

## CRIMINOLOGY OF DELUSION AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN NIGERIA AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

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### Abstract

*This paper interrogates the criminology of delusion and violent extremism and the implications for national security. The aim of this paper is to examine the reality of violent extremism in line with government delusion of a peaceful environment and what it portends for national security in Nigeria. The paper applied exploratory method in its explanations. Government response to these violent extremisms – terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, armed robbery, murder etcetera has been delusional because they claim to be on top of the situation whereas the realities on ground indicate otherwise. Government delusional propaganda on the security situation in the country only heightens the impunity of violent extremists who seem to have over-run government power packs. The paper argues that in as much as government inability to provide security for the citizens is covered in their delusional approach, the problem of violent extremism will persist with severe consequence on national security. The paper recommends that government must come clear of the insecurity in the country for people to appreciate the situation and proffer solutions and also government must show the sincerity and political will to combat terrorism headstrong.*

**Key words:** Criminology of delusion, Delusion, Violent Extremism, National Security

### Introduction

Violent extremism expressed in terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, armed banditry, armed robbery, murder and other violent crimes abound countrywide creating insecurity with severe consequences on national security. Government efforts to combat the many challenges of insecurity in the country seem to hit the rock as terrorists get emboldened daily to mess government security strategies and arrangements, especially when government forces are alleged of complicity in tackling the security problems in the country. Campbell (2018) noted that in Nigeria, kidnapping and armed banditry which involve extreme use of violence has become booming business venture, with whispers of involvement by politician and security officers merely for the money. While violent extremism continues to thrive youth unemployment level have continued to soar at 55.4% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). In 2018, Nigeria was declared the poverty capital of the world with about 86.9 million people (50%) of the population living in severe poverty in a report by the World Poverty Clock (Yomi, 2018). Nigeria is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest producer of oil in the world, yet citizens live in abject poverty or what we would describe as carpet poverty (poverty within the lowest level of human capacity survival). Nigeria was declared the global headquarters of kidnap for ransom at the 18<sup>th</sup> African Reinsurance Forum, Balaclava Mauritius in 2012 having about 34% of world cases of kidnap for ransom (Salihu, 2015; Catlin, 2012). 74% kidnapping recorded in Africa in 2012 occurred in Nigeria and Nigeria accounted for 28% of kidnap for ransom cases worldwide in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2013 (Uzochukwu, 2015). The story of kidnap for ransom has not changed in contemporary Nigeria, instead it has worsened. As at April, 2015, the internally displaced persons in North East and North Central Nigeria were 1,538,982 (Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2015).

The Institute for Economics and Peace (2018) report on Global Terrorism Index 2018 for the fourth consecutive year placed Nigeria as the third most terrorized country in the world and the most terrorized country in Africa. It went further to rank Boko Haram as the second deadliest terrorist organization in the world. An indication that Boko Haram climbed a step upward in the ranking from its third position in previous years. Similarly, Fulani herdsmen was classified as the fourth deadliest terrorist organization in the world (The Institute for Economics and Peace (2018). The report went further to state that Fulani herdsmen accounts for about 63% out of 88% of terror related attacks in 2017. Furthermore, Nigeria is ranked 148<sup>th</sup>

out of 163 peaceful countries in the world by Global Peace Index (2019). More pathetically, on March 31, 2022 Cato Institute, a Washington DC public policy research organization ranked Nigeria the second most unsafe country in the world (Adebajo, 2022). We recall that both the Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen make extensive use of fire arms and dangerous weapons against civilian targets in the pursuit of their goals. The most potent force providing the fulcrum for violent extremism is driven by government security forces' incapacity to secure citizens from marauding violent criminals. Government overtly or covertly have abandoned ungovernable spaces across the country to terrorists, armed bandits, kidnappers, unknown gunmen and their likes leaving the people they swore to protect at the mercy of these heinous violent criminals.

According to Amnesty International (2020), 1,126 persons were killed in Nigeria between January and June, 2020 in areas that were considered abandoned and left at the mercy of armed bandits. Similarly, Dataphyte Nigeria averred in their report that in the last nine years over 70,000 people have been killed as a result of violent activities of criminal elements. In addition, 37,500 persons had been killed by Boko Haram and Islamic States of West African Province (ISWAP) while 2.5 Million are left homeless resulting to over 244,000 refugees. In the same vein, 685 people were kidnapped for ransom between January and March, 2019 in Nigeria while 344 students were kidnapped in Kankara, Katsina state in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2020. Bandits also kidnapped over 26 travelers along Benin-Auchi Road in December, 2020. Zamfara, Katsina, Niger, Kaduna and Sokoto have been abandoned as a result of the activities of armed bandits. These are typical examples of the menace of violent extremism and these have critical implications on national security. In the midst of these alarming heartbreaking evidence of incidences of violent extremism orchestrated by criminal elements in the country, government continued to tell citizens that they are on top of the situation whereas the violent elements have critically overwhelmed security forces. The experiences of citizens on what the security situations are in the country are contrary from what government are selling to the public domain. There seem to be a very high cover-up of the violent situation in the country by government. It is most likely that government forces look the other way whenever terrorists are out on their killing spree, hence nothing tangential is done to reduce the level of insecurity and activities of violent elements in the country.

Previous researches on delusion in criminology have concentrated on delusional disorder and violent crimes or criminal behaviour in terms of crime causation. For example, Teixeira (2009) study dwelt on the delusional disorder in violent crimes especially delusional criminal patients in security forensic hospital in Sao Paulo, Brazil in comparison with delusional non-criminal patients in psychiatric wards. Buche, Genthner, Kaiser, von Bock, Grupe, Joest, Barthel, Vedder, Mundt, and Kronmuller (2010) study see delusional disorder experience as a fundamental symptom of psychotic illness which provide room for crime. Bezuidenhout and Collins (2007) study attempt to understand the relationship between delusional disorder and criminal behaviour. None of these studies looked at delusion outside of psychology and crime causation. This paper is an attempt to look at delusion from the point of crime reporting and how delusional those reports are because it beclouds the reality of crime and insecurity in a place. Criminology of delusion is an attempt to present dishonest report of criminal incidences in order to hide the fact and evidences of the realities on ground thereby creating a delusional picture that becloud the senses which may lead to wrong predictions of criminal events, inadequate action to combat crime, prevent pro-active intelligence in solving crime, cover-up government incapacity while violent crimes deepens with severe implication on national security imperatives. In fact, these erroneous reports provide radical criminal elements basis for criminal impunity and wanton destruction of lives and property. Recall that each time attacks are carried out by terrorists or violent extremists government responses has always been that they are in control of the situation or that they will fish out the perpetrators of the criminal act whereas in fact they lack the capacity to contain the violent attacks or they are complacently complicating security issues. More importantly, government politicized security issues, so they address insecurity as healthy, normal situation of the time; and in some cases encourage criminality through their inaction. Violent extremism has exacerbated due to government complicity and undue support to marauding criminal elements directly or indirectly across the country.

### **Conceptualization of Criminology of Delusion, Violent Extremism and National Security**

The Advanced English Dictionary defines delusion as a mistaken or unfounded opinion or idea or an erroneous belief that is held in the face of evidence to the contrary. Criminology of delusion refers to ways in which violent extremism issues are erroneously reported by government agencies in order to deceive the people on the true state or nature of insecurity in the country thereby creating a condition of harmony whereas anarchy, destruction and disharmony pervade the country.

Violent extremism has subjective interpretative implication and meaning, therefore there is no general acceptable meaning. However, violent extremism is used to mean the application or use of violent act or force particularly firearms and other lethal weapons to achieve individual, group or organizational interest especially by attacking soft targets or vulnerable members of society in order to coerce government to do or desist from doing something. Bhulai and Fink (2016 p.1) succinctly explained that violent extremism refers “to the support for or use of violence to advance sociopolitical change, often by targeting civilians in order to force government to do or refrain from something”. It implies that violent extremism involve acts that are not designated as acts of terrorism but nonetheless rely heavily on the use or threat of violence against the civilian populace. Thus, violent extremism apply force or threaten use of force against civilians under the instrumentality of dangerous weapon or fire arms (light or heavy) to compel government to carry out legitimate or illegitimate act for their selfish interest. Therefore, violent extremism is expressed when persons or group of persons deliberately and concretely demonstrate their grievance through the use of force of firearms or threatened use of force of firearms or dangerous weapons killing and maiming lives and property in order to compel government to take or not to take certain actions. However, the kind of violent extremism going on in Nigeria has no directional goal which perpetrators seek government to do or not to do rather than wanton waste of lives and property.

National security refers to freedom from danger or absence of threat that may affect a country’s (people’s) ability to protect itself, promote its cherished values and national interest and protect its citizens from existential threats (Omotola, 2019). For Onuoha (2017), national security is the capacity of a state to promote the pursuit and the realization of the fundamental needs and vital interests of man and society and to protect them from threats which may be economic, social, environmental, political, military or epidemiological. National security thus involves the ability of the state to secure the lives and properties of persons living within its governance against hostility or threatened hostility from within or without and ensure the freedom and welfare of all persons irrespective of religion, race, and tribe, socio-economic or political leanings. National security imperatives ensure that citizen’s security and wellbeing are paramount in all government policies and actions. In Nigeria, this national security imperatives seem whittled in government ineptitude as citizens are in fact alienated from reaping the benefits of good democratic governance.

### **Dimension and Realities of Violent Extremism in Nigeria**

Nigeria remains one of the countries with the highest level of insecurity in terms of terrorists attacks and victimization, yet government continue to downplay it to the extent of branding terrorists as armed bandits. Aside from the civil war terrorist attacks have claimed more lives than any other kind of disaster or crisis in Nigeria. According to Sasu (2022), between 2011 and 2021 Boko Haram killed over 34,534 people in Borno state, 5,155 in Zamfara state and 4,900 in Kaduna state. In the same vein, they killed 4,086 in Adamawa state, 3,636 in Benue state, 3,123 in Yobe state and 3,128 in Plateau state. As at January 31, 2023, over 300 school children kidnapped by Boko Haram are still in their captivity while millions of Naira have been lost as ransom to terrorists across the country. On 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 terrorists numbering over 200 attacked the Kaduna Airport and prevented operations at the Airport for hours. In the process security officers attached to Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA) were killed (Isenyo, 2022). Similarly, on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 group of terrorists (comprising Boko Haram and Islamic States of West Africa Province) attacked Abuja-Kaduna rail track between Katari and Rijana Train station killing many people and abducting over 200 passengers many who are still in their dens (Akinyemi, 2022). In the same vein, on 29<sup>th</sup> March,

2022 Abuja-Kaduna expressway was blocked while terrorists had filled day kidnapping tens of motorists (Adeleke, 2022). The implication is that Abuja-Kaduna axis either by road, rail, or air have by deliberate design or negligence been conceded to terrorists to occupy and government seemingly incapacity explicitly expressed in the wanton destruction of lives and property by these terrorists provide a clear evidence to this imputation. On June 5, 2022, terrorists attacked Christian worshippers at Saint Francis Catholic Church, Owa-luwa Street, Owo, Ondo State and killed over 50 persons while many people were seriously injured. The terrorists are said to have disguised as worshippers, who first threw an improvised explosive device (IED) before shooting at the worshippers as they stamped for safety (Oloniniran, 2022; Nida-, Adedapo, Oguntalo, Okojie, Fayahun & Abiola, 2022). The Federal Government claimed that the attack in Owo, Ondo State was executed by Islamic States in West Africa Province (ISWAP), a deliberate attempt to cover-up the activities of Fulani-extremists in the South-West. Kidnapping of Church leaders is a daily occurrence – on May 29, 2022, the Prelate of the Methodist Church of Nigeria Bishop Samuel Kanu Uche and two others were kidnapped along Enugu – Port Harcourt Road by unknown gunmen. The victims paid #100 Million Naira ransom before their release and claimed the kidnapers were Fulani extremists.

On June 12, 2022 another Church leader the Anglican Bishop of Jebba in Kwara State Bishop Oluwaseun Aderogba and his wife were kidnapped along Ogbomoso – Oyo Road and the kidnapers demanding #50 Million ransom for their release (Inyang, 2022). On June 29, 2022, terrorists stormed Shiroro Mining Site in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger state and killed about 30 soldiers and 7 policemen while many foreign expatriates (mainly Chinese) and Nigerians were kidnapped. President Muhammadu Buhari described the incident as a direct attack on Nigeria (Elumoye, Nweze & Aborisade, 2022). Does it mean that all other attacks across the country are not direct attack on Nigeria? Nonetheless, the usual government promise of fishing out the culprits was made, yet it is no longer secret that government complicity and attitude to insecurity exacerbate the situation. On July 5, 2022 terrorists attacked the advance security convoy of President Muhammadu Buhari in Katsina state (his home state) and injured many security operatives (Fatunmole, 2022). On the same July 5, 2022, terrorists attacked Kuje Medium Security Custodial Centre, Abuja with heavy bombs and released over 600 inmates including 49 Boko Haram terrorists. This is a facility that is guarded by a combined team of 179 Special Forces, Guards Brigade of the Nigerian Army, Police Mobile Squadron 21, armed personnel of State Security Services, and armed Nigerian Correctional Service personnel numbering over 100. The terrorists are alleged to have operated over three hours without any challenge from Nigeria security forces. President Buhari expressed shock and blamed the attack on intelligence system failure. This is really an irony, a man who swore to protect Nigerian citizens is shocked by the intelligence system failure of his administration, yet nobody is sacked for the lapses and criminal impunity of terrorists in the country (Adepegba, Odeniyi, Angulu, Isenyo, Habib, & Aina, 2022). It is quite obvious that the security of the custodial Centre was compromised by those assigned to guard the place to aid terrorists to carry out their assignment of freeing detained Boko Haram members. Although, ISWAP has claimed responsibility for the attack, it is a bad omen in the country and Nigeria citizens should expect the worst in coming days as general election draws near; foreign countries sent red alert to their citizens in Abuja and other parts of the country to be cautious of the time.

Across the country the story is the same, no state is safe, it is either unknown gunmen, armed bandits, foreign terrorists, herdsmen militia, ISWAP or Boko Haram are at rampage or other criminal elements. Farmers across the states of the nation no longer have access to the farm thereby heightening food insecurity and creating massive hunger and starvation in the land. Business men no longer have access to travel by road, air, or rail as kidnapers and terrorists have occupied all routes and access to do businesses. Educational institutions are not left out as schools and universities have become common grounds for attack by terrorists. In fact, the easiest way terrorists can make quick money is to enter any school or university and carry away as many people as they can for ransom. Sacred places like the Churches and Mosques are desecrated by terrorists on daily basis. Social activities have halted as a result of ravaging terrorists; people are locked up in their homes for fear of being victimized when they step out into the public place. Social gatherings are avoided, while viewing centers and relaxation spots are abandoned for fear of attack. In fact, terrorism has reduced the country as conquered and occupied territory as government go cap in hand negotiating for peace with non-state actors. The dimension of terrorist attacks are widespread and cuts across all sections of the

polity, no one is free from their attacks. In spite of all these, government continue to maintain a stance that they country is safe i.e. self-delusion whereas there is every certainty that the country is heavily under siege of insecurity coupled with massive poverty, executive lawlessness and corruption.

As if all these are not enough, government promised of delivery a transparent, credible, free and fair 2023 general election. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the umpire charged with the responsibility of organizing and conducting electoral matters in Nigeria promised to give Nigerians one of the best elections as advance technology through the use of Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), an electronic device will be utilized. The use of BVAS ensures that election results will be transmitted electronically to INEC server where everyone will view it openly (Oyemike, 2023; Ajani, 2023). However, on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 being the day for the Presidential election, the BVAS and INEC server were alleged to have gone comatose. The implication is that INEC declared generally unacceptable presidential result that both international and local electoral observers described as being but transparent, credible, free and fair while others described it as the worst election in Nigerian history (Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), 2023; Abati, 2023; Alieke, 2023). This further questioned the genuineness of government in allowing the votes of Nigerians to count especially Nigerians who turned out in large numbers seeking for a political change in the midst of scarcity of new currency and fuel coupled with economic hardship in the land. Citizens are delusional, and emotionally bitter leading to civil protests and litigations heightening fear of intense insecurity and criminal victimization. Government and INEC deceit once again demonstrates government insincerity in bequeathing at least a general acceptable election outcome because the process is fraught with misgivings exacerbating already tensed security situation in the country.

### **Government Delusion and Politicization of Insecurity**

It is no longer a hidden secret that Boko Haram gained international relevance as a terror group between 2011 and 2012 within the general election period in Nigeria. Addeh (2012) noted that the Late National Security Adviser, Gen. Azazi queried how is it that Boko Haram became better trained, better armed and better funded after election in 2011 and believe that Boko Haram could not have had the kind of sophistication they now have without the sponsorship of political elites. In 2014 when Boko Haram began to gain strong footing unleashing severe havocs in North East Zone of Nigeria, government efforts to checkmate the terror group was resisted by Northern political elites who foist Boko Haram on Nigerian citizens to discredit and hand twist President Goodluck Jonathan. In fact some of them did not see anything wrong with the activities of Boko Haram even when they have taken over and hoisted their Islamic flag in some local government areas in Borno State. Governor Murtala Nyako of Adamawa state described Boko Haram terrorist group as a phantom organization which he believes does not exist and accused the government of President Goodluck Jonathan of executing genocide against Northern states of Nigeria. He solicited the support of other Northern governors to sue the federal government and requested that military operation be withdrawn from the zone (Agada, 2014). Prior to this statement by Governor Nyako, Major General Muhammadu Buhari, a former Military Head of State during a radio programme in Hausa in Kaduna State on June 2, 2013 was alleged to have said that the military offensives against the Boko Haram insurgents are anti-north (Chiklam, 2013). However, before the general election in 2011, the National Coordinator of the Coalition of Northern politicians Dr. Junaid Mohammed allegedly said that it must be a Northerner or no Nigeria and that If Goodluck Jonathan wins the PDP's endorsement to context the 2011 Presidential election, there would be violence (Chedotum, Cheserek, Kiptui & Arusei, 2013). In fact, the greatest fuel that has swelled the embers of Boko Haram and other violent extremists in Nigeria and provided the impetus for their sustenance has been that of political rhetoric of political elites and the denial that Boko Haram does not exists or has been decimated. It is still this criminological delusion that has sustained government actions in combating terrorism in the country. A problem is solved when it is accepted it is a problem and that it can be solved. It is unclear whether government wholeheartedly accepts that Nigeria has a terrorism problem, if does positive measures devoid of any socio-political and ethno-religious undertones would not fester in dealing with it headstrong.

In the same vein in 2014, the Northern Elders Forum (NEF) in defense of the atrocities of Boko Haram terrorism accused the Army Chief of Staff, General Azubuike Ihejirika of human rights violation in

his pursuit of fighting Boko Haram in North East Nigeria and charged him before the International Court of Justice (ICC) (Onogu, 2014). These activities of Northern political elites which were ethno-religious and politically motivated had great impact on Boko Haram sustenance and re-insurgence till present time it has enveloped the entire country. It is in this delusion that government seemingly finds it very difficult to criminalized herdsman criminality and armed bandits as terrorists in the country providing them the leeway to operate without checks. In contemporary fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in Nigeria, government efforts are mere dressing window and camouflage. In fact, government inert action boost the ego of terrorist groups in Nigeria; this explains the level of general insecurity across the country. It is evident that the fight against terrorism in Nigeria is delusional because government cannot fight against the Northern political elites who foisted Boko Haram on the masses since the government and the political elites are the same and both Boko Haram and the political elites that enthrone them seem to have the same agenda- struggle for power, authority and control.

### **The Delusion of the Decimation of Boko Haram and emergence of ISWAP**

At the onset of President Muhammadu Buhari administration in 2015, he created an impression that Boko Haram had been destroyed or eliminated by his government. However, Boko Haram had rendered severe havoc in North East and North West Nigeria to proof to government that they are still very much in control of most ungoverned territories in the Country. In fact, government seems to be overtly overwhelmed by the insurgent activities of Boko Haram. For instances: On February 2018 Boko Haram terrorists attacked a Government Secondary School in Dapchi, Borno State and kidnapped over 110 girls. However, in a twists of events the then Director of State Security Services Mr. Lawal Daura led a government team that negotiated with Boko Harm for the release of the Dapchi girls. In March 21, 2018, 105 of the girls were released by the terrorists (Opeyemi, 2018). Many of the girls are still in Boko Haram's captivity five years after their kidnap. In the same year 2018, President Muhammadu Buhari granted amnesty to repentant Boko Haram members in spite of their atrocities (Adetayo, 2018), without adequate compensation families of soldiers and citizens that were killed within the period. This singular act of government may weaken the moral of soldiers at the frontline of the war on terrorism who seemingly may believe that government have no regard for their lives thereby affect the way they execute the insurgency war.

Government claim of decimating Boko Haram provided the spotlight for the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) or Islamic State in West Africa Countries (ISWAC) and other terrorist organizations including armed bandits in Northern Nigeria to surface. These terrorist groups have been operating all the breadth and length of Sokoto, Katsina, Zamfara, Yobe, Borno, Kogi, Ondo and Edo. ISWAP main aim is the continuation of the Jihadist mission in the Sahel region and West Africa with special focus in Nigeria. ISWAP composition of foreign militants from Mali, Niger, Bukina Faso, Chad, Iraq, Syria etc. make them more deadly and daring in dealing with kidnapped victims and their destruction of lives and properties, although they have their headquarters in Iraq and Syria, their influence and activities seem to have overwhelmed the Nigerian security forces. In spite their deadly attacks in Nigeria, none has been arrested or prosecuted instead government engage them through negotiations which have further embolden their heinous crimes. The group have executed deadly attacks in Edo cum Kogi states and even the Kuje Prison breaks and attack of a Catholic Church in Ondo state have been attributed to them (Dahiru, 2022). As they engage the Nigerian security forces to gain strong Islamic foothold in the country, the government seem not to tackle them headstrong and bring their presence to an end. It is this worries that created much fear on Christian population because they group seem to focus on Christians in their atrocities. The body language of President Buhari who is Muslim Fulani by tribe seem to heighten the fear of Christian communities in the country because of the way and manner the war on terrorism is being executed in Nigeria. Nigeria government must rise above petty primordial party politics and ethno-religious sentiments to halt the activities of these groups and ensure freedom for all citizens with some sign of seriousness in combating terrorism headstrong.

### **Herdsmen Terrorism and Foreign Invasion of Nigeria**

In 2018, Miyetti Allah, the umbrella body of herdsmen in Nigeria alleged that the attacks and killings in Benue State was a jihad and struggle for the ownership and control of natural resources in Benue valley and that they would be more deadly attacks in Benue state (Odinka, 2018). Since this statement was made there was no denial of it, there was no condemnation of it by government neither was there any arrest or prosecution of the individual who made the statement instead there has been wanton killing of innocent citizens and destruction of farmlands and communities not only in Benue state but countrywide. In other words, giving credence to the threat arising from that comment and nothing has been done to stop it.

President Buhari and other government officials have claimed that militias from Niger, Chad, Mali, Somalia and Libya are responsible for series of killings across the country (Akinrujomu, 2016; Ewubare, 2016). These foreign militias government claimed attacking Nigerian communities in the guise of Fulani herdsmen were said have been paid off with huge sums of money by Mr. Nasir El-Rufai the Governor of Kaduna State to stop them from further killings in Southern Kaduna (Yusuf, 2016). There are many critical issues arising from this matter. In the first place, the killers whether they are Fulani herdsmen or foreign militias are known to government. In the case of Kaduna, why is the attack centrally in Southern Christian dominated Kaduna? Why is the killings majorly in Christian dominated North Central, South East, South West and North East? The killers were settled by government, what did the government do to the victims of those attacks? It is most likely that government is playing politics and religious by being more sympathetic to one group over the others. Nigeria has been free zone for killing and any foreigner can just come and kill as much as it likes and get away without action from government. It is a free for all killing in Nigeria and yet we profess to have a functional government. Government has become primitively parochial with vested ethno-religious sentiment above national security interests. Government inability to arrest and prosecute killer herdsmen or the foreign invaders as they are termed seem to provide a theory that government have conspired with such group to cede Nigeria to their demand. The wanton destruction of properties and seizure of land and communities in Benue, Taraba, Plateau and Ondo states, in fact questions the sovereignty of Nigeria and government responsibility to protect her sovereignty. It also presented a picture that a group of people are in the mission of conquering and expanding their dominion in Nigeria. True or false the indices are clearly visible but how long to fully actualize this acquisition and conquering agenda is something citizens must watch because government deceit in presenting an appealing picture is drastically dangerous for our survival as a country.

### **Terrorism versus Armed Banditry**

The dynamics and narratives of the menace of armed banditry in Nigeria especially in North West is greatly affecting the socio-economic development of the country. This armed bandits engage in kidnapping, cattle rustling, murder, rape, destruction of communities cum displacement of people from their homes. They are mainly driven by criminal motives exhibited in extreme violence and wanton destruction of lives and property and operates in North West, North Central and some other parts of the country. The Fulani ethnic group and foreign mercenaries from Somalia, Mali, Chad, Niger, Libya, and Angola form the components of these armed bandits. Armed bandits are generally group of criminal elements who goes about terrorizing individuals, killing and destroying communities and seizing their properties through the use of firearms and dangerous weapons. The modules of operation armed bandits are similar to that of terrorists, they may only differ in terms of ideologies and motivations. In fact, their pattern and dimension of attacks are quite the same with that of terrorists. Armed bandits also goes by the label unknown gun men and terrorists.

According to a Wisconsin based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), over 2,600 people were killed in 2021 by armed bandits and also 18 abduction targeting students were recorded between January 2018 and April 2021. In the first week of February 2023 over 100 persons were killed in attacks between local vigilantes and armed bandits in Kankara Local Government Area, Katsina state (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Project, 2023). Egbejule (2022) noted that between December 2020 and August 2021 over 1,000 students and school teachers were kidnapped while over 342 persons were killed

with six months and also over 830 individuals were kidnapped in Kaduna state alone between July and September 2021 by bandits. It was also alleged that in Niger, Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Jigawa states farmers and community members had to pay bandits huge amount of money to enable them harvest their crops. All these indicates that bandits are actually a great threat to food and human security and also speak volumes of the ungovernable spaces that have literally been ceded to bandits cum terrorists by ineffective governance. In fact, criminal activities of armed bandits has cut thousands of households off from access to their communities and farmlands (source of livelihood) causing surge in physical, emotional, psychological trauma and severe food insecurity creating acute malnutrition among children cum increased mortality as health facilities dwindle.

Though, the government classified armed bandits as terrorists in January 2022 under the Terrorism Prevention ACT, yet Nigerian government continues to tag them as armed bandits perhaps to divert international community attention and reduce Nigerians ranking profile in terrorism index in the world. This ploy to deceive the international community is a criminological delusion because government wants to present the country in the light of free terrorism country while citizens continue to wallow in great danger of insecurity resulting from unchecked terrorism attacks that abound across the country. Unfortunately, while government flaunt their many efforts of military action to combat armed bandits, they on the other hand are unrepentantly and unapologetically negotiating with armed bandits thereby emboldening them and providing them with the leverage to continue in their criminal and heinous crimes against citizens. It is known that Governors of Zamfara and Katsina states, Mr. Bello Matawalle and Mr. Aminu Bello Masari, respectively negotiated with bandits to end insecurity in their states while insecurity remained unabated in their states (Aluko, 2023; Daka, 2021). It is perhaps this attitude towards the fight against terrorism and other extreme violence that have actually worsened the fight against insecurity in Nigeria. The issue is that government doesn't seem to understand the negative effect the activities of these armed bandits have caused to individuals, communities and the entire country because they treat them with kids glove.

### **Implications for National Security**

National security imperatives demand that the welfare and protection of citizens has high premium in the priority of government policies and programmes. However, when citizens no longer have confidence and trust in the ability of government to exercise its singular responsibility of providing them protection and welfare, it would lead to lack of development with severe impact on national security. When government words seem to lack absoluteness in the assurance of their ability to contain insecurity, mere anarchy where the weak become a prey for the strong certainly become the order of the day as been witnessed in Nigeria. Mistrust is a disease that can destroy government policy and its implementation especially when people believe government would say one thing and does the opposite. Trust is at the heart of national development cum national security. When people believes in their government, national security would automatically take its course with guaranteed and earnest desire to create enabling peaceful and just environment.

Nigeria is experiencing acute and exponential brain drain and capital flight with severe consequence on national security. Dr. Uche Rowland, the President of the Nigeria Medical Association in a symposium stated that over 5,600 medical doctors left the country to United Kingdom since 2015. In 2022 it was reported that about 13,609 health workers migrated to United Kingdom (Adebowale-Tambe (2022)). More so, according to Mr. Michael Nnachi, the President of the National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives, 57,000 nurses left Nigeria for United Kingdom between 2017 and 2022 (Ejifoma, 2022). It is worthy to mention that World Health Organization stipulates a ratio of one doctor to six hundred persons (1:600) but in Nigeria due to current trend in professional migration, the country has a ratio of one doctor to one thousand five hundred persons (1:1,500). The common denominator that has encouraged this exodus in medical and professional fields is due to insecurity in the country. It is not gainsaying that doctors and ivory towers have become common target for kidnapers with government at comatose to mitigate the problem, while political elites are surrounded by security forces paid from public tax, the medical professionals and other key human resources are left at their own mercy. The implication is that trained human resources and professional experts are now inadequate to manage our infrastructures. This also affect our foreign investment as foreigners no longer find the country conducive for business. Nigeria loses over \$2 Billion US



Dollars annually on medical tourism according to the Minister of Health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire (Ejifoma, 2022). This is a humongous amount of money for any country to let go annually on medical tourism or on any other thing for that matter. It would be recalled that since 2015 President Muhammadu Buhari is the most wasteful president on medical tourism Nigeria has ever had since independence in 1960.

Government handling of security challenges have been that of complicity and indifferent especially in tackling the menace of herdsmen onslaughts, armed banditry and Boko Haram coupled with unmanned national land borders especially in Northern Nigeria. The plural legalism which the country practice enabling one group of people to carry firearms openly and arresting others who does the same seem to give impetus to the wanton destruction of lives and properties nationwide. The result is increased proliferation of small and large firearms that have permeated across the length and breadth of the country exacerbating security challenges with grave consequence on national security. The weakening leadership in governance have even raised the demand for self-defense mechanism to be activated to checkmate worsening security in the country.

Since 2018 communities in Niger, Kaduna, Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto states were alleged to have paid millions of Naira to Boko Haram and armed bandits in order to access their farms to harvest their crops (Ogunyemi, 2022; Dipo, 2021). In states like Benue, Taraba, Borno, Nasarawa, Adamawa and Plateau states the communities have been sacked while the herdsmen confiscated their farm lands for cattle grazing. For example in Benue state in particular several communities have been sacked and occupied by herdsmen in Gwer West, Gwer East, Kwande, Guma, Apa Local Government Areas (Duru, 2023; Godwin, 2018). The accessibility and availability of food in the country is beyond the reach of the ordinary citizens. Food security has great implications for national security. The concept of relative deprivation and alienation is becoming a reality in Nigeria. Citizens are daily being deprived and alienated from their sources of survival and weak state institutions watch helplessly as insecurity is politicized and voices of vulnerable citizens are muzzled with executive impunity cum lawlessness. Social contract between state and citizens is ruptured and hardship stares everyone in the face with helpless abandon.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The war on terrorism and insurgency demands honest and sincere dissemination of information on the facts and situation of the war to enable citizens make informed decisions on the way forward and provide the needed security intelligence to combat insecurity in the country. Government hide and seek on the security situation regarding the state of the nation as it relates to the fight against terrorism and insurgency is deceitful and criminological delusional. More so, the use of kinetic military approach basically lethal weapons confrontation is useful in dealing with the situation in the short run but not a good option in the long run. The long run approach in combating terrorism and insurgency is dealing squarely with fundamental issues that generate terrorism in the first place. In Nigeria, strong institutions that work must emerge, rule of law is fundamental thrust of democracy; land, water and air spaces of Nigeria must be contained, proliferation of borders and firearms must be checked, unemployment, poverty, mass illiteracy, and working and workable leadership. Some of these basic issues that cause terrorism in the country must be contained to close the nozzle for terrorism recruitment before the application of kinetic approach become realizable in tackling the problem of terrorism in Nigeria. It must be emphasized that these horrible crimes against innocent citizens have festered for long as a result of dangerous leadership that has lost the ability to lead and to protect her citizens.

Therefore, the paper suggests the followings as recommendations.

1. Nigeria is too big for one individual to lord it all. Efforts must be made by citizens to build strong institutions that are independent and inter-related without any one overbearing the other. The judiciary, the legislature, the executive, police, education, transport, health sector etcetera must stand out functionally to defend the country and its constitution not an individual in power.
2. The issues that provide impetus for terrorism such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, ignorance, must be provided for all citizens with express working social welfare facilities.

3. Government must be sincere enough to fight terrorism with political will devoid of any primordial sentiments and citizens must be carried along in the day to day activities of government as it relates to information on terrorism war.
4. The land borders must be adequately policed to prevent further infiltration of criminal foreign elements and proliferation of firearms while government must make sincere efforts to withdraw firearms from the hands of herdsmen and compensate farmers whose farm crops have been destroyed and restore seized lands to their rightful owners.
5. Government must sincerely show the political will to fight terrorism no matter the disguise and who the culprits are if the fight against terrorism must end in Nigeria. Selective treatment of terrorists on the grounds of ethno-religious and political bias and divide cannot solve the problem of insecurity and the implications it has on national security. The hood that make government delusional when dealing with the reportage of terrorism must be unveiled so that citizens must be well informed on the success or otherwise the situation of the problem to enable them take informed decisions regarding their personal security.

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