

PROTRACTED BOKO HARAM TERRORISTS' VIOLENCE AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO COUNTER-TERRORISM EFFORTS BY THE NIGERIAN STATE: BETWEEN OPTIMISM AND DESPAIR

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Executive Summary

The resolve to subjugate Boko Haram terrorism and restore social order in the northeast and Nigeria as a whole is at the top of the wish list of the Nigerian state. However, the spiralling nature of the asymmetric conflict and the gruesome records of atrocities perpetrated by the terrorist group have not only intensified the apprehension regarding the dynamic trend of its violence and attendant realities, but also cast a scepticism on the effectiveness of the counter terrorism efforts of the Nigerian state. This paper examines the consequences of the heinous activities of the Boko Haram terrorists and the efforts of the Nigerian state in combating terrorism in the northeast Nigeria. It further discusses the obstacles associated with the substantial financial expenditure on counter terrorism operations and also examines how Sambisa Forest militates against the concerted efforts to end the menace. This article argues that while there are few glimpses of optimism, the despair seems to be much more as a result of many debilitating factors such as corruption, secrecy in military spending among other things. The article concludes that a comprehensive cum effective strategy to combat terrorism in the interest of peace and meaningful development in the northern Nigeria requires a balance between both the military and the civilian procedures. The article recommends among other things the need to address the root causes of terrorism while government also improves accountability of the funds dedicated to the counter-terrorism operations.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Counter- terrorism, Protracted, Terrorism, Violence,

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Introduction

The global landscape is engulfed with armed conflicts and violence arising from internal wars, interstate wars and terrorism, which have manifold negative impacts on the sustainability of both domestic and international peace (Kegley and Wittkopf, 2004). Many empirical evidences substantiate the prevalence of political violence across the world, as there is a manifestation of one variant of violent conflict or the other in different countries and every continent of the world (Osaghae, 2005; Irene, 2023; PRIO, 2024). Violence, which is the hallmark of terrorism, manifests through the harm inflicted on people by restriction of freedom, various forms of assault and killing of persons as well as destruction of valuable property (Girvertz, 1974). The instrument of terrorism are varied and the propensities for terrorism are wide-ranging, but the fact is that terrorism revolves around the adoption of threat of violence as a strategy of achieving particular aims with a view to inducing fear in the victims in a ruthless manner without any regard for or conformity to humanitarian norms (Kegley and Wittkopf, 2004). The recent and current experiences also pose a serious challenge to human security at national, regional and international levels (Kegley and Wittkopf, *ibid*). This threat seems to dominate the polity in developing countries domiciled in Asia, Middle East and Africa.

In Africa, the complexity of factors such as historical, cultural, political, economic relation, external actors etc. account for violence as a systemic variable. That is, violence is a product of the interplay of congeries of forces in a socio-political system (Osaghae, 2005). From the 1970s hitherto, the enduring image of Africa has been of a continent of conflict and violence perennially on the verge of survival. Africa thus embodies an assemblage of nations that are prone to violence and terrorism arising mostly from conflictual socio-political and economic settings, where force and conflict make the everyday life of its inhabitants (Idowu, 2005). The historical context of violence is central to explaining present-day conflicts in Africa, as most historical and anthropological accounts paint a largely violent past in most parts of the continent (Osaghae, 2005). Africa has the weakest economy and many poverty-ridden states in the world and because of the prevalent structural problems, is vulnerable to many social, economic, political and environmental crises. The failure of a government to carry out its conventional obligation for the citizen leads to disappointment, grievances and the quest for power to influence change. This has been the cause of different radical movements in the annals of history (Forest, 2014). One recent radical movement which has become a global threat is the Boko Haram.

Boko Haram is a radical Islamic terrorist' organization predominantly operational in Nigeria (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). The terror incidents masterminded by the Islamist group are so intense that combating the threat has become the topmost political agenda

in the country at the expense of socio - economic undercurrents such as poverty, lack of basic and health facilities, unemployment which have been identified as partly responsible for the emergence of this menace (Adesoji, 2010; Okafor, 2011). This paper examined the consequences of the heinous activities of the Boko Haram terrorists and the efforts of the Nigerian state in combating terrorism in the northeast Nigeria. It further discussed the obstacles associated with the substantial financial expenditure on counter terrorism operations. As well as the prospects and despairs of the government efforts. This article contended that while there are few glimpses of optimism, the despair seems to be much more as a result of many debilitating factors such as corruption, secrecy in military spending among other things.

Extremism and Boko Haram in The Northern Region: An Overview

In the late 1970s, the gradual downward spiral of the economic condition began to dampen the hearts of many people leading to the emergence of dissenting groups in Nigeria. One of such groups was Maitasine movement under the leadership of Muhammadu Marwa who exploited the growing economic disparities between the rich and the poor to incite the poor citizens of the rural communities in northern Nigeria to believe that their misery was occasioned by the intrusion of foreign Western culture. He gave many inciting lectures against the rich elites and the government and eventually had many disciples. Maitasine commenced series of violent attacks at Kano in December 1980, which was subdued by the military and claimed Marwa's life. Boko Haram has a historical connection with Maitasine uprisings in the 1980s and this reveals its strong opposition to Western civilization. Two years later, Maitasine riots resurfaced in Maiduguri, Borno state (operational base of Boko Haram) and the Nigerian security forces crushed the last Maitasine riot in 1985. Nevertheless, the northern Nigeria experienced several ethno-religious conflicts such as Zango-Kataf which were repressed by the military government between 1985 and 1999 (Komolafe, 2013).

Boko Haram, which simply refers to the prohibition of Western education, is an extremist Islamists terrorist group prominent in Northeast Nigeria that further extends its influences to Cameroon, Chad and Niger republic. The group whose official name is "Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad" meaning "people who are devoted to the spread of the prophet's teachings and Jihad" began in 2002. The group gained significant recognition under the leadership of Muhammed Yusuf who was a young Islamic cleric that influenced and incited his followers to oppose Western education vehemently through his teachings. Boko Haram cannot be regarded as an integrated, monolithic group because there are different factions within the movement that differ about strategies and sometimes contend against each other for attention and membership. They however share the same belief that the northern region was an

Islamic society before the advent of colonialism with western civilization that is diametrically opposed to the tenets of Islam (Forest, *ibid*). Thus, this extremist group not only desires the establishment of an Islamic state and introduction of Sharia Law in Nigeria but also contends with any economic and socio-political activity perceived to have western influence or involvement.

Besides, Boko Haram terrorists also wish to replace the modern political system in the Nigerian state with the ancient Muslim caliphate system similar to the famous Sokoto Caliphate in the pre-colonial period (Gebremichael et. al., 2018). These ideologies have remained the driving force for Boko Haram, but the group has evolved its tactics over the years despite the government efforts to curtail its heinous activities (Komolafe, 2013). The ideological basis of Boko Haram is parallel to other terrorist groups such as the Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), Al Shabaab, Ansauru, Hezbollah, the Islamic State, and others, whose cause is established on and propelled by Islamic fundamentalism. The members of such groups constitute threats to the general public, particularly in circumstances where their target is a secular nation that favours the co-existence of many religious traditions (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). Thus, Boko Haram and its most dangerous faction - the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) - have persistently remained the chief security concern as a result of gruesome records of horrors and atrocities perpetrated majorly within the Nigerian state. The movement that began purely as an insurgency later transformed into a full-blown terrorists' movement responsible for a large number of deaths and wanton destruction of property. Boko Haram assumed international dimension through its successful alliance with *Al Qaeda* in the Islamic Maghreb making it not only a regional menace but also a threat to global community (Knoechelmann, 2014).

The initial headquarters of Boko Haram group was located in Borno state's capital-Maiduguri, in the northeast region of Nigeria where it carried out several attacks that prompted the intervention of the nation's armed forces whose operation culminated in the seizure of the group headquarters and the demise of its leader in July 2009. These led to the escalation of the crisis as this group was forced out of Maiduguri and members fled to rural villages and particularly Sambisa Forest, which provide safe haven for them. The group under the new leadership of Abubakar Shekau vowed to avenge the murder of its leader by the Nigeria security forces, declared allegiance to al Queda in 2010 and began terrorism on a full scale (Albert, 2017; Gebremichael et. al., 2018). Boko Haram has progressively employed unselective violence towards the actualization of its social reform agenda while there have been indigenous, national and transnational efforts to subdue the movement (Serrano and Pieri, 2014).

Since the death of Mallam Yusuf and the internationalization of Boko Haram, the group has unleashed violence against the Nigerian State. On 26 August 2011, the United

Nations edifice in Abuja was attacked by this radical group through a suicide bomber which occasioned the death of 23 people and left several other innocent individuals seriously wounded (WHO, 2021; United Nations, 2022). On 14 April 2014, this ruthless group kidnapped over 250 girls of the Government Secondary school located in a small Christian town of Chibok in Borno state. Since 2009, this group destabilized the northeastern region of Nigeria, which has now spiralled to other parts of the country particularly including the nations' federal capital territory-Abuja. The attacks of this group have led to food insecurity, mass displacement of innocent people (many of whom are children) from their homes, loss of property, poor access to sanitation and clean water, malnutrition and exponential increase of schoolchildren in the Northeastern Nigeria that is generally believed as the epicentre of terrorists' activities (Raji, et. al., 2021).

Throughout 2014, the terrorist group successfully seized huge number of territories in Northeastern Nigeria that is more or less the size of Belgium (Reuters, 2015 and 2016; Sahara Reporters, 2021). In the same year 2014, Boko Haram exterminated almost 7,000 people to become one of the most lethal terrorist groups in the world (Hendrix, 2015; United States House Hearing-114 Congress, 2016). Besides, Boko Haram launched massive attacks on daily basis against the security forces, education institutions, Christians, churches, media personnel as well as Muslims they perceived not to be sympathetic to their cause. The extension of its atrocious activities into Chad, Niger and Cameroon, which are countries sharing boundary with Nigeria has posed a critical regional security challenge ever since (Gebremichael et. al., 2018). Recent statistics clearly reveals that Book Haram terrorists' group has exterminated more than 35,000 people while over 2.3 million people have suffered from displacement and property worth more than ₦16 billion have been destroyed since its inception (Raji, 2021; Statista, 2022). Worryingly, there appears to be a linkage between the terrorist group and armed bandits. In fact, the two seems to have worked together at various levels and stages.

This unwholesome development provoked the backing and concerted efforts of the African Union (AU) for the resuscitation and deployment of a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), a united multinational armed forces consisting of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria with headquarters in N'Djamena-the capital of Chad, mandated to subjugate terrorists' activities in the sub region (Gebremichael et. al., *ibid*). Owing to the seemingly incapability of the armed forces to effectually get rid of the terrorists' activities in the northeast, vigilante groups also came together and formed the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in 2013 in order to complement the efforts of the armed forces to fight Boko Haram and shield the local communities against attacks. Members of this the Civilian Joint Task Force assisted the Nigerian security forces by fighting alongside with them to avert the capture of Maiduguri by Boko Haram in 2014

(Gebremichael et. al. *ibid*). However, since the eviction of these terrorists from Maiduguri, there has been an upsurge in suicide attacks in the northern Nigeria. Actually, the group is an expression of a broad socio-economic underdevelopment as well as political illegitimacy and both the historical narratives and modern grievances have propelled members to uphold its ideology. This is because political and socio-economic provocations are largely prevalent in the Northern Nigeria than other parts of the country and Boko Haram, like other religious terrorist groups across the world, refer to local conditions to justify its ideology and pursue the agenda of establishing an Islamic state (Forest, 2014). The impenetrability of the group has also come from its refuge in the infamous Sambisa Forest.

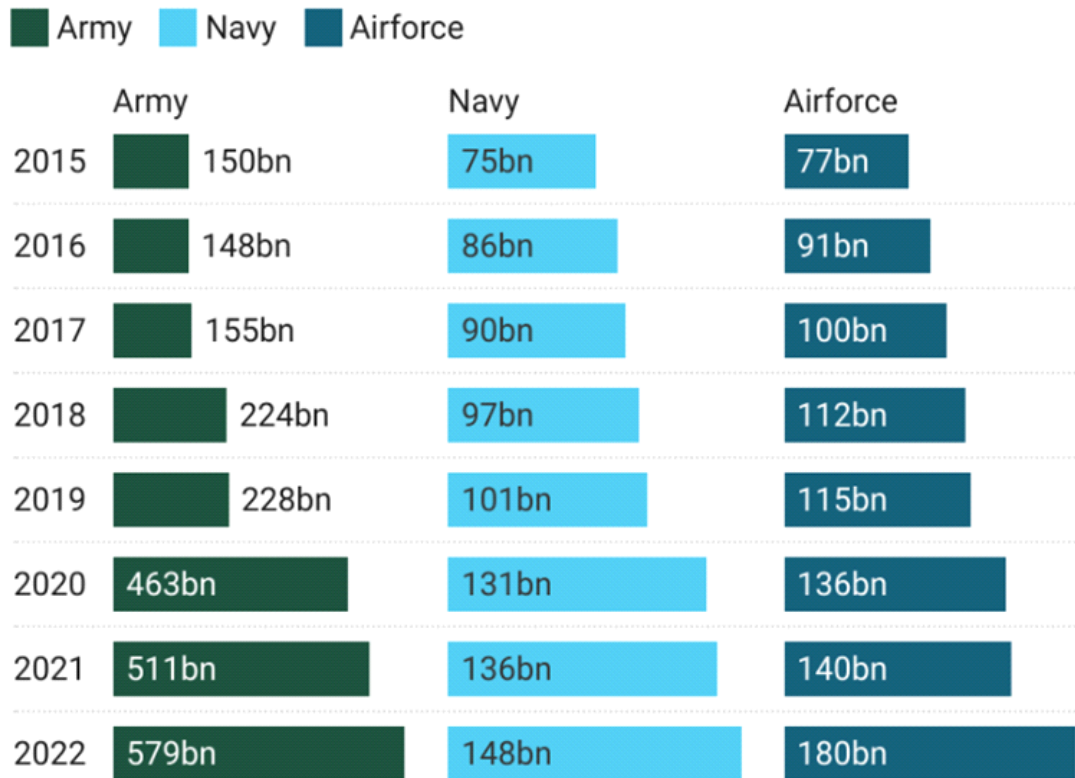
The extremely vast Sambisa Forest is the refuge of terrorists in the northeast region of Nigeria and it plays a prominent role in the protraction of Boko Haram violence and the obstructions recorded by the national and regional armed forces in their counter terrorism operations. The forest was established as a game reserve in the present-day Borno state by the colonial government in the 1950s because of its unique vegetation and concentration of animals. It was found to be the best endowed habitat for animals in the northern Guinea/Sudan Savannah. The Federal government in the 1970s gazetted the forest and the Sambisa Forest reserve was commissioned by the then military administrator of Borno state in person of Muhammed Buba Marwa for the promotion of tourism, conservation and academic research in the early 1990s (Kayode, 2014; Albert, 2017). However, the poor commitment towards the realization of the intended purposes of Sambisa Forest reserve for almost a decade led to its hijack by some armed groups that were using the forest as their hideout (Hendrix, 2015; Albert, 2017).

Evaluation of Government's Spending on Counter Terrorism

The massive security threat of Boko Haram led to the resolve by the Nigerian government to wage counter terrorism war against this extremist group. However, despite the deployment of large security forces to the northern region coupled with the allocation of 20% of the country's budget for defence sector by President Jonathan led administration in 2014 with a view to combating terrorism, there was rather an upsurge in violent activities of this notorious group (Udo, 2014, Forest, 2014). It is noteworthy that Nigerian state spent \$2.42bn and \$1.62bn on the military in 2013 and 2017 respectively. Between 2010 and 2017, Nigerian government allocated over 6.7 trillion naira to the security sector in order to strengthen its capacity for counter terrorism operations. Apart from the above allocation, federal government borrowed an extra budgetary allocation of the sum of 1 billion dollars to finance counter terrorism operations. There was also a release of \$21 million for the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2015 (Ogbonnaya, 2020). In 2018, US\$1 billion was apportioned to the Nigeria Army from the Excess Crude Oil Account for the procurement of weapons

and security equipment to strengthen the war against Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeastern region (Anadolu, 2017). Being an effective member of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), Nigeria was also aided with \$10.6 million value of training, equipment and advisory support for counter terrorism efforts between 2017 and 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2022).

Figure 1: *Budget Allocation to Nigerian Army, navy and Air Force, (2015-2022)*



Oyedeki (2022)

Among the Sub-Saharan African states, Nigeria occupies the first position on the list of countries with the highest defence spending at \$5.8 billion in 2022. The report of World Bank discloses the amazing rise in the budget of Nigeria's defence by 262% within the space of five years. In 2016, the approved defence budget was \$1.72 billion, the budget for 2017 was \$1.62 billion, the allocation for military spending for 2018 was \$2.04 billion, the military budget for 2019 was \$1.86, the budget for 2020 was \$2.57 billion in 2020 and the Nigerian state massively enlarged its military expenditure to \$4.5 billion in 2021. This data shows that Nigeria has expended more than \$19.9 billion between 2016 and 2022 to boost its military and security architectures arising from the recurrence of domestic violence across the country particularly in the northern region

(Babatunde-Lawal, 2022). Besides, the allocation of Nigerian state defence in 2022 budget was 15%, which is remarkably higher than the combination of allotments to health (7%) and education sectors (5%) (Ogbonnaya, 2022). The country's defence budget for 2023 was N1.383 trillion while the 2024 budget for defence alone is N1647 trillion, about 5.7% of the entire 2024 budget. In addition to that, N455 billion allocated for the Nigeria Police in 2021, N559 billion in 2022 and N838 in 2023. In 2024, the police budget is N969.6 billion (PLAC, 2024).

The Nigerian state seriousness to counter terrorism war in the Northeast sub region is evident in the fact that it is the only financial contributor to the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) activities (NAN, 2016). The federal government also allocated another N500 million for the prosecution of Boko Haram suspects and other criminal cases in the 2022 budget apart from the N300 million earlier voted for the prosecution of “on-going” cases, some of which are Boko Haram related (Ejekwonyilo, 2022). However, in spite of government counter-terrorism expenditure and efforts, the growing and daunting incidence of terrorism continues to be worrisome because it increases the level of insecurity and under-development. The vulnerability of the Nigerian state to terrorist attacks thwarts political stability, hinders economic growth and frustrates government efforts towards the attainment of rapid industrialization (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). Terrorism has not only had a significant negative impact on economic growth and investment but also altered the composition of government expenditure, with the defence component of government expenditure rising in comparison with other expenditure items (Chuku et al, 2017).

Despite this heavy financial commitment, the Nigerian state is yet to overcome terrorism. The Nigerian government earmarked N1 trillion in the 2023 budget approved by the National Assembly to finance the on-going war against terrorism and banditry across the nation (Sahara reporters, 2022). The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) also confirmed that the counter-terrorism war by the Nigerian state has gulped over 6 trillion naira between 2008 and 2021 (Omolaoye, 2021). The concerted efforts and financial responsibility of the government to counter terrorism operations by the security forces over the years have managed to yield negligible results as the country is still ranked as one of the state's most affected by terrorism on the Global Terrorism Index (Ogbonnaya, 2020). Peace seems not to be the horizon but an illusion in the Northeast. In its 12th years of operation in the northeast, Boko Haram has killed several thousands of people and its displacement of over 2 million people has led to an upsurge in the number of Nigerian refugees in neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger (Erezi, 2022).

Truly, the success of the military in driving terrorists' groups out of major cities led to sharp reduction of hostilities and insecurity of lives and property in the major city

centres from late 2015 to first quarter of 2018. However, Nigeria's strategic efforts to checkmate the group has not been efficacious but rather assist the group to quickly transmute into frightening international force (Forest, *ibid*). The month of December, 2019 recorded the execution 11 abducted Christians by ISWAP to revenge the killing of Islamic state leader Abu Bakar al Baghdadi by the United States Forces. In January 2020, the group killed Lawan Andimi - the Chairman of the Adamawa State Chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). It also abducted some University teachers in Yola and carried out several premeditated attacks in Borno State. The terrorists relocated to rural and remote areas where they constantly attack vulnerable villages, military facilities and government infrastructures ever since (Duerksen, 2021). Both Gubio and Jere Local Government Areas of Borno State experienced outrageous abduction as well as the killing of hundreds of their residents between June and November 2020 while many people met their sudden death during the series of rocket attacks, which put Maiduguri city in disarray between December 4 and 23, 2021 (Ogbonnaya, 2020, GOV.UK, 2022).

Although terrorism remains a serious threat in sub-Sahara Africa as it accounts for 48% of total global death from terrorism, the counter insurgency efforts in Nigeria decreased Boko Haram's activities as only 64 attacks was attributed to the organization in 2021. The fall in deaths from Boko Haram terrorism by 92% from 2,131 in 2015 to 178 in 2021 contributed to Nigeria recording the second largest decline in deaths from terrorism in 2021 with the number falling by 47% to 448. Therefore, Nigeria has now been placed in the sixth position from the fourth position it consistently maintained since 2017. It is to be noted that the Boko Haram's decline coincides with the death of the group leader, Abubakar Shekau who committed suicide during a skirmish with ISWAP in May 2021 (Global Terrorism Index, 2022). However, the spate of terrorism is not abated in 2022 as a number of cruel attacks were recorded in Ondo state, Kogi state, Niger state and Abuja- the Federal Capital Territory. On June 5, 2022, not less than 40 Christians were exterminated in a Catholic church while observing a mass service in Owo, Ondo state (World Report, 2023). In July 2022, the Kuje prison in Abuja was bombed and many prisoners including some arrested Boko Haram members escaped, some policemen were killed in Suleja, Niger state while improvised explosive devices (IEDs) attacks and bomb attacks were conducted at different locations in Kogi State in April and December, 2022 (Ogbonnaya, 2022).

Apart from the encumbrances of Sambisa Forest, corruption is another major factor militating against the counter-terrorism efforts in Nigeria. The funds for counter terrorism are not judiciously utilized and the operations are less effective. This is because substantial portion of the fund allocated for counter-terrorism operations are embezzled by conflict entrepreneurs among the top officials in the military and the security sector. This position is justified by the allegations levelled against both the

office of the National Security Adviser regarding the diversion of \$2.1 billion earmarked for the procurement of weapons and the office of the Chief of Defence Staff for another 3.9 billion scandals in 2015. Besides, there was a discovery of \$43 million cash meant for undercover operations by the National Intelligence Agency in a secluded residence in Lagos in 2017 while the \$1 billion from the Excess Crude Oil Account allocated to the Nigeria army for arms procurement was declared missing in 2018. The clandestine nature of military expenditure, which necessitates the exemption of military spending from audit exercise due to its sensitive nature, gives room for misappropriation of allocations for counter terrorism operations (Ogbonnaya, 2022).

Between Optimism and Despair

It is disheartening that the Nigerian state witnessed a tragic level of insecurity in recent time owing to terrorist attacks in different places, in spite of its investment on counter terrorism over the years (World Report, 2023). However, considering the doggedness and financial commitments of the Nigerian government to end the menace, there seems to be some glimpses of optimism for the restoration of social order in the northern region. The reviewed National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST), the Policy Framework and the National Action Plan to checkmate violent extremism have continued to improve the governmental capacity to counter the upsurge of terrorism thereby raising a ray of hope (Edokpa, 2021). The tenacity of the security forces to get rid of terrorists in the region have yielded some positive results as they have not only arrested several terrorists but also succeeded in exterminating many members of this dangerous groups, including a good number of Boko Haram/ISWAP diehard commanders (Sanusi, 2022; Abubakar, 2023). Another success recorded by the military operations was the mass surrender (more than 82,000 so far) of Boko Haram terrorists and their families to the troops of Operation Hadin Kai (OPHK) in the Northeast (Sahara Reporters, 2023). The laying down of arms by the surrendered ex-combatants was not unconnected with the demise of Boko Haram leader- Abubakar Shekau who died in a clash with ISWAP on May 19, 2021, coupled with the continued hostility between the two factions ever since (Momoh, 2023; Abubakar, 2023; Obiezu, 2022).

In its concerted efforts to eradicate terrorism and curtail the scourge of insecurity, the Nigerian state successfully established new structures and institutions. Some of the initiatives are the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light weapons (NCCSALW) and enactment of some legislations including the Terrorism Prevention Act 2013 (Amendment) for the prosecution of captured perpetrators of terrorism (Edokpa, *ibid*). Between 2019 and 2022, more than 4,000 arrested terrorists had been prosecuted and those who were convicted are serving various jail terms while others are awaiting trials (Iroanusi, 2020; Abu-bashal, 2021; Nwezeh, 2023). Besides, a non-kinetic approach called Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) was also established in

September 2015 which encourages willing and repentant Boko Haram and ISWAP members to surrender and undertake a structured de-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. This initiative has reportedly graduated more than 3500 surrendered ex-combatants who have been reintegrated into the society (Sahara, Reporters, 2023).

However, despite the exertions of the government in ensuring adequate financial provision for arms procurement and logistic supplies, conflict entrepreneurs in the security sector engage in false procurement deals and other illegal extra military activities at the expense of the nation's security. It is pathetic that equipment shortfalls, poor weapons and logistic supplies were the reasons adduced by the military spokesperson for the death of almost 200 soldiers in a Boko Haram ambush and attack on 157 Task Force Battalion in Metele, Borno State. It has been argued that except the Nigerian government check corruption in the top echelon of the military and thwarts the activities of conflict magnates that undermine security operations, it may be difficult to adequately counter terrorism. This is because violent extremism will continue to thrive in the region and the battle against terrorism will be an endless one. Thus, there is need to reinforce both legal and institutional structures to contend with corrupt practices in the security sector that frustrate counter terrorism efforts (Ogbonnaya, 2022).

The current realities in the nation attest to the fact that the end of the conflict is not yet in sight as the expected triumph over Boko Haram terrorism still hangs between optimism and despair. This is because the cessation of violent extremism being experienced in the northern Nigeria requires total dislodgement of the terrorists from the Sambisa Forest that provides a safe haven and operational headquarters for them, stoppage of corrupt practices in the security sector and more importantly, the removal of the underlying causes of the protracted violence. The truth is that, until the factors militating against the success of counter terrorism efforts are decisively dealt with, the unbidden but incessant terrorists' violent activities would not be eradicated but might rather grow worse.

Furthermore, the Boko Haram terrorists cannot be successfully eliminated through the adoption of adversarial conflict management strategies alone. It is to be recalled that the emancipation of 103 out of over 250 school girls was not through the military intervention but the product of the negotiation between Boko Haram and the Nigerian government facilitated by the International Committee for Red Cross (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). The financial commitments to military counter terrorism operations alone cannot eradicate terrorism because the success of military operations is not the panacea to its causal factors ranging from bad governance, corruption, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and inaccessibility to adequate social amenities and

infrastructure as well as basic support services in the region (Ibegbu, 2009, Ajah, et al, 2020). Thus, there is need for an extensive approach to combating terrorism in Nigeria while the weaknesses of Boko Haram ideology and activities must be understood and considered as part of the strategy (Forest, 2012).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The most reasonable and enduring solution to this protracted domestic terrorism that would lead to the stoppage of unwarranted financial wastage by the Nigerian state is a systematic riddance of its underlying causes. It is pathetic that the failure of the government to address the root causes of terrorism has degenerated to banditry in the Northeast and north central Nigeria, which has become another serious security challenge like Boko Haram to the polity (Ogbonnaya, 2020, PLAC, 2024). The history of religious conflicts in Nigeria shows that apart from the purported religious propensities, there are some underlying factors that prompted the conflicts. The problematic political and socio-economic situations in Nigeria have contributed immensely to the persistence of religious crisis in the country. The sustained structural problems such as corruption, poverty, unemployment, hunger and lack of infrastructural facilities will continue to promote the cause of Boko Haram terrorists' violence. It has been discovered that there are many supporters of Boko Haram ideology, grievances and its actions, and until the socio-economic challenges which are the causal factors are dealt with, the ideology will continue to appeal to frustrated young minds and may be difficult to get rid of it (Forest, 2012, PLAC, 2024).

Thus, the superlative strategy for the Nigerian government to defeat Boko Haram is to be financially committed to the counter terrorism military operations and simultaneously address squarely the socio-economic and political challenges that are the root causes of the lingering terrorism in the north-eastern region (Komolafe, 2003). In fact, if the Nigerian government through the security forces were to defeat and end Boko Haram terrorism without proffering a lasting panacea to the socio-economic grievances, there would be no guarantee of a long-term security and sustainable peace in the region as another rebellious group would emerge to take its place. Therefore, the hope of restoring both economic and socio-political stability in the northern Nigeria lies on the government readiness to address the underlying causes of the violence, which serve not only as persuasive mechanisms for terrorism but also as an impetus for the frustrated individuals who are incited and swayed to join the vicious movement.

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