

## **NIGERIAN MILITARY AND COUNTERERRORISM EFFECTIVENESS: A PSYCHOSOCIAL REVIEW**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The research examined characterization Nigerian military and its impact on counterterrorism, the Nigerian military characterization entails the actual present performance contrary to their professional expectation with reference to counterterrorism, counterterrorism is a wide range security activity carried out to combat terrorism, the research made an incursion into a brief psychohistory antecedent of the Nigerian military. Game theory served as the theoretical foundation for the research. this was followed by examination of responsibility expectation of the Nigerian military, counterterrorism performance in Nigeria was examined reflecting the challenges to counterterrorism goal in Nigeria, recommendations were proffered to the identified challenges, suggestion for further studies were also made.*

**KEYWORDS:** **Nigerian Military, Counterterrorism Effectiveness, Psychosocial Review**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The characterization of the Nigerian military entails their actual present performance contrary to their professional expectations. This is with reference to counterterrorism, which is the subject-matter of this research. The Nigerian military are the combined military forces of Nigeria. It consists of three uniformed service branches, the Nigerian army, Nigeria navy and Nigeria air force.

### **Counterterrorism**

Counterterrorism also known as anti-terrorism incorporates the practices, military tactics, techniques, and strategies that government, law enforcement agencies, and intelligence agencies use to combat or eliminate terrorism. Counterterrorism strategies are a government's strategy to use the instruments of national power to depower terrorists, the organizations they maintain, and the networks they contain

Counter-Terrorism can also be seen as the techniques and strategies employed by the government or its agencies, to combat terrorist threats. When counter-terrorism is part of a broader insurgency, counter-terrorism may form part of a counter-insurgency doctrine. And defensive mechanism.

Defensive measures used to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and property to terrorist acts, to include limited response and containment by local military and civilian forces (Us Department of Defense 2007).

### **Psychohistory Antecedents of the Nigerian Military**

The Nigerian Army is part of the Nigerian Armed Forces established in 1960 as the successor to the combat units of the Royal West African frontier force stationed in the country, which had previously served as the British Empire's multi-battalion field force, during Nigeria's Protectorate period. Shortly after its formation, the Nigerian armed forces were engaged in combat operations against Biafra, during the Biafra-Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970.

The Nigerian Navy owes its origin to the Nigerian Marine. The Nigerian Marine, on the other hand, was formed in 1914 after the amalgamation of the then Northern and Southern Nigeria. But before the amalgamation, what became the Nigerian Marine had expanded to become the Southern Nigerian Marine in 1893. It is important to note that the then responsibilities of the Marine included administration of the ports and harbors, dredging of channels, and lighting.

However, the constitutional task of the Navy would be expanded in 1964.

The Nigerian Air Force was formally established on 18 April 1964 with the passage of the Air Force Act 1964 by the National Assembly. The Act stated that the 'Nigerian Air Force shall be charged with the defence of the Federal Republic by air, and to give effect thereto, the personnel shall be trained in such duties as in the air as well as on the ground.

### **Statement of Problem**

A Nigerian president once said that terrorism in Nigeria has been technically defeated. However, the uncontrollable escalation of terrorism activities in Nigeria discredits the assertion of the President, curiously Nigeria military seems incompetent and very ineffective in combating terrorism in Nigeria.

Nigeria is one of the countries in Africa to comply with all established and existing Conventions, Resolutions, Protocols and other laws regarding the regulation and combating of international terrorism, combating of the financing of terrorism and anti-money laundering and other related criminal acts specified under those laws. Notwithstanding the measures taken to be a compliant state among the comity of nations. Onah (2013) pointed out that Nigeria lacks the political will to enforce, and implement the laws so far approved or passed relating to acts of terrorism or financing of counterterrorism in Nigeria.

The research is therefore very relevant as it aims at bringing out the challenges of the Nigeria military in counterterrorism operations. This is a goal that cannot be over emphasized as terrorism have become a major challenge in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Game Theory by Neumann (1903-1957)** founded on cognitive (mathematical analysis) of situation that may be similar or opposing to each other. In Nigeria counterterrorism program there are allegations that policy makers in the counterterrorism program have the same interest with terrorist group and agenda, so in that context both the

policy maker and the terrorist themselves are involved in strategies for achieving the same outcome, the outcome seems very plausible of jihadist and Islamization of Nigerian state.

The game theory also becomes very necessary in the fact that many of the members of the Nigerian armed forces are also working same direction with the jihadist using terrorism as a strategy, hence why the Nigerian military institution works as a party in counterterrorism. Their operation seems very ineffective because the terrorist themselves as the other party uses the Nigerian military to propagate terrorism agenda, it therefore seems that the Nigeria counterterrorism program a complimentary game between the military and the terrorist group in Nigeria.

The limitations of this theory are that it is rather very technical. The mathematical analogy of it makes is very advanced that ordinary researcher may not be able to apply it in a research work effectively. Again, this theory seems very complex in the sense that there are other sub theories that are embedded in it example utility theory and classical theory which should have been independent theories. The theory has advantage especially in explaining the rationale behind the ineffective counterterrorism program experienced in Nigeria despite the effort and money spent in these programs. It also has shown its relevance in psychology that human being are very active and capable of finding solutions by engaging in complex analysis.

### **Responsibility Expectations of the Nigerian Military**

Today, the Nigerian Armed Forces faces a number of domestic challenges which continue to undermine stability within Nigeria and the region as a whole. Some of these threats include the ongoing conflict against the Jihadist rebel group, Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria, Northeastern Nigeria which has been in effect since July 2009. Likewise, Nigeria has been engaged in a long-running anti-piracy campaign in the Niger delta, which has threatened the vital petroleum industry in the country, which is the source of 90% of Nigeria's exports and 35% of the government's revenue. Compounding this

state of affairs is the role corruption plays in the ongoing attempts to strengthen the armed forces. Corruption has historically weakened the Nigerian military's capacity to face internal security threats, and is cited as being responsible for the continued longevity of rebels and terrorists operating throughout the nation thereby reducing counterterrorism effectiveness.

### **Counterterrorism Performance in Nigeria**

Terrorism in Nigeria has become famous between 2001 and 2019 with the emergence of Boko Harm and other terrorist groups from the oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Some of the Niger Delta militia groups include Niger Delta People's Volunteer Front, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta and most recently, Niger Delta Avengers. The alleged motive for Niger Delta terrorists developed as a result of social benefit deprivation and government neglect. The nation's economy depends mainly on oil, a natural resource rooted in the region. Militant groups gained strength and advantage through various tactics such as kidnapping expatriates and oil workers for ransom and attacks on oil facilities forcing the government to negotiate with them (International Criminal Court, 2013). Terrorists also negotiated for the allocation of huge contracts to leaders of these groups (UNOCH, 2004). The military tactics used to disengage terrorists are the same combat engagement strategies that infuriate terrorists and result in reprisal attacks, which have cost the nation billions of dollars (Global Terrorism Index, 2016). This has necessitated need for new counterterrorism measures.

Mismanagement of the resources assigned for the project, lack of professional engagement, and corruption on the part of the handlers led to a reckless waste of over \$40 billion on unprofitable training programs (Okoromadu, 2018). More than 80% of the terrorists were trained in vocations that had no financial viability and others were allocated monthly stipends for merely sitting at home (Wodu, 2014). This faulty strategy aimed at bringing an end to terrorism in the Niger Delta only encouraged terrorists from the region to threaten the government. Other militant groups in

that region began to form by people who also wanted to enjoy these personal benefits from the government. Boko Haram was in existence and had registered scanty and unnoticed attacks prior to the formation of the recent Niger Delta militant groups.

When terrorists from the Niger Delta were captured by the Department of State Security and placed in the same cells with Boko Haram members, they gained access to knowledge of more sophisticated tactics from these other terrorists' groups. The Department of State Security thought mixing terrorist groups together would break them because of their cultural and religious differences but the terrorists saw it as an opportunity to share ideas, experiences and tactics. As a result, Boko haram sect began to duplicate the tactics of the Niger Delta terrorists. Explosives were introduced in the north along with kidnapping, both of which had not been part of Boko Haram's previous tactics for negotiations with the Nigerian government.

Over the years, and especially between 2000 and 2017, Nigeria suffered major casualties from Boko Haram attacks. In this period, as many as 18,914 lives (both civilians and military) were lost, children were kidnapped and deprived of education and parental care, and communities have been destroyed, leaving the nation with colossal damage and economic loss (Global Terrorism Index 2017).

In 2014, fifteen Nigerian military officers were found guilty of this unthinkable crime (Wiener-Bronner, 2014). Though they were severely punished for this, it did not deter others from committing the same crime, as there must have been some form of benefits derived from this betrayal of their colleagues. With the low morale as well as the likelihood that some military personnel may share the ideologies of the sect, it is not out of place to assume that the military still have such characters within their ranks.

Felbab-Brown (2018) argues that the huge number of casualties, especially of civilians in Nigeria, resulting from terrorism, should be attributed to insurgents as well as the military.

This leaves civilians with no option but to flee from communities that are being approached by soldiers, in order to be saved from the wrought of the military (Ogundipe, 2018).

Unfortunately, the biggest arms purchase scandal in Nigeria was recorded to have had military authorities involved, along with top government officials, when two billion dollars were released for the purchase of weapons to fight terrorism, in 2015 (Perlo-Freeman, 2017). This is a major setback in counterterrorism effectiveness by the Nigerian military

### **Challenges to Counterterrorism Goal in Nigeria**

Nigerian Government in Attempts at Combating Terrorism and counterterrorism in Nigeria has developed various strategies towards curbing the activities of terrorist. First is the use of brute military force against insurgent groups and deployment of over 8000 troops into affected parts of northern Nigeria, but with no clearly defined Military Code of Justice for the operation. For example, the invasion of and killing in the Baga community in Borno state on Sunday, April 21, 2013 by Nigerian soldiers. The Nigerian soldiers in a single operation killed over 200 civilians suspected to be members of Boko Haram in the aftermath of an attack (Akande, 2013).

In the recent time, the federal government deployed the specially trained anti-terrorism combat squad to the terrorist zones in order to suppress the activities of Boko Haram (Okupe, 2015), the acquisition and development of more sophisticated, adequate and appropriate military hardware and the recent approval by the African Union and the violations of a broad-based international coalition to collaborate with our military, the approval given by the international bodies that give authority to neighboring countries (Chad, Niger and Cameroon) to lawfully deploy troops on Nigerian soil. Nigerian military also operate beyond borders to hunt fleeing terrorists, thereby removing their safe haven. Although, the absence of a specific Military Code of Justice to clearly identify intended targets and protect

civilians has further increased the number of casualties in Northern Nigeria.

Consequently, Lee and Perl (2002) as cited in Eke, (2013) pointed out that Nigeria's security agencies take only pictures and finger prints of criminals arrested in connection with terrorism or criminal acts. They lack the skill to carry out forensic or DNA examinations. It is quite absurd that Nigerian military and government cannot delve into the aspect of investigation by utilizing competent forensic psychologist and forensic technology.

Another dilemma confronting the country and Nigerian military in the fight against counterterrorism is that terrorism in Nigeria is religiously or ideologically motivated. The challenge associated with this kind of terrorism is how to condemn and combat such terrorist activity or extremism and violent ideology of specific radical groups without appearing to be Anti-Islamic or anti-religious in general. On the other hand, at the international level, a desire to punish a State for supporting international terrorism or harboring terrorists may conflict with other foreign policy involving the country.

The Department of Security Service (DSS) and the Nigerian Army have blamed the ineffectiveness of the counter-terrorism efforts in Nigeria on the lack of collaboration among the various security agencies. (Ikedinma, 2014).

When fighting terrorism, the State should pay further attention to the effects of the adopted counterterrorism measures. (Parry 2007). Nigeria is ravaged by insurgency despite disarmament, deradicalization and rehabilitation policies. The victims of terrorism are yet to get justice, and very insignificantly, the 'repentant' terrorists can be conveniently manipulated by political gladiators to undermine the integrity of the forthcoming general elections. (Cable News, September 2020)

Basically, Nigerian government resettles and pampers Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen terrorists. "The war must be over before we start doing that. The military could open up the corridor, allow everybody to enter and start profiling them and keep them somewhere as prisoners of war and train them," he said. "The

current arrangement where the repentant insurgents are granted amnesty without apologizing to the victims and the state cannot bring about the required peace.” (Daily post, July 20,2020)

Also discrediting this strategy, Brigadier General Sani Usman (rtd) stated thus: “There is nowhere in the world where you have such a huge number of terrorists surrender, hence there is a need to come up with a unique approach to handle them. First, we need to work on our justice system. I have said on several occasions that people should not be allowed to get away with their crimes. We must ensure that justice is done to the victims.” (Guardian newspaper,23 feb 2023)

Reportedly, many of the beneficiaries of Operation Safe Corridor not only returned to their old ways but also now act as spies for terrorist organizations. In July 2022, some Boko Haram defectors, who had been rehabilitated and resettled at the Government Girls Secondary School Bama, Borno State were accused of still transacting business with their former colleagues, Boko Haram fighters, in a market known as Daula located on the outskirts of Goniri village. Obviously, the loyalty of the former insurgents is very suspicious. The military owes an explanation on how it arrived at the conclusion that the soon-to-be-released insurgents are now repentant. Were they subjected to proper mental, psychological and emotional assessment? Terrorism transcends the boundaries of mere crime it is a movement that is deeply rooted in strong indoctrination.

It appears Operation Safe Corridor has become a mill that continuously churns out ‘renounced’ terrorists into society without more. Indeed, it lives up to its name as a safe haven for terrorists to escape criminal liability for their evil acts. It has failed to effectively incentivize or deter violent persons from engaging in terrorism.

Terrorists are not like regular violent criminals. They are adherents of a particular cause who use the instrument of extreme violence to propagate their beliefs. Echoing this concern, the Governor of Kaduna State, Nasir El-Rufai, and the Theatre Commander, Operation Hadin Kai, Major General Christopher Musa, had

separately expressed doubt over the sincerity of the repentant terrorists (the Guardian,13<sup>th</sup> February 2023)

Boko Haram fighters have unleashed irreversible pain and unprecedented horror that are better seen in Hollywood blockbusters than in reality! They have slaughtered and abducted tens of thousands of people, including civilians and servicemen, forcibly married off women and girls to their fighters, decimated several communities and conducted mass-casualty terrorist attacks against mosques, churches, markets and camps for internally displaced persons. Yet not even a single member of the Sect is standing trial in any court of law in Nigeria!

Curiously, in 2020, the Federal Government, through the Central Bank of Nigeria, hastily published the names of alleged EndSARS financiers but to this day, the identities of the sponsors of Boko Haram remain a mystery. Whereas, in 2022, the U.S. government blacklisted six Nigerians following their conviction by the United Arab Emirates for financing terrorism in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Terrorism is an advanced stage of a failed political process that begins with inequities and injustice, and moves from frustrated attempts at reform that breed fear and anger, to political confrontation that erupts in violence, which can be exploited to rationalize the use of any form of violence against any target.

The terrorist’s objective is therefore more about scaring civil society and making itself known, while counterterrorism objectives are military in nature and its tactics is to wear the enemy down through constant attacks against the regular forces while acquiring weapons and support from the disenfranchised population. The terrorist’s ideology is based on fundamentalist Islam, and their intent is to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria and cleansing the country of any and all Western influence

### **Recommendations**

1. To achieve effective counterterrorism, a lot of resources are required. It is therefore

required that superior fire power must be acquired for the Nigerian military, to ensure they match up with these terrorists.

2. Empowerment program that aims at reducing unemployment among the young school leavers and university graduates must be effectively implemented. This will further improve the standard of living and wellbeing of Nigerian youths, as youths' idleness promotes terrorism.
3. Government should create an avenue to resolve conflicts among any conflicting parties before it degenerates into crisis.
4. The Nigerian state is yet to achieve active civilian participation in counterterrorism, likely because all agents fighting against terrorism in Nigeria appear to be part of those terrorizing civilians. By this, institutional (government) terrorism has to be stopped in Nigeria.
5. Nonetheless, understanding the tactics of the terrorists is a major tool toward defeating them. Nigerian military counterterrorist's lack this skill and needed education and training in creative ways to tackle this problem through various results-oriented strategies, rather than mere combat engagement.
6. Strict measures should be taken on arms trade in Nigeria and those involved in the business must be licensed and monitored. also examining arm trade in Nigeria may be exposing the persons or organizations sponsoring terrorism in Nigeria.
7. The Government must get the military psychologist fully involved with the military recruitment, selection, placement and training.

#### **Suggestions for Further Research**

1. Future researches should focus on the role of the government in propagating terrorism in Nigeria.
2. The roles of some non-governmental organizations in terrorism and counterterrorism need to be researched upon.

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