

## INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION AND COMBATING TERRORISM IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Terrorism is a global phenomenon and since 2009 Nigeria has experienced a wave of terrorism that has left havoc in its wake. In response to this gruesome menace, the Nigerian government has employed different approaches in the fight against the Boko-Haram terrorism. All the efforts of the Nigerian government in curbing this menace have yielded little result as the Boko-Haram sect continued to unleash untold terror. The paper sought to explore and examine the efforts of the government and their allies in their fight against terrorism and examine the challenges it's facing. The paper is qualitative in nature and adopted an exploratory research design. The population of the study is the North eastern region of Nigeria where most of these gruesome attacks have been carried out. Qualitative text analysis was adopted in processing and analyzing the data collected which aided in the evaluation and interpretation of the documents. The paper found that terrorism has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian state as nothing has been done to fight the root causes of the Boko-Haram terrorism. The study also found that the international interventions in the fight against Boko-Haram insurgency like the efforts of the government have done nothing to put to an end the menace. The paper concluded that Boko-Haram terrorism broke out in Nigeria because of the failed system of the country and little or nothing have been done by the government to better the living conditions of the Nigerian citizens. It recommended that government should concern itself with strategies that would help improve the economy of the country instead of relying solely on military strategies in the fight against the Boko-Haram terrorism that has continued to plague the country.*

**Keywords:** Boko-Haram, International Intervention, Strategies, Government, Northeast, Terrorism

### Introduction

Since the catastrophe of the September 11, 2001 in the United States of America terrorism and counter terrorism measures have continued to dominate international discourse and headlines. Insurgency and its special tactics 'terrorism' are now viewed globally as the gravest threat to international peace and security. Today, the world has entered another period where large-scale conventional warfare between states is unlikely; at least in principle. But mounting global discontents arising from globalization; the failure of the economic developments to reconcile people's expectations with reality on ground; high level of poverty; widespread anger and resentment; environmental decay; corruption; population pressure; weak institutions and regimes; growing uprisings; transnational organized crimes; and the widespread proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) among others have made insurgency common and strategically significant, and this significance is likely to continue for at least a decade, perhaps longer (Metz, 2015).

In response to the devastating effect of terrorist attacks all over the world, increasing use of sophisticated weaponry and the consequences in terms of increased potential for mass casualties various strategies and conferences have been held to put in place counter terrorism measures. For instance, International Counter-

Terrorism Conference (ICTC), and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCTC) established within the Office of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF). In Africa, there is AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Strategy, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) reactivated in 2012, and deployed in 2015. In Nigeria, there is the Terrorism Prevention Act (TPA) of 2011, Terrorism Prevention Amendment Act (TPAA) of 2013, Nigeria's National Security Strategy (NNS) of 2014, National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTST) 2014, Counter-Insurgency Centre (CIC), the National Counter- Terrorism Strategy Reviewed in 2016, De-Radicalization Programme Guide (October 2015), the Policy Framework and National Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) August, 2017 (Ugwueze, 2017).

Terrorism is indeed a global issue, but notwithstanding its global outreach; it has become a common refrain that failed states are most prone to terrorist's uprisings. Unfortunately, Nigeria belongs to such state where element of failure have given room to group like the Boko-Haram to evolve. The Boko-Haram is a radical Islamic Movement that originated from the Northeast region of Nigeria. The name is translated to mean "Western Education is forbidden". The sect was founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in Gwoza, Borno state of Nigeria (Abiodun, 2011). But after Yusuf Mohammed's death in 2009, Abukakar Shekau assumed leadership and quickly elevated it to a more aggressive and violent terrorist network with affiliations and allegiances to other international terrorist's organizations like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Syria (ISIL or ISIS), Al Qaeda and other extreme networks.

Since Shekau's installation as the leader of the Boko-Haram sect, Boko-Haram has claimed tens of thousands of innocent lives across Nigeria and has displaced millions of people both internally and externally. In fact, the group was ranked world's deadliest terror gang in 2015 by the Global terrorism index. According to the report, the Boko-Haram sect succeeded in killing 6,644 people between 2014 and 2015, surpassing ISIS 6,073 within the same period. The activities of this group have also triggered one of the worst humanitarian crises in the 21st century. It has also led to a massive displacement of people; hunger, food insecurity, high level of child mortality rate, and death (Global Terrorism Index, 2015).

Nigeria is experiencing a new wave of terrorism conducted in different forms, means and places. The contemporary Nigeria society is engulfed by terrible acts of Terrorism, either from the restive youths of the Niger-Delta or from the recurrent attacks on the country by the Boko-Haram. The attacks by the latter is characterized by bombing and killing of persons and targeting certain persons and places such as the worship centers, homes, commercial buildings, telecommunication masts, government installations and infrastructure as well as depriving people of their legitimate entitlements. The Boko-Haram have created for themselves a multi-varied image by the incessant bombings with the impunity and horrific portrayal of people burnt to ashes, maimed and properties wantonly destroyed with the recent kidnapping of 234 girls from a secondary school in the country (Zalman, 2014).

These terrorist activities are carried out by non-state actors and do not exclude politicians and government functionaries including security agency that are saddled with the responsibility to protect lives and properties. The incidents of terrorism in Nigeria, impinge on the national security of the country as the act instill fear and uncertainty in the mind of the citizens, thereby inhibiting investments and development and constituting a threat to national security.

Unfortunately, the approach towards fighting the Boko-Haram had always hung on the individual efforts of the affected states. But the ineffectiveness of such efforts due to the internationalization and transnationalization of the terrorist networks as well as the potential of such violent spilling over to neighboring states have led to a collective approach that span national level in countering terrorism and violent extremism in the Lake Chad region. It was against this backdrop that the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was commissioned by the countries of the Lake Chad basin and Benin republic in 2012 to effectively combat the challenges posed by insurgency in the region. Its mandate was expanded to include terrorism as an area of focus.

According to Ugwueze (2017), the MNJTF is an offensive and stabilization force with the objective of combating Boko-Haram and other insurgent groups operating around the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). Historically, the Task Force was first established as solely a Nigerian force in 1994, during the regime of Gen. Sani Abacha, with the responsibility of curtailing banditry activities along the northern border of Nigeria. However, In 1998 it was expanded to include units from neighboring Chad and Niger with the purpose of dealing with common cross-border security issues in the Lake Chad region, and its headquarter was in the town of Baga, Borno State. Structurally, the MNJTF is under the authority of the Lake Chad Basin Commission head of states and governments, whom it reports to, and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) serving as strategic and technical partner of the MNJTF. The AU strategic support cell coordinates and manages all donor assistance to the MNJTF, whereas the mission support team in N'Djamena which consist of personnel from various contributing countries, provides daily support, logistics, information technology as well as communication equipments to the Task Force (Ugwueze, 2017).

The performance of the MNJTF has become a subject of continuous debate among scholars, analysts and commentators. The study seeks to ascertain whether the deployment of the Multi-national Joint Task Force has helped in combating the activities of the Boko-Haram in Nigeria.

### **Overview of Boko-Haram Terrorism in Nigeria**

Terrorism is transnational or international when the act transcends a national territory given 'the foreign ties of its perpetrators, the nature of its institutional or human victims, the target of its demands, or the execution of its logistics' (Ender & Sandler, 2000). In recent times, transnational terror has been closely associated with religious extremism. Religious terrorism represents the predominant wave of international terrorism in the present era, given that the terrorists are significantly driven by religious extremism. Although underscoring that other religion has had its own share of terrorist outbursts, Salkida argues that 'Islam is at the heart of the current wave'. The year 1979 is strategic to the maturation of this wave as it marked the period of the Iranian Islamic revolution, the invasion of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and the Islamic revolutionary war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. It was through the evolution of this form of terrorism that the unprecedented act of suicide bombing emerged as an extremist strategy. That strategy further metamorphosed, in terms of the scale of boldness and violence, as seen in the deadly 11 September 2001 attacks against the United States, since then, there has been a sharp increase in suicide bombing as a form of terror in Muslim-populated countries, including Nigeria (Salkida, 2009).

The origin of Boko Haram according to Ibegbu (2014) started in 1995 of Sahaba and was virtually led by Lawan Abubakar, who later left for the University of Medicine in Saudi Arabia for further studies. Yusuf was said to have taken over the leadership after the departure of Abubakar and indoctrinated the sect with his own teachings which he claimed was based on purity.

The history of Boko Haram's origin lies in a group of radical Islamist youths who worshipped at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri in 2002, and declared that the city and Islamic establishments are intolerably corrupt and irredeemable. They declared that they were embarking on hijra (a withdrawal along the lines of the Prophet Muhammad's withdrawal from Mecca to Medina), and moved from Maiduguri to a village called Kanama, Yobe State, near the border with Niger, to set up a separatist community ran on hard-line Islamic principles. Its leader, Mohammed Ali Yusuf, preached anti-state ideology and called other Muslims to join them and return to a life under "true" Islamic laws, with the aim of making a more perfect society away from the corrupt establishment.

### **The Socio-economic determinants of Boko-Haram terrorism in Nigeria**

Borum (2011) rightly noted the difference between violent extremism and radicalization; to them, radicalization is a process, whereas violent extremism is an action taken. According to the explanations above

about the causes of Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria, it is a general belief that religion is the sole cause of violent extremism and radicalization but Borum (2011) also notes that there is a causal link between terrorism and the underlying socio-economic conditions. He further asserts that factors such as poverty, social inequality, exclusion, and political grievance, are the independent variables on which the emergences of terrorist and extremist group are dependent.

McNamara (1968) in examining the role of social, economic and technological forces in the security calculus warned that “any society that seeks to achieve adequate military security against the background of acute food shortages, population explosion, low level of productivity and per capita income, low technological development, inadequate and inefficient public utilities, and chronic problem of unemployment, has a false sense of security. Re-thinking national security in this century has become necessarily important because when one considers the nature and manifestation of threats to national security in Nigeria at the moment, they are internally generated. For instance a general look on the array of violent extremist attacks carried out by the Boko-Haram sect on the Nigerian state reveals that the real security threat to the Nigerian state is the issue of underdevelopment, poverty and political instability and social injustice.

In observing the consequences of poverty in Nigeria, Anyanwu (1997) noted that no Nigerian regardless of their social location is free of the consequences of poverty. Hence he suggested that the poor Nigerians can no longer sleep because they are hungry and the rich Nigerians can no longer sleep because the poor Nigerians are awake. To further illustrate this point, a hungry man is an angry man, an angry man is a violent man and a violent man destroys and destruction on its own is a security threat. As a result, a perpetual state of insecurity exists. Therefore, insecurity cannot be reasonably and adequately tackled by military preparedness alone. McNamara (1968) again argues that coercive force alone cannot guarantee national security especially in situations of structural injustice and endemic poverty. He also added that the internal upheaval all across the underdeveloped countries in the past decade has been related directly to the explosive tensions generated by poverty which have often led to unrest, violence and the escalation of violent extremism.

#### **The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)**

Nigeria’s neighbors have worked through regional organizations including the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). The LCBC created the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 1998, and its mandate was terrorism as an area of focus. Nigeria and its neighbors have talked about creating such a force since the early days of the group’s insurgency, back in 2009. To combat Boko-Haram, the AU in February 2015 authorized the mobilization of a multinational force sourced from Cameroon, Chad, Benin, Niger, and Nigeria. Before this, a poorly-arranged multinational military alliance between Nigeria, Cameroon, and Niger had the mandate to disrupt the doings of the group. But the most palpable shortcoming of the present multinational responses has been a lack of mutual confidence between the participant states (Sagir, 2015).

A key part of United States strategy in the area is providing support to the MNJTF, which comprises of soldiers from Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, and Benin. The US provided training, intelligence, advisors, equipment, and logistical support. Again, the US supported the victims of Boko-Haram by providing more than \$195 million in humanitarian aid. Nigeria signed an agreement with Cameroon, Niger, Chad, and Benin to deploy 8,700 robust regional “Multinational Joint Task Force” to combat Boko-Haram which had murdered several people in northeastern part of Nigeria and gradually threatened the countries in the region. At a point, the Nigerian government was strongly against the inclusion of any foreign troops to help fight Boko-Haram on their land. Not only was there a lack of military coordination and mutual confidence among the nations, but at times some nations also had shown unhappiness with the actions of others; including accusations of one nation having links with the enemy, all of which led to a failure to achieve an optimal military capability. For instance, the disagreements before the creation of the MNJTF became evident in January of 2015, when Chad unilaterally deployed soldiers into Nigeria. Another instance is when Niger

branded the Nigerian army as “cowards,” to which Nigeria retaliated by referring to Niger’s army as “serial looters.”

The AU formed the MNJTF to prevent such rancorous battle of words besides its core mandate of coordinating actions. As at now, it still appears that at least a certain degree of the disagreement lingers on. On February 3, 2015, Nigeria’s military stated that the nation’s sovereignty was not compromised although Chadian ground troops were present in northeastern Nigeria to combat Boko-Haram. The armed forces of Chad carried out air and ground assault against insurgents in the Borno town of Malam Fatori. The Nigerian authorities had defended the attack, asserting that the town was under the jurisdiction covered by the MNJTF, which Chadian forces were part of. Nevertheless, after three days of bombardment of Boko-Haram locations, the troops again crisscrossed the border from northern Cameroon to the Nigerian town of Gamboru as the regional fight-back against the terrorist group continued. President Muhammadu Buhari in June 2015 instructed the immediate release of \$21 million (N4.2 billion) to the MNJTF. The President insisted that the money should be released in a matter of one week to aid the MNJTF fight the battle against Boko-Haram successfully. The Nigeria government subsequently made a pledge of \$100 million to support the activities of the MNJTF (Sagir, 2015).

On 30 July 2015, the Nigerian President tasked an army general to head a coalition of West African counter-terrorism troops. This was a step forward for a fast-forming multinational effort against Shekau’s Boko-Haram. Major General Iliya Abbah received the daunting task to lead the MNJTF. The general previously served as a commander pursuing kidnappers and thieves in Nigeria’s oil-rich south. The appointment offered further evidence of how quickly a West African army was coming together against Boko-Haram. Collaboration across borders had long been viewed as the panacea to the insurgency of Boko-Haram, which started in Nigeria but has since spread through the country’s porous borders into Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. The Multinational Joint Task Force composed of troops from Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Benin is actively fighting Boko-Haram and achieving some success. Boko-Haram, however, still carried out attacks in Nigeria and its neighbors, leading some experts to question whether regional cooperation was as deep as it should be.

But to some, the Multinational Joint Task Force seemed not to be what would have been needed to neutralize the threat posed by Boko-Haram. To eliminate the threat posed by Boko-Haram, a formidable force like the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which has been combating al-Shabaab Islamists since 2007 would have been required. Again, the formulators of the MNJTF could have learnt the strategy used by the AU Regional Cooperation Initiative for the elimination of the Lord’s Resistance Army (RCI-LRA), which was established in 2011. The MNJTF could also have been modeled after the initial configuration of the African-led international support mission to Mali (AFISMA), with the Malian army envisioned to be at the forefront of operations which was to be supported the African force (Sagir, 2015).

Perhaps the most brutal attack by Boko-Haram was carried out in January 2016 around Baga, a fishing settlement in Borno state, northeast Nigeria. This attack took the lives of at least 2,000 people and ransacking the military base of the MNJTF. In July 2016, the Nigerian Army reopened the Maiduguri-Dikwa-Gamboru road three years after it was closed because of Boko-Haram’s attacks. In 2013, at the peak of Boko-Haram activities in Borno, the road was closed to motorists. On 08 July 2016, Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno State together with the Chief of Army Staff Tukur Buratai, a Lt.-Gen., inaugurated the reopening of the road.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper adopted the relative deprivation to further give insight into the problems that has been identified as the root cause of insurgency in Nigeria. Relative deprivation approach to conflict studies was introduced in 1949, by Samuel Stouffer. Relative deprivation theory is defined according to Pettigrew and Walker (2015:2), as a “Judgment that one or one’s group is disadvantaged compared to a relevant referent, and that

this judgment invokes feelings of anger, resentment and entitlement”. In addition to the definition of relative deprivation theory above, the scholars asserted that relative deprivation theory have three basic psychological aspect any one or group of persons experiencing relative deprivation, must experience and they are the following three conditions: (i) “they first make cognitive comparisons, (ii) then cognitive appraisals that they or their groups are disadvantaged, (iii) these disadvantages are seen as unfair and arouse angry resentment”. Pettigrew and Smith (2012) noted that if the three basic indicators of relative deprivation are not experienced then a group or individual is not ostracized.

Gurr explains in *Why Men Rebel* (1970) that instead of an absolute standard of deprivation, a gap between expected and achieved welfare creates collective discontent. This theory applies to individuals who find their own welfare to be inferior to that of others to whom they compare themselves. Adekanye, (2007) noted that relative deprivation is one of the root causes of violence conflict like terrorism. Also, when the economic and social wellbeing of citizens are “regressive, the natural follow-up is violence” (Adekanye, 2007).

Richardson (2011), however, in his research asserted that frustration is a product of relative deprivation, which triggers aggression that develops to terrorism. Owing to Richardson assertions, it is conventional that relative deprivation can influence or trigger violence conflict in a given community, be it terrorism or other forms of insurrection. Martin (2013) noted that, “when a group’s rising needs are met by sustained repression or second-class status, the group’s reaction may include political violence”. Martin further opined that the justification behind groups or individual choice to violent conflict is influenced by aggression borne out of resentment from ultra-marginalization of a group or person. Relative Deprivation may also emphasize the individual experience of discontent when being deprived of something to which one believes oneself to be entitled. It is a term used in social sciences to describe feelings or measures of economic, political, or social deprivation that are relative rather than absolute.

How might feelings of relative deprivation translate into terrorism? Gurr (1970) provides a psychological approach to explain how collective discontent is manifested as political violence: “The primary source of the human capacity for violence appears to be the frustration-aggression mechanism, as the anger induced by frustration is a motivating force that disposes men to aggression, irrespective of its instrumentalities.” This frustration is caused by relative deprivation, and the resulting aggression is manifested as terrorism.

#### **Achievements of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)**

Since the MNJTF became operational, the MNJTF have fought with the Boko-Haram group on three occasions. They fought each other twice in Nigeria and once in Chad. On all the three occasions, the Boko-Haram terrorists suffered heavy casualties in terms of both manpower and equipment. Among the equipment captured from the Boko-Haram Terrorist (BHT) were 27 AK47, three GPMG, and LMG, three hand grenades and three RPG tubes. Since the operation started, a total of 31 BHT have been killed. Unfortunately, one member of the force died while nine other soldiers were wounded. The operation is continuing with the air support of Lafiya Dole Operation (Sagir, 2015).

During Operation Lafiya Dole, appreciable success was achieved. Insurgents were dislodged from Doran Nairi, Faide-Jimba, Yebi-Tasugia, Yebi-Jemi, Alli Kanori, Yebi Tumanba and Alagarno villages up to Doran Naira along Sector 3 (Nigeria) axis. The MNJTF also cleared Littri, Madayi and some villages on the Lake Chad Island along Sector 2 axis along (Chad) of Boko Haram fighters. The operation is still recording more successes. According to Colonel Dole (2016):

MNJTF troops, during these encounters, neutralized 31 terrorists, seized and destroyed massive quantities of equipment as well as a cache of arms and ammunition. Among the equipment captured are one Hilux van mounted with Shilka gun with 97 rounds of 21mm, 14 AK 47 rifles, four rocket propelled grenade bombs, six mortar bombs, two 97 rounds of 21mm gun and eight bandoliers (Adesina, 2016, p. 20)

In the November 2016, according to Muhammed Dole, 240 Boko-Haram combatants surrendered to the MNJTF in Sector 2 of Bagasola in Chad after “a fierce firepower of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) ground troops and joint Air operation during the Operation Gama Aiki”. The Commander of the MNJTF, Major-General Lamidi Adeosun, addressed the repentant terrorists and their families during his operational visit to the Second Sector. The Commander lauded the leadership of the former Boko-Haram combatants for the bold decision to do away with terrorism and embracing normal lifestyles. He further promised them of their safety if they would not look back. According to Colonel Sanusi Usman (2016):

The Troops of 152 and 155 Task Force Battalions at Operation Lafiya Dole in conjunction with troops of Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) from Cameroon, have conducted massive joint clearance operation of suspected Boko-Haram terrorists along Nigeria-Cameroon borders (Adesina, 2016, p.20).

The extraordinary military operation undertaken swept over 10 suspected Boko-Haram terrorists hideouts along the frontier. During the operation, 22 Boko-Haram fighters were killed; while three of their soldiers (commanders) were arrested. 1275 abductees held hostage were also rescued and freed.<sup>56</sup>The Head of Missions of the task force, Sanusi Abdullahi, in a meeting in January 2017 with Defence Chiefs from the Lake Chad Basin Authority announced that 1300 Boko-Haram terrorists have surrounded to the Multinational joint force. The meeting was attended by Defence Chiefs from Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Benin. They deliberated on how to improve security in the Lake Chad region through multilateral cooperation. Despite the remarkable efforts made in curtailing the activities of Boko-Haram insurgents and other security threats, Nigeria’s Defence Minister, Mansur Dan Ali, said the threat Boko-Haram poses is still real; although the attention of the Nigerian government is being geared towards peace building and rehabilitation should be given priority (Sagir, 2016).

### **The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the fight against terrorism in Nigeria**

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is a collaborative effort of the Nigerian state and the neighboring countries that are also experiencing the gruesome effects of the Boko-Haram terrorism. Since the inception of the Boko-Haram terrorism in Nigeria, the Nigerian government has made efforts to mitigate terrorism in Nigeria: The effort to provide Nigeria with a comprehensive legal framework for combating terrorism was formalized with the introduction of the Terrorism Prevention Act on February 17, 2013. It amended the country’s first counterterrorism law, which was passed in 2011. The Act mainly sought to promote inter-agency counter-terrorism efforts, set the responsibilities of the different stakeholders, and define their specific functions, including the possibility for law enforcement agencies to detain and prosecute individuals suspected of terrorism. While the amended version of the Terrorism Prevention Act provided the country with the necessary legal framework to counter terrorist threats, the policy framework for counter-terrorism is primarily enshrined in the NACTEST. The document was first adopted by President Goodluck Jonathan in April 2014 and was subsequently followed by a second version released by President Buhari’s administration in August 2016.

The NACTEST institutionalized the position of the Counter-Terrorism Center (CTC) within the ONSA’s structure in order to coordinate the implementation of the national Counter-Terrorism strategy and oversee security and intelligence operations in the country. The ONSA does not have statutory executive functions but does have an advisory role. This arrangement has been criticized on several occasions as a potential obstacle to the effective implementation of the strategy (NACTEST, 2016).

The National Counter-Terrorism strategy is developed around five main work streams, each with specific medium and long-term objectives. The five pillars include: Forestall, Secure, Identify, Prepare and Implement:

1. Forestall aims at reducing the risk of radicalization;
2. Secure entails the process of raising the security posture of the country in the face of terrorist threats;

3. Identify aims at pre-emption through detection, early warning as well as the strengthening of the judicial system;
4. Prepare seeks to mitigate the risk of terrorist attacks by increasing the capability of the Government to react to such an occurrence; and,
5. Implement, which aims to foster coordination/cooperation at the operational and strategic levels both within and beyond national boundaries (NACTEST, 2016).

In 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan launched a major offensive against Boko-Haram, declaring a state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States. Goodluck Jonathan also created a school to get the Almajiris from the street. In June 2015, in a strong sign of President Muhammadu Buhari's determination to dismantle the Islamic militant networks in the northern states, Abuja took the lead of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The MNJTF is made up of contingents from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin. It replaced and formalized the structure of the previous 'ad-hoc' military coalition and included Benin as a contributing country. The establishment of a command and Control Centre in the Maiduguri (MCCC) in early 2015 provided the military with the capability to monitor, coordinate, and control its operational efforts from the epicenter of the crisis (Falode, 2016).

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) does not fight all the battles that have to be fought against Boko-Haram. Its mandate is limited to securing the borders between LCB countries. It ensures that Boko-Haram does not have access to the use of the borders for launching its attacks. With the borders secured, each of the countries is expected to flush out Boko-Haram from their respective countries. For example, the force dealing with Boko-Haram in Nigeria is known as 'operation lafiya dole' (peace by force). This is the force fighting the insurgents in various parts of north-eastern Nigeria, most especially the Sambisa forest. As these internal forces carry out their operations, the insurgents would run towards the borders to escape into neighboring states and they are expected to be cut down by the MNJTF. This security regimen is not without problems but it has contributed significantly to the degrading of the capacity of Boko-Haram. In Nigeria, for example, the operations of the MNJTF have limited the activities of Boko Haram to the vast Sambisa forest. Their supply lines from neighboring countries have been totally cut off.

### **Challenges of Government's Counter-terrorism strategies**

The emergence of Boko-Haram as a terrorist group in Nigeria significantly changed the country's security landscape. From a quiet religious study group in the early 2000s, the Boko-Haram sect rose to become one of the world's deadliest terrorist groups in 2015. Terrorism is currently Nigeria's greatest security challenge, and as the work has exposed in the previous chapter, different efforts have been made by the Nigerian government and the MNJTF in countering this violent extremism. However, the government's strategy to counter the threat appears ineffective as terrorism still plagues the nation. Some of the reasons why the counter terrorism strategies employed by the Nigerian government are not yielding the expected success would be discussed below.

### **Exclusive Military Approach at combating terrorism in Nigeria**

A nation's national security is predicated on her national interest as well as her strategic calculations within the region and in the global arena. For us to have an effective and result-oriented national security therefore, the socio-economic terrain and the entrepreneurial needs of the nation must be well enhanced, as these are catalysts that propel growth and development, which in turn guarantees the well-being of the populace. This cannot be achieved by one sector alone, a combination of all elements of national power and our strategic alliance would have to be harnessed. Thus the military remain a vital element in the overall national security strategy. Military involvement in the internal security operations is inevitable as no nation can combat terrorism solely on soft approach to counterterrorism. Soft Approach is fundamentally the application of soft power measures to target the underlying causes of terrorism, its capacity lies in the ability to attract, persuade rather than force.



Internal security in Nigeria is conventionally the responsibility of the Nigerian Police Force. However, overwhelmed by pervasive security threats, including militancy and terrorist activities, the police force has not lived up to its expected functions. The police force is further weighed down by nepotism, corruption, lack of expertise, and inadequate remuneration, retirement benefits or disengagement programs. Due to all of these factors, the populace and the Nigerian state have found themselves more often than not looking unto the military for security assistance. To counter Boko-Haram, the Nigerian government employed militarized kinetic operations which brought together personnel from the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) made up of the Army, Navy and Air force, Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Department of State Security (DSS), Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) (Mbah & Nwangwu, 2014).

The Nigerian military counter terrorism efforts have comprised killings of suspected terrorists, massive arrests, and detentions. Some of these have been termed unlawful, wanton and an unwarranted expression of high-handedness. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch published reports of what they construe to be random killings of civilians, physical abuse, arbitrary arrests, attacks on defenseless communities, secret detentions, extortions, extra-judicial killing of suspects, detention-related human rights abuses like torture, holding suspects without charge or trial, rape, arson and so on (Mbah & Nwangwu 2014). Nothing demonstrates the Joint Task Force's high-handedness more than the 16 April 2013 incident in Baga, a town located 196km from Maiduguri. In retaliation for the shooting of a military personnel by an unknown gunman presumed to be a Boko-Haram member, the JTF responded by storming the town with reinforcements, shooting indiscriminately at anybody in sight and razing residences to the ground. About 200 deaths were reported while over 193 people were admitted to a local health clinic (Mcgregor, 2015). Had Boko-Haram's incessant attacks been abated by JTF's operations, their high-handed tactics might have been tolerated as a means to an end. Unfortunately, the JTF's seeming overzealousness turned into a rallying cry for Boko-Haram's subsequent violent campaigns, with the group justifying new attacks as retaliation for killing, arrests and prosecution of their comrades, and insisting that reprisal attacks will continue until security forces behind the execution of their slain leader, Muhammad Yusuf, are made to face justice.

The JTF, with heightened operational and logistic problems, proved ineffectual in responding to seeming regionalization and internationalization of Boko-Haram's terrorist activities. Shortage of troops ended a mandatory six-month rotation in place for JTF troops, resulting in cancelation of leave and training. Extended posting began a steady rise in 'absence without leave' (AWOL) and soldiers left the military without permission. Under-resourcing, low morale and impunity continued to lessen JTF's ability to defeat Boko-Haram until the African Union (AU) agreed to the setting up of the Multinational Joint Task Force, made up of troops from the affected countries, namely Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon. As explained in the previous chapter, a MNJTF was already in place but it was mostly dormant.

On 24 December 2015, President Buhari declared Boko-Haram 'technically defeated'. This followed a chain of military successes which drastically reduced the spate of sophisticated attacks carried out by the terrorist group. Buhari had effected a thorough command change, moved tactical formations' headquarters to Maiduguri, improved logistics, wage-payment, air support, rotation of troops and equipment procurement. All these boosted the morale and capacity of Nigeria's armed forces, which had been compromised by years of mismanagement and wide-scale fraud. To improve capacity, the president also ordered investigations of more than 300 companies and prominent citizens, including senior serving and retired officers, believed involved in security budget fraud and misappropriation (Matfess, Lewis & Allen, 2016). Hillary Matfess (2015) and other scholars swiftly warned however that Buhari's claims were immature and an exaggeration of military progress. To them, Boko Haram still maintained: 'significant manpower' made up of a network of committed insurgents whom the state has had difficulty capturing or killing and far-ranging operational capabilities. Using women and even children as bombers, Boko-Haram had mounted dozens of coordinated attacks, striking as far afield as Chad's capital of N'Djamena in June and July 2015, Nigeria's capital of Abuja in early October, and north-eastern villages and camps for the internally displaced in January and

February 2016. Thus, although Boko-Haram had dramatically lost territory in Nigeria, its spread across the region showed few signs of being contained (Matfess, Lewis & Allen, 2016).

Crisis Group International observed that “for several months, the group has carried out fewer attacks, and those attacks were smaller, on softer targets and with reduced success”. Likely, military assaults have weakened the center of the movement’s network, making it less capable of securing obedience and coordination, and fragmenting it into smaller, more local units, tied to specific areas and resource bases. Despite Boko-Haram’s inability to occupy territory after it was pushed out of its holding caches in Sambisa and Gwoza, the group needs to be viewed as ‘down but not out’. The reliance on exclusive military action to counter the group in 2009 still holds as a factor for its resurgence. The emphasis on the military option in tackling the Boko-Haram appears to suggest that the lesson of the return of the sect about a year after it was presumed extinct has not been learnt (Odo, 2015). With the group militarily crushed at the end of July 2010, state actors executed no alternative counter-terrorism capacity building mechanism. They were thus not prepared for Boko-Haram’s refined and better coordinated comeback. Exclusive military action turned out to be deficient in 2009 and is proving inadequate contemporarily due to the following reasons:

#### **The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the Fight against Terrorism in Nigeria**

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is a collaborative effort of the Nigerian state and the neighboring countries that are also experiencing the gruesome effects of the Boko-Haram terrorism. Since the inception of the Boko-Haram terrorism in Nigeria, the Nigerian government has made efforts to mitigate terrorism in Nigeria: The effort to provide Nigeria with a comprehensive legal framework for combating terrorism was formalized with the introduction of the Terrorism Prevention Act on February 17, 2013. It amended the country’s first counterterrorism law, which was passed in 2011. The Act mainly sought to promote inter-agency counter-terrorism efforts, set the responsibilities of the different stakeholders, and define their specific functions, including the possibility for law enforcement agencies to detain and prosecute individuals suspected of terrorism. While the amended version of the Terrorism Prevention Act provided the country with the necessary legal framework to counter terrorist threats, the policy framework for counter-terrorism is primarily enshrined in the NACTEST. The document was first adopted by President Goodluck Jonathan in April 2014 and was subsequently followed by a second version released by President Buhari’s administration in August 2016. The NACTEST institutionalized the position of the Counter-Terrorism Center (CTC) within the ONSA’s structure in order to coordinate the implementation of the national Counter-Terrorism strategy and oversee security and intelligence operations in the country. The ONSA does not have statutory executive functions but does have an advisory role. This arrangement has been criticized on several occasions as a potential obstacle to the effective implementation of the strategy (NACTEST, 2016).

The national Counter-Terrorism strategy is developed around five main work streams, each with specific medium and long-term objectives. The five pillars include: Forestall, Secure, Identify, Prepare and Implement:

1. Forestall aims at reducing the risk of radicalization;
2. Secure entails the process of raising the security posture of the country in the face of terrorist threats;
3. Identify aims at pre-emption through detection, early warning as well as the strengthening of the judicial system;
4. Prepare seeks to mitigate the risk of terrorist attacks by increasing the capability of the Government to react to such an occurrence; and,
5. Implement, which aims to foster coordination/cooperation at the operational and strategic levels both within and beyond national boundaries (NACTEST, 2016).

In 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan launched a major offensive against Boko-Haram, declaring a state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States. Goodluck Jonathan also created a school to get the

Almajiris from the street. In June 2015, in a strong sign of President Muhammadu Buhari's determination to dismantle the Islamic militant networks in the northern states, Abuja took the lead of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The MNJTF is made up of contingents from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin. It replaced and formalized the structure of the previous 'ad-hoc' military coalition and included Benin as a contributing country. The establishment of a command and Control Centre in the Maiduguri (MCCC) in early 2015 provided the military with the capability to monitor, coordinate, and control its operational efforts from the epicenter of the crisis (Falode, 2016).

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) does not fight all the battles that have to be fought against Boko-Haram. Its mandate is limited to securing the borders between LCB countries. It ensures that Boko-Haram does not have access to the use of the borders for launching its attacks. With the borders secured, each of the countries are expected to flush out Boko-Haram from their respective countries. For example, the force dealing with Boko-Haram in Nigeria is known as 'operation lafiya dole' (peace by force). This is the force fighting the insurgents in various parts of north-eastern Nigeria, most especially the Sambisa forest. As these internal forces carry out their operations, the insurgents would run towards the borders to escape into neighboring states and they are expected to be cut down by the MNJTF. This security regimen is not without problems but it has contributed significantly to the degrading of the capacity of Boko-Haram. In Nigeria, for example, the operations of the MNJTF have limited the activities of Boko Haram to the vast Sambisa forest. Their supply lines from neighboring countries have been totally cut off.

### **The State of the Nigerian Borders**

Nigerian borders are monstrous, protracted and permeable with high volume of both, lawful and criminal border intersections and the control component appears to be frail because of poor compensation, training and endemic debasement with respect to the security work force allocated to control the borders. The ungoverned or not well represented nature of the north east borders and different regions where Boko-Haram terrorists have built up "caliphates" makes it difficult to control the borders in those territories. Consequently, unlawful movements of arms, crude materials for bombs, forbidden medications, and mercenaries as well as proliferation of smuggled goods become the norm, with the possibility to additionally worsen crisis and insecurity in the areas.

Terrorists, marauders, traffickers of different products and different culprits benefit from this unfortunate break to operate networks across the region, moving their operations based on plausibility and calculated risks. Appropriately, the inability to facilitate law implementation and intelligence, results to failure of intelligence, and consequently, failure of intelligence to operational security agencies usually permits terrorists to design multi-faceted operations without being found out and this might explain some portion of the reasons behind the resurgence of terrorists' bombings in Maiduguri, Yobe and different regions.

The different footpaths to neighboring nations of Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger that connect to Libya Mali and Sudan are examples of the difficult issues engaged in the effective administration and control of Nigeria's borders and the successful and speedy battle against terrorism. As at 2013, conservative estimate by locals indicated that there were well over unlawful routes mostly footpaths from Damaturu/ Maiduguri axis alone, that connect or lead directly to Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Cotonou, Ghana, Niger, Sudan and Mali. These paths that are mostly unknown by security agencies, are unmanned, unprotected and therefore serve as leaky routes for arms and ammunition movements, illegal drugs, car smuggling as well as human trafficking in and out of Nigeria serving as avenues for cash transfers to finance terrorism and perpetuate money laundering. Subsequently, the government loses viable control of the borders and the economics. Also, the borders and economics increasingly becomes a rogue force working against the country (Sagir, 2013). As long as Nigeria's land and maritime borders are riskily unsecured, there is the high probability that the menace of mercenaries, arms proliferation and terrorism will continue to present serious security challenges to Nigeria, the West African sub-region and the continent in general.

Therefore, fixing of Nigeria's border posts, elimination of the mercenaries, stopping arms flow and removal of the ones already in circulation from illegal hands are holistically critical to the success of counter terrorism

operations not only in Nigeria, but also in Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin, without which the desire for peace, stability and development would be difficult to achieve.

### **Government's Insincerity in tackling the underlying causes of violent extremism**

As indicated by Bloom (2007), lack of rule of law, failed or frail states that gives safe havens to terrorists, corrupt government, despondency, discrimination, marginalization, unemployment, social injustice, relative deprivation, and government insincerity, lack of care, poverty and executive lawlessness are some of the underlying causes of terrorism in Nigeria. CNN Library (2007) also buttressed this point by expressing that, terrorism in Nigeria stems somewhat from need, poverty, illiteracy, a feeling of exclusiveness and distrust in the government, most of which comes from the malignant growth of corruption that has eaten deep into the fabric of the country. Looking at the current security challenges in Nigeria caused by terrorism, the public perception is that the state has failed in her social contract with the people of Nigeria by her inability to secure life and property from the rampaging extremists in the North-East of the country.

Aside from the huge amount of budget Government appropriates every fiscal year, the country is yet to reap the dividends of democracy. Fundamental social amenities like water, electricity, education, hospitals, roads etc. are none existent instead most of government budget is allocated to the National Assembly overhead current expenditure. The public is only privileged to know how much budget is approved for each fiscal year, but how much of the budget is used to transform the socioeconomic status of the citizenry is another ball game entirely. Government is insincere in fulfilling her election campaign promises to the people instead they flamboyantly with great impetus exhibit executive lawlessness in corruption and abuse of office at the glaring face of hungry, poverty ridden, unemployed and absolutely deprived Nigerian youths ( Bloom, 2007).

Akanji (2007) argues that it is “corrupt and ineffectual political leadership that often engenders poverty and, consequently, violent activities”. The implication is that government inactions precipitate violent acts. As long as government continues to distance the masses from their land and appropriate their rights without due process, government cannot be seen to be egalitarian as it does not take into consideration the principles of corporate governance, which involves freedom of choice, rule of law, transparency, justice and accountability. The war against terrorism cannot be fought when the generality of the citizens are living below poverty level. In this era, where there is “free-lance terrorist” (soldiers of unemployed youths, who do not belong to any fundamentalist or radical group but who are easy tools in the hands of the rich or terrorist organizations) by just a mere financial inducement, they can carry out any terrorist act. These youths are easily available for criminal acts because they have nothing doing and nobody cares about their well-being. Government only make political and economic promises in order to secure a win, but after they have won; promises are abandoned only to recycle the promise in the next election because they must win their votes. This is the Nigerian dilemma. This is the critical meeting point that has enhanced the emergence and growth of militancy and terror groups in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

The paper concluded that even with the tireless efforts of the Nigerian government in combating terrorism in Nigeria, their efforts have yielded little or no result as terrorist activities by the Boko-Haram sect has continued unabated. The paper analyzed Nigeria's counter terrorism activities against Boko-Haram, the role and achievements of Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko- Haram. The persistent attacks perpetrated by the terrorist group and the threats they pose to the sub-region make the MNJTF more important and relevant. The paper found that while the MNJTF has achieved a lot in its fight against Boko-Haram, the task force's success is undermined by financial difficulties, corruption and lack of competency.

Also with the challenges facing the MNJTF, the Task Force holds the brightest prospect of defeating Boko-Haram. Since the members' territories are the settings for Boko-Haram activities and given the fact that the members' knowledge of the terrains is unquestionable; they are best positioned to fight the group if the MNJTF is well resourced and their activities are well coordinated.

The paper therefore examined the challenges militating against the success of the efforts of the Nigerian government in its fight against terrorism and concluded that the government have focused solely on the terrorists and the terrorist sects ignoring the main reason why the violent extremism broke out initially. It also concluded that the government has done little or nothing to change the living condition of the Nigerian citizens that have lived through this hard and harsh reality consequently releasing into the society fresh set of angry, deprived and frustrated individuals.

### **Recommendations**

The following are the recommendations

1. There is the important need to improve the social-economic conditions of Nigerian citizens living in the north east of Nigeria by providing the basic social amenities, create special initiatives that focuses on uneducated and unemployed youths. It will be helpful to develop the Borno region and other border regions of the MNJTF members. It appears the relative deprivation prevailing in the rural areas of the countries is feeding into the militancy.
2. The need to adopt and apply non-militarized counter terrorist approaches is recommended especially since exclusive military actions has not yielded the desired results
3. Terrorism, whatever the form it takes, and wherever it manifests, pose real threats to international security. As such, the international community, especially the leading countries of the world and the private sector, should contribute generously to the MNJTF fight against Boko Haram.

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