

# Rethinking Insecurity and Scoping Security Threat in Nigeria: Looking Ahead



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## ABSTRACT

Early in the 2000s, Boko Haram emerged with an Islamisation agenda concentrating mostly on Nigeria the largest African economy. There is empirical evidence suggesting that the government of Nigeria has not successfully warded off this group's hostility. Yet there are gaps in security threats and extant literature. This study therefore examined the instability and anomic conditions resulting from this insurgency using the document analysis method and the Containment Theory employed as the theoretical framework. The analysis showed that there is no clear reason why the Nigerian military has failed to contain the Boko Haram insurgency given the army's undoubted gallantry after excelling in several international peacekeeping assignments. It was recommended that public programs for enlightenment through community engagement and transparency would influence positively the government's efforts to contain these terrorist activities. Given the complex nature of terrorism, there is a need for robust empirical studies that have to be done before any meaningful policy implementation can be considered. This study will amplify the international awareness of violent extremist activities in this most populated African nation. It will significantly provide the Nigerian government, human rights groups, researchers, civil society, policymakers, and public and private security agents with more knowledge to understand these terrorists better.

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## INTRODUCTION

Terrorism remains a serious security threat globally, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa where numerous terrorist and militant groups have become active, turning the region into a breeding ground for vicious terrorist escapades.<sup>1</sup> The north-eastern parts of Nigeria have witnessed radical terrorist exploits attributed primarily to Boko Haram, a deadly group of jihadists. According to Igbini, this has resulted in kidnap cases, deaths, and internal displacement of more than 5 million people.<sup>2</sup> The alliance with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has leveraged Boko Haram by accessing the vast resources available to the global network of terrorists.<sup>3</sup> The University of Maryland's recent study on global terrorism revealed that deaths due to Boko Haram exceeded those perpetrated in India by Maoists, al Qaeda Arabian Peninsula,

<sup>1</sup> Mevayerore Daniel Igbini, "Banditory And Security Threats: An Analysis Of Insecurity In Nigeria," *Journal of Public Administration, Finance and Law* 11, no. 23 (2022): 53–62.

<sup>2</sup> Igbini, "Banditory And Security Threats: An Analysis Of Insecurity In Nigeria."

<sup>3</sup> S G Adegoke, "Insurgency, Armed Banditry and Corruption in Nigeria: The Bane of Socio-Economic Underdevelopment," *International Journal of Advanced Academic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2019): 17–26.

al-Shabab, and in Iraq by al Qaeda.<sup>4</sup> Existing literature indicates that the government of Nigeria has failed to starve off terrorist belligerence.<sup>5</sup>

Ronczkowski argues that in the modern world, cultural ideology, religion, and environmental effects are the major drivers in the advent of terrorists.<sup>6</sup> Terrorism by its nature is identified with a life-threatening violent behaviour whereby terrorists use violent threats to instil fear and scare governments and people in pursuit of their political, ideological, and religious agenda. Thurston notes that Boko Haram appeared with ferocious attacks at the beginning of the 2000s.<sup>7</sup> The Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI) defines terrorism as the use of violence or illegal force against people or property to compel or terrify civilians, a government, or any segment believed to have the potential of furthering social or political objectives.<sup>8</sup> The Organisation of the African Unity rechristened the African Union (AU) defines terrorism as violating criminal laws and harming physical integrity, lives, or freedom, causing death or severe injury.<sup>9</sup> Terrorism has more to do with instilling fear and hence Onwudiwe contends that nothing rationalises the smog of trepidation that claims innocent lives.<sup>10</sup>

From the period 2000 to 2020, Nigeria saw a big increase in terrorist exploits that displaced more than 5 million people in the country's northeastern part.<sup>11</sup> Boko Haram's assaults started in 2003; with the supporters of Mohammed Yusuf, the radical leader relocating to the Yobe state's remote areas and clashing continuously with authorities in the locality. In 2009, the group in the northeastern area of Nigeria launched an uprising after combat with the security authorities in the Maiduguri state.<sup>12</sup> In this fight, which lasted for five days, the government military forces allegedly killed eight hundred people, arrested Yusuf, and surrendered him to the police before he died.<sup>13</sup>

Boko Haram remained inactive for close to a year after the death of Yusuf before his deputy, Abubakar Shekau took over the reins of leadership after recovering from a gunshot injury. More violence was to be expected particularly owing to the causal issues of rampant corruption, abject poverty, lack of jobs, and basic education for the youths.<sup>14</sup> As expected, Boko Haram took a notorious move of conducting suicide-bombing assaults through the angry Almajiris (an Islamic system of education practiced in northern Nigeria). The Boko Haram crisis was fuelled significantly by the socio-economic poverty in Nigeria's northeast region.<sup>15</sup> When Boko Haram pledged its loyalty to ISIS in 2009, it was encouraged to launch violent various attacks on armed forces and civilians with its peak recorded in April 2014 on a global platform after kidnapping almost 300 girls in Chibok (a remote area) in the northeast of Nigeria.<sup>16</sup>

This study seeks to examine the instability and anomic conditions resulting from this insurgency using the document analysis method and the containment theory employed as the theoretical framework. The findings are presented in subsequent sections.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Egiegbia Agbiboa, "No Retreat, No Surrender: Understanding the Religious Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria," *African Study Monographs* 34, no. 2 (2013): 65–84.

<sup>5</sup> Igbini, "Banditory And Security Threats: An Analysis Of Insecurity In Nigeria"; CFC, "Boko Haram: Nigeria Security Tracker Weekly Update: June 24-30," Council of Foreign Relations, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/boko-haram>; GTI, "Global Terrorism Index 2023," Reliefweb, March 14, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-terrorism-index-2023>.

<sup>6</sup> M. R. Ronczkowski, "Terrorism and Organized Hate Crime: Intelligence Gathering, Analysis, and Investigations," CRC Press, 2018, <https://www.routledge.com/Terrorism-and-Organized-Hate-Crime-Intelligence-Gathering-Analysis-and-Ronczkowski/p/book/9781032096452#>.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Thurston, *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement* (Princeton University Press, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Ronczkowski, "Terrorism and Organized Hate Crime: Intelligence Gathering, Analysis, and Investigations."

<sup>9</sup> OAU, "OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism," African Union, July 1, 1999, <https://au.int/en/treaties/oau-convention-prevention-and-combating-terrorism>.

<sup>10</sup> Ihekwoaba D Onwudiwe, *The Globalization of Terrorism* (Routledge, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Emmanuel Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria" (Texas Southern University, 2022), <https://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu/dissertations/8>.

<sup>12</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>13</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>14</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>15</sup> J. S. Olanrewaju, "Terrorism and Its Socio-Economic Impacts on Nigeria: A Study of Boko-Haram in the Northeast" (Kwara State University, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

## Theoretical Framework: Containment Theory/Control Theory

The containment theory, which is a kind of control theory, is credited to Walter Cade Reckless who postulated it in the period 1940s–1960s.<sup>17</sup> This theory argues that a chain of internal qualities and external social factors effectively isolate certain people from being involved in criminal activities even if others are induced to commit crimes by some environmental factors. While at first, the theory was quite promising, it received criticism from some criminal experts for different flaws.<sup>18</sup> The containment theory addresses various factors while primarily focusing on self-concept and the functions and processes associated with it.<sup>19</sup> The self-concept portrays a bad or good image of a person and serves as a safeguard against external influences. The theory also explains deviancy and conforming behaviour.<sup>20</sup> According to Hauhart, containment provides two underlying aspects namely: an outer and inner control system enabling an individual to refrain from deviancy or some kind of exceeding expectation from society.<sup>21</sup>

Emphasising inner containment Reckless indicated that self-concept exists in individuals and is shaped at a tender age. This is how the terrorist group, Boko Haram has cultivated the Almajiris into believing their ideologies. Reckless also suggested a variety of push and pull factors in the direction of deviant behaviour that is experienced by every person. This stimulus effect of perpetrating acts of delinquency depends solely on a person's inner and outer strength of containment. The containment theory is seen as an all-inclusive viewpoint for explaining delinquency and criminality. Some believe that this theory has appealed more as a delinquency theory, as its strength primarily lies in integrated psychodynamic procedures fraught with Chicago's traditional sociological thoughts.<sup>22</sup> The assumption by control theorists is that everyone is prone to commit crimes naturally if they are left on their own. Accordingly, people commit delinquencies because the restraining forces from committing crimes are weaker than those forces compelling them toward wrongdoing.<sup>23</sup> The continuing violent experiences waged by Boko Haram attest to the several theories and their position toward crime control in society. In Nigeria, the fundamental ideas of containment theory are indicative that outer containment and inner containment are needed for one to have restraining forces from committing crimes. Here, outer containment implies that other groups, families, communities, and societies should have the ability to hold individuals within the confines of established norms and values.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of related literature includes an overview of Nigeria, an understanding of terrorism, the political dynamics of Nigeria, the Almajiri concept and the Nigerian army.

### Overview of Nigeria

Akanni opines that Nigeria has had spates of terrorism in different ways, mainly in the northeast.<sup>24</sup> This has resulted in fear among people, pervading across all religions. Nigeria is a federal republic and a sovereign state lying in the west of Africa whose borders are shared in the north with Niger, northeast with Chad, in the past with Cameroon, and in the west with the Benin Republic. Nigeria attained its political independence on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 1960 but experienced civil wars from 1967 up until 1970.<sup>25</sup> The country's democracy became stable in 1999. The country is complex and inhabited by more than 250 ethnic groups of people who speak almost 500 different languages, all with different cultures.<sup>26</sup> However, the largest three ethnic groups are the predominantly Muslim Hausa–Fulani people in the north, the Christians and Muslim Yoruba people in the west, and mainly Christian Igbo people in the East, all

<sup>17</sup> Robert C. Hauhart, "Containment Theory," in *The Encyclopedia of Juvenile Delinquency and Justice* (Wiley, 2017), 1–4, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118524275.ej0096>.

<sup>18</sup> Hauhart, "Containment Theory."

<sup>19</sup> R. J. Mutchnick, R. Martin, and W. T. Austin, *Criminological Thought: Pioneers Past and Present* (New York: Pearson, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Hauhart, "Containment Theory."

<sup>21</sup> Hauhart, "Containment Theory."

<sup>22</sup> Mutchnick, Martin, and Austin, *Criminological Thought: Pioneers Past and Present*.

<sup>23</sup> T. J. Bernard, J. B. Snipes, and A. L. Gerould, *Vold's Theoretical Criminology* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> A A Akanni, "History of Terrorism, Youth Psychology and Unemployment in Nigeria," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 7, no. 3 (2014): 65–77.

<sup>25</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>26</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

together constituting more than 60 % of the country's total population.<sup>27</sup> Varella contends that in Africa, Nigeria holds the highest population with more than 200 million people as of 2019, with US\$1,950.90 of real GDP per capita sitting at the 166th position of the global economic economy ranking.<sup>28</sup> Varella estimated that come 2050, the population could double up to almost 400 million noting that in the past 50 years, the country's population grew at a very high rate.

### Understanding Terrorism

Terrorism is a term that has been extensively debated but without agreement on a single definition by both scholars and peace practitioners.<sup>29</sup> It is an international phenomenon that is emotive and complex, with a systematic and deliberate violent act calculated to frighten, maim, kill, and destroy vulnerable people and accomplish a mission; or attract international and local attention to bow down to extraordinary demands difficult-to-meet ordinarily. It can also be described as a rebellion of a group of dissidents protesting against internally real or perceived unfavourable government policies. Akpor-Robaro and Lanre-Babalola advanced that terrorism turns out to be an insurgency if individuals whose identity is either known or unknown conduct its activities.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the activities are structured with a high degree of sophistication to control and capture a targeted geographic location.

Ronczkowski observes that the FBI defines terrorism as the illegal application of violence and force, against property or a person to coerce or intimidate civilians or a government in pursuit of social or political objectives.<sup>31</sup> Ronczkowski argues that nobody should be concerned much about having a terrorism definition, which is all-inclusive but should instead, be focused on accepting what constitutes terrorism.<sup>32</sup> The African Union (AU) defines the term terrorism as any action, which violates a country's criminal laws and may jeopardise life, personal integrity, and freedom, or cause injury to people, private or public property, cultural heritage, or natural resources.<sup>33</sup>

### The Political Dynamics of Nigeria

Factors that drive radicalization in Nigeria can be grouped into three namely; personal characteristics push and pull according to Onapajo and Ozden.<sup>34</sup> Push factors refer to those structural challenges in a community that turn persons into violent extremism, sometimes referred to as the root causes. For instance, state repression, unemployment and poverty, bad governance, inequality, illiteracy, marginalisation and political exclusion. It is critical to understand these factors as a prerequisite to the process of de-radicalisation.<sup>35</sup> De-radicalisation largely aims at the utmost radicalism version, since it targets changing the beliefs that are prone to violence of a person even if they have never engaged physically in the act of violence.<sup>36</sup> Osaghae and Suberu argue that Nigeria is presented with a convolution of individual identities, recursive and intersecting ethnic identities, communal (subethnic), regional, and religious, and these are most striking grounds for intense conflicts.<sup>37</sup> Regional identities and cleavages resulted from the configurations produced and fused by the colonial powers in the formative stage of the Nigerian state. Campbell contends that with Nigeria's endowment of natural resources and large population, it is the United States' most essential strategic partner.<sup>38</sup> Yet, prevalent fragmentation and alienation have made Nigeria become very religious and one of the world's most violent countries. Campbell revealed that

<sup>27</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>28</sup> S. Varella, "Demographics of Nigeria - statistics & facts." *Statista* (2020). Accessed August 16, 2023.

[https://www.statista.com/topics/6477/demographics-of-nigeria/#dossierSummary\\_\\_chapter6](https://www.statista.com/topics/6477/demographics-of-nigeria/#dossierSummary__chapter6).

<sup>29</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

<sup>30</sup> M. O. M. Akpor-Robaro and F. O Lanre-Babalola, "Nomadic Fulani Herdsmen Turn Terrorists? Exploring the Situation and the Security Implications for Nigeria," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 23, no. 7 (2016): 20–31.

<sup>31</sup> Ronczkowski, "Terrorism and Organized Hate Crime: Intelligence Gathering, Analysis, and Investigations."

<sup>32</sup> Ronczkowski, "Terrorism and Organized Hate Crime: Intelligence Gathering, Analysis, and Investigations."

<sup>33</sup> OAU, "OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism."

<sup>34</sup> H. Onapajo and K. Ozden, "Non-Military Approach against Terrorism in Nigeria: Deradicalization Strategies and Challenges in Countering Boko Haram," *Security Journal* 33 (2020): 476–92.

<sup>35</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>36</sup> Onapajo and Ozden, "Non-Military Approach against Terrorism in Nigeria: Deradicalization Strategies and Challenges in Countering Boko Haram."

<sup>37</sup> Eghosa E Osaghae and Rotimi T Suberu, *A History of Identities, Violence and Stability in Nigeria*, vol. 6 (Centre for Research on Inequality, University of Oxford, 2005).

<sup>38</sup> J. Campbell, "Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink," Council of Foreign Relations, 2013, <https://www.cfr.org/book/nigeria-dancing-brink>.

owing to terrorist attacks related to Boko Haram the magnitude of violence is outrageous and mirrors the weaknesses of Nigerian institutions of governance.<sup>39</sup>

Although it is not very clear when the Boko Haram group started, there are claims that it started back in 1995 being led by Malam Abubakar Lawan before changing names numerous times; including from Ahlul Sunnah Wal Jama'ah Hijra sect, Nigerian Taliban Yusufiyah until it came to be known as Boko Haram.<sup>40</sup> Attacks by the group started early in 2003 in the north-eastern parts of Nigeria namely Geidam Yobe and Kanama. Boko Haram is thought to be a criminal group, social movement, or political rebellion.<sup>41</sup> During the reign of Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999, 12 politicians hailing from the northern state under the leadership of Ahmad Sani Yerima the then Governor of Zamfara state pressed for the establishment of Sharia law as central for criminal and civil laws.<sup>42</sup> However, many viewed these laws to be selectively enforceable.<sup>43</sup> Around the period 2000 to 2003 in some parts of northern Nigeria (exclusively in Borno, Yobe, Kano, and Adamawa states), the Boko Haram group began shaping up when Yusuf's followers fled to Yobe state a remote place.<sup>44</sup> Boko Haram later stretched to some other countries like Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and the rest of other parts of Nigeria.<sup>45</sup> This expansion generated a sense of shared terrorist crisis amongst these states of West Africa. Although the Boko Haram insurgency has not received much attention in Nigeria currently, in comparison to other terrorist groups worldwide, it reached international notoriety level from 2007 to 2015.<sup>46</sup>

Generally, the exact origins of Boko Haram remain contested, but it has been suggested that the advent of this group could have inspired been by the Maitatsine uprisings experienced in the 1980s.<sup>47</sup> At its formation, despite not having a specific name Boko Haram was variously described predicated on the local people's perceptions. As founded by Yusuf in 2002, Maiduguri, Boko Haram was first recognised as a mosque and school (religious complex), but with a hidden agenda.<sup>48</sup> It became a fertile ground later for the Islamic fundamentalists so they could raise their jihadist supporters.<sup>49</sup> Boko Haram as a name is derived from a blend of Hausa and Arabic languages; Hausa 'Boko,' meaning a book, and Arabic 'haram,' meaning something not acceptable, sinful, or wicked. The literal meaning is that the 'book is wicked' but deeply it means the western teaching is sacrilegious, profane, and heretical and should never be accepted.<sup>50</sup>

The July 2009 insurrection by Boko Haram in Nigeria under the leadership of Yusuf marked the commencement of a momentous point anchored on recurrent religious-related violence in the state of Nigeria. Campbell states that Yusuf's followers began as marginal and small components of the more important protest movement in the northeast whose Islamic members were not violent.<sup>51</sup> Campbell suggests that the transformation of Boko Haram from a peaceful small group into a savage and aggressive campaign was encouraged by the brutality of the security forces in Nigeria.<sup>52</sup> When Yusuf was killed, violent attacks by the group became rooted with Shekau the leader offering unambiguous choices to civilians, either to take their brand of Islam or face the music.<sup>53</sup>

Some scholars like Aghedo and James have argued that there has been heavy-handedness by the Nigerian government in dealing with the Boko Haram insurgency, including unfair detentions, arrests,

<sup>39</sup> Campbell, "Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink."

<sup>40</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>41</sup> Babayo Sule, Usman Sambo, and Mohammed Kwarah Tal, "Islamic Militants and Insurgency in Northeastern Nigeria: A Comparison of the Ideology and Methodology of Maitatsine and Boko Haram," *E-Academia Journal* 7, no. 2 (2018): 76–91.

<sup>42</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>43</sup> M. Smith, *Boko Haram: Inside Nigeria's Unholy War* (London: Taurus, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>45</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *Boko Haram: Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*.

<sup>47</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>48</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>49</sup> O. B. Amao, "A Decade of Terror: Revisiting Nigeria's Interminable Boko Haram Insurgency," *Security Journal*, 2020, 1–19.

<sup>50</sup> Abimbola O Adesoji, "Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Response of the Nigerian State," *Africa Today* 57, no. 4 (2011): 99–119.

<sup>51</sup> Campbell, "Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink."

<sup>52</sup> Campbell, "Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink."

<sup>53</sup> Thurston, *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement*.

and killings of the sect's adherents.<sup>54</sup> Under these circumstances, one could have argued for measures of conciliation, poverty mitigation, amnesty, massive literacy campaigns, and dialogue.<sup>55</sup> The observation by Pérouse-de-Montclos is that the movement of Boko Haram remains shadowy, with little proof to confirm different claims about its actual plan.<sup>56</sup> The group has been portrayed as anti-Christian, anti-education anti-women, and extremist.<sup>57</sup> To understand why some young people rampage to engage in kidnapping, killings, and suicide bombing, Smith opines that there is a need to look beyond the formation of Boko Haram and reflect on Nigeria's complex historical background.<sup>58</sup> Also, Smith observes that the Islam belief in West Africa coupled with endemic corruption entrenched in most other states has mugged Africa's biggest producer of oil, and the biggest economy, leaving many people wallowing in abject poverty.<sup>59</sup>

Boko Haram's peculiarity in Nigeria has less to do with its criminality; instead, it is its agenda of sectarianism.<sup>60</sup> This makes a clear distinction from the resource-driven dynamics of local violent conflicts seen between various ethnic insurgent groups like the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and the O'odua People's Congress (OPC).<sup>61</sup> In Katsina state of Nigeria, by December 2020, more than 300 boys were abducted from school, and Boko Haram was quick to claim responsibility for that act. This was a distressing and horrible reminder of the Chibok events and the kidnapping of the schoolchild from Dapchi.<sup>62</sup> This time, the government swiftly reacted and ensured that all the boys were released although by the end of 2020, close to 112 Chibok girls were still under captivity.<sup>63</sup> In addition, a Dapchi pupil, known as Leah Sharibu, remains captive and enslaved for life by Boko Haram after declining to renounce her affiliation with the Christian faith.<sup>64</sup>

### The Concept of Almajiris

The Almajiris continue to be problematic to the government of Nigeria, especially their upshot on the general economic development of the country's northeastern area. They also remain a sanctuary for possible candidates for recruitment into the feared terrorist group of Boko Haram. Taiwo says 'Almajiri' is a word derived from Sheik Abba Aji, a famous Islamic scholar who hails from Maiduguri; borrowing from the Arabic word 'Al-Muhajir' which means a seeker of Islamic understanding.<sup>65</sup> Its bedrock is Prophet Mohammed's migration from Mecca to Medina, and the immigrants called Al-Muhajiroun who journeyed with the prophet.<sup>66</sup> The young people are known as the Almajiri (students leaving their parents to acquire the Qur'anic education). The term Almajiri is derived as well from the Arabic term 'Almuhajirun' concerning migrants. It refers to a way of obtaining and remembering the book of the Qur'an in the land of Hausa/Fulani, where guardians or parents usher young boys to some towns, or villages to learn the Qur'an under an Islamic intellectual named a Malam.<sup>67</sup> The Almajiri practice is one typical form of child abuse rampant in northern Nigeria.

Aghedo and Eke contend that the spread and growth of Boko Haram are understood better as a result of the increase in the number of youths particularly the readily available foot soldiers drawn from the Almajirai.<sup>68</sup> These roving pupils of the Quran also constitute school dropouts which poses a big

<sup>54</sup> Iro Aghedo and Surulola James Eke, "From Alms to Arms: The Almajiri Phenomenon and Internal Security in Northern Nigeria," *Journal of Policy Studies* 28, no. 3 (2013): 97–123; Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>55</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>56</sup> M. A. Pérouse-de-Montclos, *Nigeria's Interminable Insurgency? Addressing the Boko Haram Crisis* (London: Chatham House, 2014).

<sup>57</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>58</sup> Smith, *Boko Haram: Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*.

<sup>59</sup> Smith, *Boko Haram: Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*.

<sup>60</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>61</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>62</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>63</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>64</sup> Ben-Edet, "Terrorism: A Case Study of the Global Security Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria."

<sup>65</sup> Fowoyo Joseph Taiwo, "Transforming the Almajiri Education for the Benefit of the Nigerian Society," *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, no. 08 (2014): 244–51.

<sup>66</sup> Taiwo, "Transforming the Almajiri Education for the Benefit of the Nigerian Society."

<sup>67</sup> M A Yusha'u et al., "Problems and Prospects of Integrated Almajiri Education in Northern Nigeria," *Scientific Journal of Pure and Applied Sciences* 2, no. 3 (2013): 125–34.

<sup>68</sup> Aghedo and Eke, "From Alms to Arms: The Almajiri Phenomenon and Internal Security in Northern Nigeria."

national security threat. The phenomenon of Almajiri highlights the devastating and debased crisis of African youth; reflecting mainly the systemic dysfunctional structures.<sup>69</sup>

According to Taiwo, over 10 million Almajiris were roaming the roads of the northern area of Nigeria.<sup>70</sup> In the above informal education, all these youngsters would have a bleak future. Yet the government of Nigeria and people from the north have tolerated this condition, perhaps because of what they benefit.<sup>71</sup> The Almajiri has created a fertile ground for recruiting masses of Muslim youths into several rebellious activities; some are spun into hawkers, wanderers and beggars.<sup>72</sup> For some years, Boko Haram has used this as a tool for sourcing recruits.<sup>73</sup> This has been supported by Aghedo and Eke who maintained that, Boko Haram draws most of its soldiers from the demographic cohort of Almajiri.<sup>74</sup>

### The Nigerian Army

Nigeria's military tactic has progressively been demonstrated not to be effective in ending terrorism, and its reaction to terrorism by Boko Haram is the same.<sup>75</sup> Research has reviewed operations by the military as opposed to claims by the government of having defeated Boko Haram.<sup>76</sup> However, experiential evidence reveals low morale, revolt by soldiers, and war front desertion resulting in the high success rate of the Boko Haram insurgency. Accordingly, regardless of the increase in the budget of the security sector from almost US\$1.44 billion in 2009 to US\$2.81 billion in 2018, counterinsurgency operation led by the military in Nigeria is still faced with major security issues.<sup>77</sup>

Joshua et al. observe that challenges of insecurity have become a major issue in Nigeria.<sup>78</sup> Any attempts made at dealing with insecurity further worsen instead of diminishing it; this makes it compelling to investigate.<sup>79</sup> Thus, the involvement of the military in security concerns has tended to aggravate the insecurity owing to the wrong approach, which usually deliberately targets civilians instead of protecting them. De-Montclos asserts that since 2009, the Nigerian army has never overpowered Boko Haram notwithstanding the founding of the antiterrorist coalition in 2015 made up of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon known as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).<sup>80</sup> In its place, the military chose to pull out of the supposed super-camps, which have practically left Boko Haram to roam freely out of the urban areas.<sup>81</sup> Hence, the fight against the terrorist group brings the classic asymmetric case of warfare. On the other hand, the Nigerian military remains deep-seated in towns going out only in large armored vehicle convoys.

### METHODOLOGY

This study used document analysis to review and evaluate documents collected from electronic and printed materials.<sup>82</sup> Just like other qualitative research methods of analysis, in document analysis data was studied and interpreted to elicit sense, increase understanding, and grow experiential knowledge.<sup>83</sup> Documents

<sup>69</sup> Aghedo and Eke, "From Alms to Arms: The Almajiri Phenomenon and Internal Security in Northern Nigeria."

<sup>70</sup> Taiwo, "Transforming the Almajiri Education for the Benefit of the Nigerian Society."

<sup>71</sup> Aghedo and Eke, "From Alms to Arms: The Almajiri Phenomenon and Internal Security in Northern Nigeria."

<sup>72</sup> Taiwo, "Transforming the Almajiri Education for the Benefit of the Nigerian Society."

<sup>73</sup> Yusha'u et al., "Problems and Prospects of Integrated Almajiri Education in Northern Nigeria."

<sup>74</sup> Aghedo and Eke, "From Alms to Arms: The Almajiri Phenomenon and Internal Security in Northern Nigeria."

<sup>75</sup> Onapajo and Ozden, "Non-Military Approach against Terrorism in Nigeria: Deradicalization Strategies and Challenges in Countering Boko Haram."

<sup>76</sup> Freedom C Onuoha, Chikodiri Nwangwu, and Michael I Ugwueze, "Counterinsurgency Operations of the Nigerian Military and Boko Haram Insurgency: Expounding the Viscid Manacle," in *Ten Years of Boko Haram in Nigeria: The Dynamics and Counterinsurgency Challenges* (Springer, 2023), 69–94.

<sup>77</sup> Onuoha, Nwangwu, and Ugwueze, "Counterinsurgency Operations of the Nigerian Military and Boko Haram Insurgency: Expounding the Viscid Manacle."

<sup>78</sup> Segun Joshua, Daniel Gberevbie, and Kester Onor, "Building Security through Insecurity: The Nigerian Military and Counter-Violence Campaigns in the Fourth Republic," *Armed Forces & Society* 47, no. 1 (2021): 177–200.

<sup>79</sup> Joshua, Gberevbie, and Onor, "Building Security through Insecurity: The Nigerian Military and Counter-Violence Campaigns in the Fourth Republic."

<sup>80</sup> Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, "The Nigerian Military Response to Boko Haram: A Critical Analysis," *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 10, no. 2 (2020): 65–82.

<sup>81</sup> Joshua, Gberevbie, and Onor, "Building Security through Insecurity: The Nigerian Military and Counter-Violence Campaigns in the Fourth Republic."

<sup>82</sup> Glenn A Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 27–40.

<sup>83</sup> Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research (3rd Ed.): Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States : SAGE Publications, Inc., 2008), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452230153>.

ordinarily contain images and texts recorded in the absence of any intervening activities by the researcher. In this study, other trace or mute evidence, like cultural artefacts, were excluded. Atkinson and Coffey assert that documents are social facts, created, shared, and utilised in publicly planned ways.<sup>84</sup> As a method of research, document analysis is predominantly pertinent to qualitative case studies—rigorous studies that produce rich accounts of a given phenomenon.<sup>85</sup>

## DISCUSSION OF MAIN FINDINGS

The current insecurity in Nigeria has overwhelmed its different government security sectors. This has created multiple social concerns and an atmosphere of defeat or retreat after they failed to contain the insurrections. This failure to dislodge the terrorist groups has resulted in terrorist activities reappearing, particularly in the northeast parts of the country. The pressure exerted by the Boko Haram activities has distressed many of the unemployable young people who could have completely lost confidence in their government's capacity to protect their properties and lives. Just like the Almajiris, these youths are seduced, brainwashed, indoctrinated and radicalized, into becoming part of terrorist groups that promised self-emancipation. They are now a source of prospective recruits for different groups bent on creating a grip to achieve their ideological, religious, and political goals.

The government of Nigeria has attempted to deracialise these youths through reintegration programs but failed because of the previous problems that the former reintegrated combatants experienced. The local people still believe they are very dangerous people not to be accepted despite any form of reintegration program. Public programs for enlightenment through community engagement and transparency would affect positively the government's efforts to contain these terrorist activities. Elements of terrorism are often labelled as unknown gunmen or bandits by the state, which is seen as the government's relaxed approach to dealing with terrorism issues. This apparent government's lackadaisical posture should be changed to curtail the insurgencies.

It is not clear why the Nigerian military failed to contain the Boko Haram insurgency given the army's undoubted gallantry after excelling in several international peacekeeping assignments. Maybe, the issue is about the implementation of policy and improving the inadequate fighting resources for combating terrorist groups in the country. The Nigerian leadership should be challenged to be unselfish in guaranteeing that all funds budgeted for the procurement of arms are directed toward accessing the desired artillery instead of embezzling the money. The lack of accountability and transparency when it comes to the procurement of weaponry has been the bane of exterminating the terrorist activities in this country among others.

The conflict pitting farmers and cattle herders, the existence in central Nigeria of the Shia Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), the IPOB and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDA) in the southeast, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) or the Boko Haram in the northeast all disturb the peace in Nigeria. Despite numerous efforts to prevent attacks on civilians by the terror group, school attacks and kidnappings, the government of Nigeria is yet to come up with a better solution to this security conundrum.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

While there is, no single and simple, solution to end terrorist acts, it is imperative to accentuate that the proposed policy recommendations could avert the same problems that gave rise to the Nigerian civil from 1967 to 1970.

### *Religiosity and Community Engagement*

Indeed, a situation of absolute mistrust and mounting frustrations has existed in the state of Nigeria over the years after the upsetting accounts of massive corruption by the elite, exploitation of the people, social injustice and failure to provide democratic dividends. To address this frustration and incessant Boko Haram terrorist acts, community engagement must be employed by the government. This involves the government establishing a multidisciplinary task comprised of the police, military, and other civil

<sup>84</sup> Paul Atkinson and Amanda Coffey, "Analysing Documentary Realities," *Qualitative Research* 3 (2004): 77–92.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003); R. E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995).

protection agencies, community leaders, and nongovernmental organisations across the 774 local governments and 36 states.

### ***Youth Skills Training***

Engaging youth in skilled training programs by the government will help curb the drive to being entrapped by terrorist groups.

### ***Reintegration Programs***

Although the Countering Violent Extremism Agency (CVEA) dubbed the National Security Corridor (NSC) instituted to counter-recruitments by Boko Haram and foster reintegration is a good move, more should be done. For instance, professionals from criminal justice, trauma counsellors, and social workers should work together with security agencies and health specialists in the process of reintegrating former terrorist members from Boko Haram. This professional group would be embedded in the Nigerian National Orientation Agency (NOA) whose mandate includes boosting public awareness and promoting peace and tranquillity.

### ***The Military Strategy Review***

Despite the military prowess known by the Nigerian army, there is an urgency to review its military strategies through its policymakers and contain terrorism. A fundamental disconnect exists where apologetic members of Boko Haram are taken into the military and other security agencies with minimal process of vetting. Such laxity in the process of physical reintegration could have increased vulnerabilities to external attacks assisted by collaborators from inside.

### ***Religious Leaders' Accountability***

It is evident that religion plays a pivotal role in the indoctrination of prospective Boko Haram recruits. Religious leaders should be made accountable for their radicalization roles to youths who are susceptible to religious indoctrination. Religious leaders seen to be avid religious extremism supporters should be dealt with severely. The government is obliged to engage religious leaders during the process of communal reintegration and de-radicalization.

### ***The Oputa Panel***

As it stands, the government of Nigeria should reconsider the 2002 Oputa panel recommendations. One of them stressed the importance of managing resources in regions, contributing to the central basin. This would eliminate the national monopoly and focus on regionalisation. This transposition could cause healthy competitiveness amongst regions for instance, in the west the cocoa industry, in the north, groundnut pyramids, tin, gold, and zinc, and in the south, gas and oil. This decentralisation of these resources could be the desired change by all the various ethnic groups to control their few

## **CONCLUSION**

In the last two decades, spanning from 2000 to 2020, what appeared to have started as a religious fundamentalist group has since exploited the Nigerian government's failure and morphed into a violent terrorist group. World leaders are exhorted to collectively help the Nigerian government and vanquish activities of terrorism before it is too late for global security's interest. Over the years, the security situation in Nigeria has been volatile, whereas the states in the Northwest have remained besieged by Boko Haram, sliding steadily into rural violence and banditry morass. In the Northwest as well, rural banditry has transformed recently from an onset of sporadic moves to rapid expansion similar to the Boko Haram insurgency. In addition, like the Boko Haram group, these bandits have chosen to be static and sedentary in the hinterlands and frontiers of the Northwestern areas.

## **RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

- Analyse and compare terrorist activities orchestrated by Boko Haram and other groups backed by ISIS from 2020 and beyond in all the states of Nigeria.

- The federal and Katsina state governments should make provisions for sustainable ways of youth's livelihood to avoid being simply swayed or used as instruments of security threat. Nigerian government on its part should be seized with all or some of the policy recommendations above before the insurgency and banditry become unstoppable.
- Focus on how resources are controlled from Nigeria's three major regions (western, eastern, and northern regions).

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