

## Response and efforts at combating terrorism in Nigeria

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### Abstract

It is undisputable that “Terrorism” as a topic has after the 9/11 attack, provoked a lot of debates and argument most especially in realm of international law and jurisprudence. Since the inception of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nigeria like other states of the world has witnessed incidents of terrorism so much so that life in certain place has become precarious and uncertain. The question that would naturally flow in the mind of a Nigerian are as follows: what are the courses of terrorism? What efforts has the Nigerian Government put in place to combat Terrorism? Are these efforts commendable, efficient of counter-productive? In this paper we intend to answer questions. This paper is divided into five parts. Part one deals with the meaning/Nature of terrorism. In part two, we will look at terrorism in Nigeria. In doing this we will list incidents and courses of terrorisms in Nigeria. We will also appraise Government effort in combating terrorism in Nigeria. In part four, we will discourse Governments impediments/Challenges in the fight against terrorism. The last part will cover recommendation and conclusion.

*Keywords:* Terrorism, Causes of Terrorism, Challenges and combating terrorism in Nigeria

### Introduction

Like most contentious topics of debate, terrorism as a word and concept has defied a generally accepted definition. This is because it's very nature. Before we discourse the nature of terrorism, we will examine and criticize some definitions proffered by some author's and scholars.

The heritage dictionary defines terrorism as: “the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing society or governments, often for ideological or political reason.” This definition is not wide enough as terrorist acts may also be carried

not with the intention of destroying, killing or even totally annihilating a particular group. Terrorism has also been defined by (Harmen, C.C: 2000) as:

“Actions focusing on harming some people in other to create fear in other’s in targeting civilians and facilities or system on which civilians rely”

This definition is restrictive and not encompassing. This is because the scope of operation of terrorism has gone beyond civilian population to include police and Military formation.

The United State Department of Defence defines Terrorism as:

“the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate Government or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological”

### **Nature Of Terrorism**

Terrorism, by its very nature, employ the use of violence that puts the target in fear with the aim of achieving political religious, criminal, or ideological objectives. Terrorism therefore is different from other forms of violence in the following ways:

- a) It is premeditated and and designed to create a climate of extreme fear.
- b) It is directed at a wider target than the immediate victims.
- c) It is considered by the society in which it occurs as “extra-normal” that is, it violate the norms regulating disputes, protest and dissent.
- d) It is use primarily, though not exclusively to influence the political behavior of government, communities or specific social groups (Bravo, A and Digs.C 2006)
- e) It is characterized by violence, threat of violence or intimidation.
- f) Its definition is fluid as what is tagged as terrorism. Today may not be terrorism, tomorrow and what is terrorism to group “A” may not be terrorism to group “B”.

### **Terrorist Groups And Incidences Of Terrorismin Nigeria.**

Terrorism in Nigeria, like the world at large, is an age long phenomenon. However, for the purpose of this paper, we will be limiting or discussion to act of terrorism in recent time particularly in early 21<sup>st</sup> century and towards the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the incident of terrorism were perpetrated by the following terrorist group:

1. Mai Tatsine Group

2. The Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC)

3. The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND)

4. Bakkasi Boys

5. Boko Haram

### **Causes Of Terrorism In Nigeria**

1. Failure of government/Institutions of Government

2. Corruption

3. Discrimination

4. Poverty

5. Illiteracy. etc.

### **Immediate Causes Of Terrorism In Nigeria.**

The immediate cause of terrorism here means the direct causes of terrorism. Some of these causes are:

1. Proliferation of weapons.

2. Religious extremism.

3. Porous borders.

4. Crisis/political instability in some African States.

### **The Counter Measures Being Adopted By The Federal Government Of Nigeria To Curtail The Menace Of Terrorism In Nigeria.**

In an effort to curtail the menace of terrorist groups in the country the Federal Government has put in place the following

measures that will help control the excesses of this group. These include:-

### **National Counter Terrorism Strategy (Nactes) As Revised 2016.**

The NACTES is all call for action to all Ministries, Department and Agencies, MDAs, including Non-Governmental Organizations and all well-meaning Nigerians to consciously take up their roles as outlined in the strategy and contribute by undertaking programmes and projects that are especially counter-terrorism specific and counter-terrorism relevant.

The first edition of the counter-terrorism strategy was developed and launched in 2014, with distribution and awareness being created for the purpose of mainstreaming its content and fostering implementation “However, the strategy has now been reviewed after two years of working and testing, as provided for. The Office of the National Security Adviser, ONSA, is therefore, there and buy-in of the relevant stakeholders as represented here by “MDAs. “The ONSA has ensured the development of NACTEST Desks and appointment of Focal/Liaison Officers in MDAs. “The ONSA expects all MDAs to use these desks to ensure the driving of their roles as stated in

the NACTEST as there would be periodic checks/liaison to give room for monitoring and evaluation.

### **Enactment Of Anti-Terrorism Law By The National Assembly**

Before the advent of full blown terrorism in Nigeria, there was no law in our status books that could serve as a guide for security operatives in prosecuting offenders of terrorist acts. However, with the emergence of such terrorist group as he Boko Haram and Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) in the country, members of the national assembly enacted an anti-terrorism law in 2011.

### **Setting Up Of Joint Task Forece**

In an attempt to contain the fire power of these groups especially Boko Haram who were terrorizing members of the security agencies and innocent civilians, the Federal Government set up joint task force in some states of the Federation to checkmate the activities of the Boko Haram sect.

### **Declaraton Of State Of Emergency**

As one of the containing measures, the Federal Government recently declared a state of emergency in some Local Government Areas of some affected states. This measure in intended to give member of the Security

Agencies unhindered power to deal promptly with any crisis.

### **Closure Of Borders**

Recent arrest of some members of the Boko haram sect, by security agencies in Plateau, Kano and Kaduna State respectively has shown that most members of the sect, that were arrested with their Nigerian counterparts are Nationals of some Neighboring countries, such as Niger, Chard and Cameroon, hence there was the need for the temporary closure of our porous international Boarders to checkmate their influx in to the country and control of proliferation of small arms and light weapon.

### **Training And Re-Training Of Security Persornnel**

For the Security agencies who were hitherto not trained in the act of handling and combating terrorism, the Federal Government saw the need for their training so that they can face the current challenges confronting the Nation. There is ongoing massive training of various Security personnel being embarked upon by the Government to update them on counter measures to be adopted in curtailing the activities of the groups, particularly the Boko Haram sect. However, there is also the need

for developed countries like the United State of America, United Kingdom and France to offer some Operational Training assistance to our security Agencies to build up their capacity to handle the sect.

### **Bilateral Agreement On Terrorism**

Of recent, the Federal Government entered in to agreements with some of her neighboring countries on to jointly fight terrorism. These agreement could be enhanced true the provision of surveillance equipment. Furthermore collaboration and sharing of intelligence is essential.

### **Discussion With The Stateholders**

As one of the counter measures, both the Federal and State Governments engaged various stakeholders such as traditional rulers, opinion and religious leaders, including some prominent politicians, village are ward heads for discussion on how to find a lasting solution to the current threat posed by the activities of Boko Haram sect in the country. ECOWAS Countries through their Chiefs of Defence Staff are also involve in taking measures to counter the menace that may affect the entire region.

### **Challenges In Combating Terrorism In Nigeria**

1. Insufficient funding

2. Risk of human rights breaches in combating terrorism
3. Poor technology.
4. Delicate and sensitive nature f terrorism in Nigeria.
5. Lack of skilled Manpower and Training.
6. Government insincerity in tackling the Root Courses of Terrorism.

### **High Risk Of Human Rights Breaches In Cobating Terrorism.**

Terrorism itself involve violence and the act of breaching citizens' Fundamental Human Rights particularly the Right to Life and dignity this simply means that a successful fight against terrorism will have to involve force, the use of force and sometimes violence but the problem that the security agencies have always had is the ability to balance the protection of Citizen Human Right against the need for the total and comprehensive fight against terrorism. Most time where the security agencies have had to fight terrorism, they have had to breach citizens' fundamental rights particularly the right to Liberty, dignity of person and right to life. This situation is worsened by the fact that the Boko Haram terrorist reside amongst

Nigeria and it is difficult to identify them from ordinary Nigerian.

### **Poor Technology.**

It is evidently clear that Nigeria has not used recent technological gadgets to track and fight terrorist and terrorism. Nigeria needs to employ technology in other to effectively fight terrorism. Nigeria need to equip the immigration service with technological gadgets that will be able to trace and track smugglers of weapons and immigrants with ease and also watch over it borders. Gadgets here includes sophisticated surveillance cameras and satellites.

### **The Delicate And Sensitive Nature Of Terrorism.**

The nature of terrorism itself is sensitive and delicate. Just like it was mentioned earlier, a terrorist group to community “A” may not be a terrorist group in group “B” this simply means that the Boko Haram group may not be seen by all Nigerians as a terrorist group. Some other groups see it as a platform to fight for their right or express their views. This characteristic of terrorism particularly the Boko Haram group has made the Government fight terrorism with caution so as not to run the risk of being described as persecuting Muslims or Islam.

### **Lack Of Skilled Manpower And Training.**

At the peak of the kidnapping crisis in the South-East following the kidnapping of the four journalist at Abia State, it was reported that security experts were imported from Israel to help in tracking the whereabouts of the kidnappers and their hideouts. Similarly, experts were also flown from Britain and America to take samples of the pieces of bomb blast recovered at the scene of incident of the bomb blast of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 at Abuja. Moreover, the imported cache of guns and ammunitions discovered at Apapa Wharf sometimes in 2010 was also sent t to America to determine where the items were made. All these references where highlighted to bring to fore the fact that Nigerians lack the expertise in terms of manpower skill and training to deal with terrorism.

### **Government Insincerity In Tackling The Root Causes Of Terrorism.**

Scholars from various disciplines have all identified root causes as key to understanding why most terrorism occurs.

For example, Bloom (2007) enumerated the following as root of terrorism among others:

- Lack of rule of law
- Failed or weak states that provide havens for terrorists.

- Corrupt Government.
- Depression
- Discrimination
- Social injustice
- We may add to the above list among others: unemployment, absolute poverty, underemployment, rise of indigenous neo elites, executive lawlessness, marginalization, relative deprivation, oppression, neo-imperialist class, do or die politics and government insincerity and insensitivity.

### Conclusion.

This paper has attempted to discuss terrorism and terrorist groups in Nigeria. In doing this, a brief history of terrorism in Nigeria was considered. The nature, causes (both remote and immediate) were also X-rayed. Terrorism in Nigeria started with formation of small groups which were initially more of political thugs being used by some politicians and currently becoming full flesh terrorist groups like Boko Haram, who are into bombings resulting in loss of lives and property.

The challenges in dealing with the threat of terrorist groups, especially Boko Haram are numerous, but the Federal and State Governments have put of many counter

measures to contain the activities of these groups. We, in concluding our discussion, we discussed the challenges faced by Nigeria particularly the security agencies in combating terrorism.

### Reommendations

Having done a research on the vexed topic of terrorism and Nigeria's effort in combating terrorism, we hereby recommend as follows

1. That the terrorism (prevention Act of 2013 be further amended to provide for the enticement of Nigerians to supply information to security agencies as well as provide Amnesty for Boko Haram members who joined because of poverty.
2. Nigeria should set up Counter-Terrorism Center
3. That the said act should provide for the sensitization and orientation of Nigerians as to it content. This is because no matter how beautiful the act look, if Nigerians do not know the content and effect of the act, it still remains.
4. Government should continue with training and re-training of security personnel on how to combat terrorism
5. That the act should regulate the act of practice of religion so as to prevent the rise of



any other religious sect that may rise to become like the Boko Haram. If this was done earlier, Boko Haram would have long been nabbed in the bud.

6. Security agencies should be funded and equipped with good and sophisticated gadgets that would help track terrorism.

7. Government should maintain bilateral agreement with other countries on how to jointly fight terrorism.

8. A strict penalty against security agencies be inserted in the Act. This will deter them from aiding or sympathizing with Boko Haram.

9. De-radicalization of extremist groups be strongly maintain.

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