise, 2022).

Conclusion

Security of life and property is a fundamental human right guaranteed by the Nigerian constitution. However, since the country's transition to democratic rule in May 1999, the government at all levels has failed dismally to ensure security of life's and properties, resulting in insurrection in the regions of the country. Political violence and assassination, electoral violence, ethnic crisis, communal and religious conflicts, sectarian violence, kidnapping, bombing and terrorism had continue to rock Nigeria. This kind of security challenge is one that is fought or tackled with great experience compared to conventional military forces, the International communities are better equipped in their long-term working with traditional and religious leaders in a comprehensive effort to combat terrorism, Boko Haram and the local condition that sustain them (Campbell & Harwood, 2018)

The paper provides useful insights about Boko Haram and its operating environment, the most powerful weapon of the International response is knowledge about the operations of the terrorist organization, its cross-cultural and religious competency, human terrain analysis and layered social networks. Human terrain network must be accounted for in order to understand the behaviour of citizens, particularly in response to the demands of its government. The study, hereby recommends, among others, the need for government to revitalize the economy to create jobs and provide for citizens the basic necessities of life, the state should shift emphasis on tackling terrorism and religious extremism from not only the military arms approach to a more humanistic and economic security strategies, and the government on Nigeria should identify the role of institutions and intelligence gathering for effective security policing.

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Corresponding Email: ominiapere@gmail.com fasanubi@delsu.Ed.ng orheabraham@gmail.com

