

Taming The Tides; Nigerian Counter-Terrorism Policy on Boko-Haram Terrorism, Empirical Mixed Method Analysis

Roberts Anya Nkata¹, Okpan Samuel Okpanocha²

¹Department of Political Science and Diplomacy Veritas University, Bwari Abuja. Orcid ID/0000-0002-1464-7935

²Department of Sociology and Anthropology Evangel University, Akaeze, Ebonyi State. Orcid ID: 0000-0003-4685-5293

ABSTRACT: Over the years, the Boko Haram insurgency has gradually metamorphosed into a seemingly intractable security tide besetting the Northeast region of Nigeria. Despite the efforts of the Nigerian government to adopt concerted counter-terrorism approaches to tackle the terrorist group, it thus appears little has been achieved. This paper explored the efforts of the Nigerian government towards countering the terrorist activities of the group and achieving a terrorist-free nation. The paper adopts the mixed research method using the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, deploying questionnaires and structured in-depth interview guides; the study finds an overt adoption of the Kinetic approach deployment of military force as the principal constituent of the Nigerian counter-terrorism policy, which was found as ineffective as it fails to address the core reasons for terrorism and the abuse of operation guidelines, raising the question of human rights abuse discredits the efforts of the government. The study recommends a non-kinetic approach that addresses the factors that precipitated the emergence of Boko Haram, cutting off terrorist financiers, general adoption of soft power and an increase in efforts necessary to win the hearts and minds of the terrorised communities.

KEYWORDS: Boko Haram, Counterterrorism, Insecurity, Kinetic, Non-Kinetic

INTRODUCTION

The terrorist activities of the dreaded Boko Haram group which started in the North eastern zone of Nigeria have continued to ravage virtually all forms livelihood and have destabilised the entire zone and beyond. For Boko Haram, it thus appears they have been unofficially licensed since 2009 for an unrestrained reign of terrorism, including wanton killings, maiming and destruction of properties/critical infrastructures.

Terrorism is a global phenomenon; although it began around the 1880s, it was after a century before few scholars began to understand the peculiarities of international terrorism (Rapoport, 2017). It was until after the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States that States and scholars began to dedicate adequate attention moving away from historical amnesia to a dedicated focus on terrorism after the declaration by President George W. Bush, which stated that terrorism would be eliminated both at the home soil and outside the nation "Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government which supports them. Our war . . . will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated" (Bush, 2001, p. 68). This declaration also marked the inception of the United States (US) coherent counter-terrorism policy with the agenda of homeland security for protecting the lives and properties of its citizens, alleviating the US as a leading nation in the global war against terrorism. The United States counter-terrorism policy aims to crush global terror-sponsoring individuals. The increasing rate of terrorist attacks on Europe necessitated the European Union (E.U) member states security services to formulate the counter-terrorism-focused cooperation group called the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG). The counter-terrorism policies within these nations and the Union can best be classified as kinetic.

In Latin America, Terrorism-related incidents claimed the lives of 9,435 individuals between 1995 and 2002 in Colombia, with subversive terrorist activities accounting for 5,864 deaths and paramilitary terrorist activities accounting for 3,571. Peru has been afflicted by two prominent domestic terrorist organizations, namely the Sendero Luminoso or "Shining Path" (SL) and the Revolutionary Movement Túpac Amaru (MRTA), over the previous two decades. The Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, part of its non-kinetic counter-terrorism approach, revealed on 28 August 2003 that about 69,280 individuals lost their lives during the internal violence in Peru between 1980 and 2000. Incidents of terror attacks in both nations led to the formation of their counter-terrorism policies and agencies – The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Shining Path (SL) in Peru (Shane, 2021).

Turning to the Asian continent, terrorism in the Philippines dates to 1967-68, coinciding with the escalating tensions between China and the Soviet Union. Terrorism in the Philippines also includes the emergence of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in 1990, which caused severe human and material loss to the ASEAN region as a whole and the Philippines in particular. Many terrorist groups emerged and operated in Indonesia, including Jemaah Islamiyah, Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid, Laskar Jihad, Mujahidin Indonesia Timur, as well as the recent ISIS attempt to establish a foothold in Indonesia. China, the biggest economy in Asia and the second largest in the world, has not been immune to terrorism attacks. Since the late 1980s, there have been an increasing number of terrorist incidents in China as a result of the grievances of non-Han ethnic minorities, particularly Uyghurs. However, it is essential to mention that China's anti-terrorism policy has evolved over the past six decades, reflecting its transformation from pariah to significant power. The increased terrorist attacks in some Asian countries motivated the formation of The ASEAN Convention on counter-terrorism, which affirms that terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. This was adopted in 2001 during the ASEAN summit. Also, Ramakrishna (2001) suggested that due to the increasing rate of attacks motivated by government resentment by the citizens, the Malaysian government adopted what was known as the "Emergency propaganda-minded" counter-terrorism approach. The counter-terrorism approach in these countries is mostly non-kinetic.

On the other hand, the African continent has experienced its fair share of terror attacks. For instance, the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were bombed in 1998, killing 291 and 10 people, respectively (Mair, 2023). An Islamist sect known as "Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad" popularly referred to as Boko Haram by the locals, meaning "Western education is sin" (mixture of Hausa and Arabic languages) emerged in the city of Maiduguri in Borno state in 2009. The Boko Haram sect started as an offspring of an Islamic group popularly referred to as the Nigerian Taliban in Yobe State in the year 2002 (Serrano & Pieri, 2014). The movement quickly spread to other parts of the North-Eastern states of Nigeria, particularly Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states.

Although Nigeria as a nation has experienced its fair share of insecurity and violence before the surfacing of Boko Haram, it is noted that the Boko Haram group brought an International dimension to insecurity in Nigeria (Roberts & Okpan, 2022). Similarly, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) Global Terrorism Index (IEP, 2020) reports that Boko haram is among the three deadliest terrorist organization in the world. It is ranked as the second deadliest terrorist group in the world and remains number one in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) report of 2020. Boko Haram has coordinated a series of attacks on churches, schools, security establishments, public institutions and communities without restraint. As of October 2018, over 2 million individuals remain displaced, a number that has once again increased over the past year (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2018). International organizations estimate that around 800,000 people are still stuck in northern Borno areas beyond the reach of humanitarian assistance, with little information available about their profile and needs (Ruth, 2018). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2020), the terrorist attacks of Boko Haram have also been instrumental to the displacement of approximately 2.4 million people in the Lake Chad Basin, while over 2 million people are internally displaced in Nigeria because of the conflict. Okpan and Ezeah (2020) found that most internally displaced persons are left alone, with little or no care, disposing them to acute livelihood challenges. Reports suggest that Nigeria has lost over 847 soldiers to Boko Haram attacks (This Day, 2019). Boko Haram has recorded a surge in its terror activities in 2019 following a period of steady decline. Of the 1,068 deaths attributed to Boko Haram in 2019, 69% occurred in Nigeria, while the remaining occurred in Cameroon, Niger, and Chad at 20%, seven (7) %, and four (4) % respectively. However, within the eleven months of 2020, the group killed 1,606 people in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states in the 125 fatal incidents of Small Business Intelligence (SBM Intelligence, 2017).

In spite of Boko Haram's unrelenting onslaught, the Nigerian government persistently endeavours to eradicate terrorism within the country. The government has formulated diverse counter-terrorism policies and operations (Ike, 2022). For instance, Operation Last Hold, Operation Lafiya Dole, Operation Zaman Lafiya, Operation Boyona and Operation Restore Order (Omeni, 2017). Again, there has been a significant increase in military spending to combat Boko Haram. For example, between 2009 and 2018, the total military spending accrued to US\$1.9billion, and this amount surpasses the expenditure of neighbouring countries, including Cameroon, Niger and Chad, which makes Nigeria the largest financier of the counter-terrorism war on Boko Haram (Onuoha et al., 2020). In the same vein, Nigeria is said to have spent approximately US\$3.9 billion between 2014 and 2018 in the procurement of arms to combat Boko Haram insurgents (Oriola, 2018).

However, scholars have questioned the outcome of these policies, operations, and expenditures, with evidence showing that not much has been achieved. For instance, Onuoha et al. (2020) argue that there seems to be a disconnection between increased military funding and the effectiveness of the government's counterinsurgency efforts in Nigeria. Similarly, the support from the international community, such as the United States, has yielded minimal success in eradicating the terrorist threat. For instance, the United States donates US\$3 million annually to Nigeria for security assistance and other logistical and technical support (Le Van, 2013). Three main criticisms of Nigerian counter-terrorism failure are captured from three perspectives: political, strategic, and tactical (Onuoha, 2020). At the political level, it involves extortion by lawmakers from the military budget and embezzlement by ministers and heads of the military (International Crisis Group, 2016); the strategic level encompasses purchases of obsolete

weapons and ammunition and, criticized because of its secrecy (Onuoha, 2020) and lastly, the strategic level which raises issues of perceived human rights abuses by the military, for instance, the bombing of civilian locations etc. (Amnesty International, 2014). Against this background, this study interrogates the constituents of the Nigerian counter-terrorism approach against Boko-Haram, aiming to identify gaps in those policies and their implementation.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Nigeria's Counter-terrorism Policy Process

The evaluation of the effectiveness of each policy is predicated on results and is determined by empirical evidence (Parsons, 2002; Sanderson, 2002). According to Anyaegbunam (2012), a state's sustainability or failure is proportional to its policies' scope, arguing that the Nigerian constitution of 1999 delineated security and welfare as fundamental national obligations, implying that Nigeria's counter-terrorism policy was tailored as a state's effort to meet its obligatory requirements.

Nigeria practices the presidential system of governance (Mbaya et al., 2013; Oni, 2013). The executive arm of the government "comprises the president, prime minister, premier or governor, (as the case may be), ministers, special advisers, special assistants, top political aides and the administrator" (Popoola, 2016, p. 48). The executive arm of the government is responsible for the execution, enforcement, and coordination of government policies, ensuring their implementation by their intended design or plan (Anyaegbunam, 2012; Popoola, 2016; FGN, 2009). Legislators comprise the principal policymakers and are members of parliaments, such as the National Assembly and state assemblies in Nigeria (Popoola, 2016).

In Nigeria, the legislative branch of the government is the National Assembly; they are responsible for making laws and possess the authority to override decisions made by security agencies through repealing legislation. Consequently, such actions could impact the implementation of policies and regulations (Oni, 2013). According to Anyaegbunam (2012), the Nigerian constitution assigns essential responsibilities to the National Assembly regarding deploying troops and allocating funds for counter-terrorism operations. It is essential to state that the government can terminate or modify a policy regardless of whether it has achieved its intended objectives. A policy may terminate abruptly due to the evaluation outcome or the modification of the system.

Nigeria's policy process involves the three arms of the government. As rightly observed by scholars, Nigeria has made many commendable policies, but the issue usually lies in successful implementation. The policy statement is significant in the policy process because it describes a government's intention, which may be in the form of presidential orders, administrative rules and statutes, regulations, legislative statutes, and court opinions (Ojelade, 2018). It is, therefore, evident that the Nigerian counter-terrorism policies were made as a result of the emergence of Boko Haram terrorism in the North East. It is important to note that despite the constitutional provisions that allow a policy process in Nigeria, sections 65 and 305 of the 1960 and 1999 constitutions, respectively, empowers the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (executive arm) to make orders with or without the due process of going through the deliberations and processes of the National Assembly (Onwe et al., 2014). This was exemplified by the presidential declaration of a state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states on May 14, 2013, as a result of the Boko Haram terrorist attacks in the zone.

Viewed differently, the counter-terrorism policy process in Nigeria has sometimes not gone through the due processes of the three Arms of the government, especially when it comes to emergencies, as was the case of the Nigeria counter-terrorism policy in the North Eastern geopolitical zone, though they were constitutional. However, the 2011 and 2013 Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act 2013 (TPAA) as a counter-terrorism policy went through due process of the Legislature, Executive, and the Judiciary. The National Counter Terrorism Strategy -NACTEST 2014 as a policy document involved contributions from various entities, including the office of the National Security Adviser (NSA), security agencies, the National Defence Council, the National Security Council, and the Ministry of Justice (Akinbi, 2015). In this scenario, the government's three arms were engaged in monitoring and evaluation. The implementation of policies such as the relocation of the military command centre, deployment of troops, and establishment of internally displaced persons (IDP) camps was exclusively carried out through presidential directives and administrative rules and regulations, though it did not pass through the three arms of the government but were all constitutional (Akinbi, 2015; Campbell, 2014).

Nigeria's Counter-terrorism Policy towards Boko Haram Terrorism

The primary objectives of counter-terrorism policy encompass the eradication of terrorism as a threat and the implementation of measures that impede the ability of terrorists and their associates to execute acts of terrorism (Department of Defense, 2006). According to Oyewole (2013), counter-terrorism policies are legislation and strategies to maintain and restore order. The Nigerian government has implemented various strategies from 2009 to 2021 to combat Boko Haram terrorism within the nation, especially in the North Eastern zone. However, several studies have indicated varying degrees of success in some approaches, while some have not succeeded (DoD, 2006; Dasuki, 2013; Jideofor, 2014). The strategies encompassed the utilization, implementation, and synchronization of various instruments of national power, including military, diplomatic, economic, and information. These strategies can be categorized into two primary dimensions: strategic and tactical (Ikenna, 2016; Onuoha, 2014). According to Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe (2013), the community has collaborated with security forces in a joint effort to combat terrorism. The

indigenous populace willingly collaborates with law enforcement, military personnel, and intelligence agencies by providing voluntary information. The Nigerian government enhanced its strategic counter-terrorism policy by establishing the Counter-Terrorism Centre (CTC), primarily tasked with formulating a comprehensive framework for the country's counter-terrorism efforts (Dasuki, 2013; Jidefor, 2012; Hassan, 2014).

The objective of harmonizing current and conflicting legislations, such as the Financial Crimes Law and Anti-Money Laundering Law, is to effectively tackle issues related to terrorism financing and other gaps in the legal framework (Omolaye-Ajileye, 2015). The Nigerian government implemented a series of reforms to address various challenges within the criminal justice system, specifically focusing on terrorism investigations, prosecutions, trial delays, witness protection, and the safeguarding of judges. The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2011, as amended in 2013, was promulgated by the National Assembly (Omolaye-Ajileye, 2015). The Nigerian government enhanced its bilateral and multilateral engagements with different nations at various levels, including sub-regional, regional, continental, and global (Dasuki, 2013). The establishment of the Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit (RIFU) in Abuja was a result of the collaboration between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries of Niger, Benin, Chad, and Cameroon (Aderonke, 2015).

The government has actively promoted and supported international collaboration and the establishment of agreements with authorities at regional, continental, and global levels (Dasuki, 2013; Fulgence, 2015). Several measures were implemented, including the active involvement of the government in addressing the deficiencies of the 1991 AU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, which was enforced in 2002, as well as the broader international initiatives aimed at countering terrorism (Dasuki, 2013). The Nigerian government sought assistance from several West African nations to cooperate and collaborate with the United States as part of the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) (Dasuki, 2013; Fulgence, 2015). The Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI) is an initiative implemented by the US State Department to support the enhancement of border capacities in African nations, including Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad. Its primary objectives are to address issues related to arms smuggling, drug trafficking, and transnational terrorism (Archer & Popovic, 2007; Warner, 2014). At the regional level, the countries within the West African sub-region have implemented many international legislations pertaining to counter-terrorism under the guidance of ECOWAS, the sub-regional organization (Dasuki, 2013; Fulgence, 2015). Additionally, the sub-regional organization convened multiple meetings to coordinate the sub-region's efforts to combat terrorism in West Africa (Fulgence, 2015; Ogbonnaya et al., 2014).

Nigeria has established bilateral agreements with its neighbouring countries, including Chad, Benin Republic, and Niger, in order to foster cross-border collaboration in combating crime and terrorism. These countries engage in joint border patrols, particularly along illicit pathways within their shared borders (Adetula, 2015; Fulgence, 2015). Nigerian government established the National Counter-terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) framework, approved by President Goodluck Jonathan on April 30, 2014, and endorsed by President Muhammadu Buhari on August 23, 2016. It is noteworthy to state that the NACTEST were products of Nigeria's counter-terrorism policy. It explicitly specifies stakeholder responsibilities, including the establishments responsible for counter-terrorism (Eji, 2016). The NACTEST is structured into five distinct work streams, each with its primary objectives (Eji, 2016). The work streams encompass the following components: Forestall, Secure, Identify, Prepare, and Implement. The Forestall initiative seeks to proactively prevent individuals from engaging in terrorist activities. The Secure program aims to enhance the ability to defend against terrorist threats by bolstering security measures. The Identify strategy focuses on pre-emptive measures through detecting and timely notification of potential threats. According to Eji, (2016), the Prepare work stream aims to reduce the impact of terrorist attacks, while the Implement work stream establishes the framework for coordinating a cross-governmental effort to counter terrorism.

However, it is pertinent to state that the implementation of Nigeria's Counter-terrorism Strategies (NACTEST-2014) that resulted in the establishment of the Joint Task Force (JTF), the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), involving troops from Cameroon, Chad, Niger Republic, and the Republic of Benin, and the Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF). The composition of the Military counter-terrorism strategies of Nigeria has convinced scholars to view the Nigerian counter-terrorism strategies as being repressive and military-centred instead of being people-oriented (Iro & Osumah, 2012; Akinola, 2015; Eji, 2016; Obamamoye, 2017; Iwuoha, 2019; Ochogwu & Okechukwu, 2021 cited in Akwen & Iteogu, 2021). Despite the concerted efforts undertaken by the President Jonathan and President Buhari's administrations, the NACTEST 2014 policy instrument has only partially achieved victory in countering the Boko Haram terrorists by reducing their operational capacity (Nkata & Okpanocha, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed research design. The design involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating (or mixing) quantitative and qualitative research methods (and data) in a single study (Bulsara, 1997). The study is limited to "Taming the Tides; Nigerian Counter-terrorism Policy on Boko-Haram Terrorist, Empirical Mixed Method Analysis." The population of this study constitutes the population of Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe, and Taraba states; these are the six states that constitute the North Eastern region of Nigeria. Due to paucity of funds and time, the total population was not studied. Consequently, Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states were selected through purposive sampling. The states were selected because they are the most affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. Borno state witnessed 77% of all the Boko Haram attacks in the North East between 2009 and 2021; Yobe state

Taming The Tides; Nigerian Counter-Terrorism Policy on Boko-Haram Terrorist, Empirical Mixed Method Analysis

witnessed 11%, while Adamawa state witnessed 8%. The three studied states witnessed 96% of all the attacks in the North East within the study time frame (Omogunloye et al., 2023, p. 78). Data for this research was collected directly from respondents and subjected to analysis. The instruments used for data collection are questionnaires and in-depth interview guides. The structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from 988 respondents and was purposively distributed in a random manner. The semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data from 18 key informants. Respondents were purposively selected based on the uniqueness of the environment, which is sensitive to religion and issues of Boko Haram. The interview schedule questions allowed respondents to bear their minds on the phenomenon under investigation.

VALIDITY OF INSTRUMENTS

The validity test of a survey questionnaire is a process analysing the survey questions for their dependability (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). Muoneme (2021, p. 205) described it as a serious limitation and posited that it is inexcusable in scientific research if a “questionnaire is used without proper validation exercises”. To validate the instrument, a pilot test was conducted on the questionnaire. This was done by administering the instrument on a group of 30 people from Maiduguri in Borno state. Twenty-eight questionnaires were returned correctly completed. Furthermore, it enabled the researcher to determine the suitability of the respondents to the instrument, which the respondents found easy to understand, and it was confirmed that the respondents could react to all the items in the instrument for data collection. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire were processed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0. The socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and the substantive issues in all sections of the questionnaire are presented using descriptive statistics such as simple frequency distribution tables, percentages.

The qualitative data collected through in-depth interview was carefully edited, sorted, translated and transcribed. Open code content analyses was adopted. The data were isolated into various responses in accordance with the objectives of the study. The interview transcripts were further analyzed using the qualitative data software (QDA Miner). Extracts of verbatim quotes was used to complement the quantitative data analysis. The qualitative and quantitative data generated are presented sequentially. This is to enable appreciation of areas of convergence and divergence. The findings thereafter were related to literature and theories to support or disapprove the assumptions of the study.

FINDING

The study sets out to interrogate the constituents of Nigerian counter-terrorism policy in the North-Eastern zone of Nigeria? To interrogate what constitutes the Nigerian counter-terrorism policy, questions were asked on the nature of the strategies deployed by the Nigerian government such as military operations; operation safe corridor, multi-national joint task force (MNJTF), interagency collaboration, and violation of human rights.

Quantitative Data

Table 1: Nigerian Counter-Terrorism Policy is based on Utilization of Military Operations only

Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	28	2.8
Disagree	18	1.8
Undecided	71	7.2
Agree	389	39.4
Strongly Agree	482	48.8
Total	988	100

Field survey: 2023

Table 1 shows that a majority of the respondents 482(48.8%) strongly agreed that Nigerian counter-terrorism policy is largely military oriented while 18(1.8%) disagreed. This implies that the Nigerian government has consistently adopted the kinetic approach in its attempt to resolve the Boko Haram terrorist attacks.

To understand other policies besides the kinetic approach identified above, the study further interrogated if the operation safe corridor was a deliberate policy initiated to counter- Boko Haram terrorist operations. The findings are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Operation Safe-corridor was introduced as non-kinetic approach in Nigerian counter-terrorism policy

Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	17	1.7
Disagree	22	2.2
Undecided	81	8.2
Agree	376	38.1
Strongly Agree	492	49.8
Total	988	100

Field survey: 2023

Taming The Tides; Nigerian Counter-Terrorism Policy on Boko-Haram Terrorist, Empirical Mixed Method Analysis

Table 6 shows that a majority of the respondents 492(49.8%) strongly agreed that the Nigerian government initiated the operation safe-corridor as a non-kinetic approach in its attempt to resolve Boko-Haram terrorist onslaught while 17(1.7%) strongly agreed. Perhaps having adopted the outright kinetic approach of full military force and it achieved little or no result, the government tried to attempt other options that is less or non-kinetic in approach.

Considering that the military are mostly saddled with the responsibility of tackling Boko haram related issues, the study probed to understand if formulation of policies that will obligate collaboration among other security agencies will enhance Nigerian Counter-terrorism efforts. The responses are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Interagency Collaboration between security agencies was formulated as a Nigerian counter-terrorism policy initiative?

Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	148	14.9
Disagree	95	9.6
Undecided	181	18.3
Agree	219	22.2
Strongly Agree	345	34.9
Total	988	100

Field survey: 2023

Table 3 shows that 345(34.9%) the majority strongly agreed that the Nigerian government has equally adopted interagency collaboration between security agencies as a policy initiative towards countering the Boko-Haram terrorism. Whereas 95(9.6%) disagreed. This implies that the Nigerian government has deployed virtually all necessary armed forces towards countering Boko-Haram rampage.

The study equally probed to understand if the formation of multi-national joint task force could improve the capacity and adequacy of Nigerian counter-terrorism efforts.

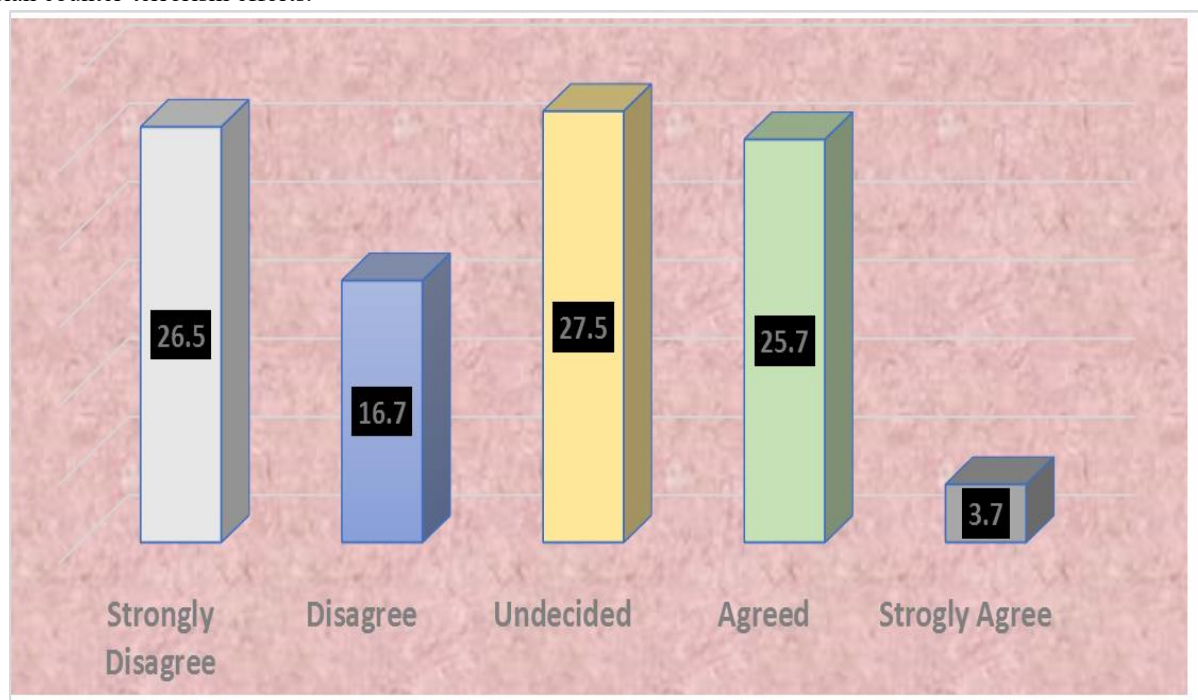


Fig 1: Adoption Multi-National Joint Task Force as a counter-terrorism?

Figure 1 shows that (27%) were undecided while (3.7%) strongly agreed. This implies that it is rather difficult to determine the extent formation of multi-national task force could help in increasing the capacity of military counter-terrorism efforts.

Considering the government has overtime adopted outright military interventions as a policy against Boko-Haram, there are chances the military may have violated the rights of some persons in North-east who might not even be among the Boko-haram sect. Therefore, the study interrogated if the military has violated the rights of the citizens. The responses are presented in figure 2

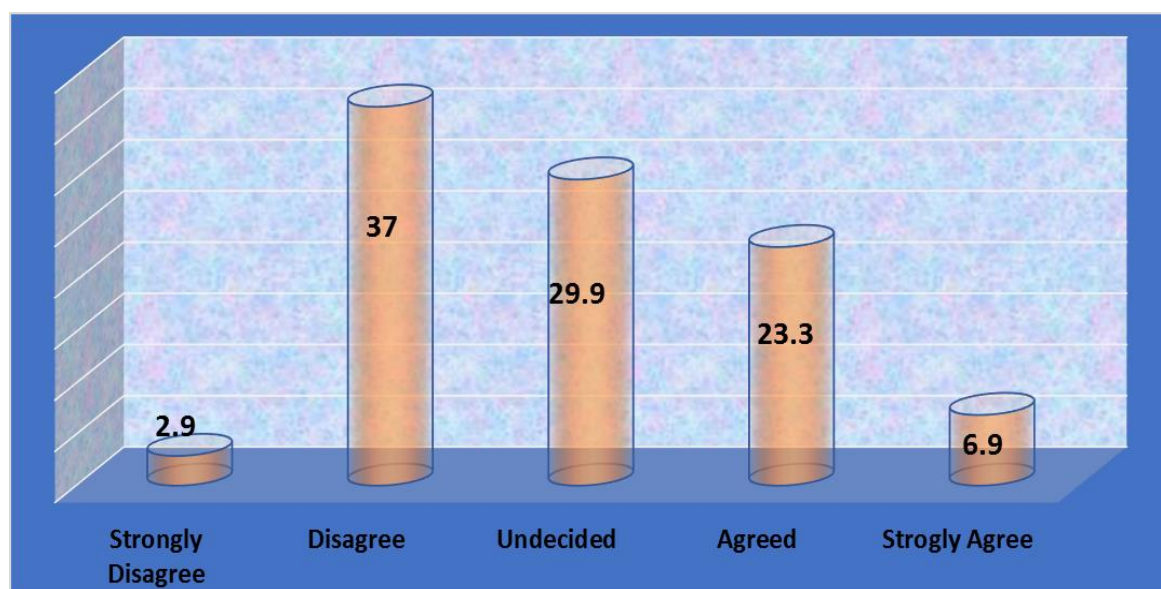


Fig 2: Nigerian counter-terrorism policy is apparent human Rights violation

Figure 2 shows that a majority of the respondents (37%) disagreed that the government military strategy has violated the rights of the citizens while (2.9%) strongly disagreed. This implies that contrary to certain opinion especially from the social media, the military has conducted it-self within the best international practices regarding the rules of engagement.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data divergent more insightful and robust underpinning data with regards to the government policy and approach in handling the Boko Haram. While some clearly supported the quantitative data, suggesting that kinetic approach has been and will remain the constituent of Nigerian counter-terrorism, other respondents suggested that the Kinetic approach overtly adopted was less effective, suggesting the adoption of non-kinetic approach. For instance, Doks (2022, Interview), argues that...

The government thinks everything is by force, they try to claim “we don’t negotiate with terrorist” as if they are America. After all what is even the cause of terrorism in the first place? It is the negligence of the youths and total government ineptitude, they don’t want to negotiate and find lasting solutions instead they want to spend the unavailable funds buying weapons and killing Nigerian youths for trying to demand from the government to do the right thing. Now look at it, has this military power and might solved the problem... I mean has terrorism stopped? I am just laughing. If the government is serious they should negotiate with the groups it will go a long way in resolving the chaos.

In a contrary view Brig. Gen. Etubom (2021, Interview), asserted thus:

I want to categorically maintain that the Nigerian State does not negotiate with terrorist. Yes, they may be casualties both on the military and civilian population, however if you observe closely the military is steadily winning the battle so why negotiate with terrorist. It might take some time but like I said we are winning the war on terror. Listen my friend if the government should negotiate with the miscreants what then do you consider the role of the military or its purpose to the State. I can assure you we will conquer them and eradicate the miscreants called terrorist groups.

Major General Jonathan rtd. (2022, Interview), who served in the Nigeria military previously as military spokesman, former Army War college commandant, former director of Defense Information and the coordinator Defence Media operations. He oversaw all military operations in Nigeria for one and half years and during the peak of Boko Haram terrorism. Coincidentally, the military strategies used by the then Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Buratai were articulated by Major General Jonathan. He averred that:

The precipitation and perpetuation of Boko Haram terrorism in North East is traceable to the mismanagement of the extra-judicial killing of the leader of Boko Haram. To him, the political and religious leaders failed in the management of the situation, and it led to the escalation of the Boko Haram terrorism. He also blamed the lack of political will in defining the Boko Haram issue in specific terms as a factor that impinged the containment of the Boko Haram terrorism. There was no direct policy at the onset nor deployment of forces. Some within the corridors of power were highly sentimental and treated them with kid’s gloves. He further added that actually the people within the region were sympathetic of Boko Haram mainly because their assault then was on churches and foreigners. Following its onslaughts on government agencies and escalation of hostilities the government embarked on military interventions the deploying the Kinetic approach.

In a related interview section, Austino (2022, Interview), a Peace & Conflict expert and Human rights activist believes that the counter-terrorism approach of the government has been the reason why it has become almost impossible to defeat Boko Haram.

Taming The Tides; Nigerian Counter-Terrorism Policy on Boko-Haram Terrorist, Empirical Mixed Method Analysis

His argument is that Boko Haram is an ideological war and must be tackled as such. He reiterates the kinetic approach employed by the government is the reason it has not succeeded yet. He asserted that ideological wars are won by a mixture of both kinetic and soft approach. He pointed out that Boko Haram has its epistemological origin from Borno State. For him, Boko Haram started as 'Yusuf' movement, a movement which teaches its followers that Western form of education is forbidden and that they should wage war against it to stop it. This movement gathered more force to cause pandemonium and make the country ungovernable when its leader was killed. In his words:

Boko Haram activities in Nigeria escalated and worsened to the stage it is now due to improper management by the police and the government in power at the time it started. Nothing was done to nip the brewing insurrection which has religious undertone on the bud. Hence the current state of social, economic, and political tumult we are meshed in as a nation. The counter-terrorism approach government has been using lacks the potency to contain the Boko Haram terrorism. Government should re-strategize and must include more of soft approach than kinetic.

Similarly, Brig. Gen. Williams *et al.* (2022, Interview), observed that Boko Haram only uses asymmetrical tactics and weapons. Boko Haram lacks strategy and training. They hide in society. Boko Haram uses the Geneva Convention to avoid collateral damage and international attention. The Nigerian security forces have reduced Boko Haram's offensive capability by declaring a full-scale war on terrorism. This affirms that the government policy has remained Kinetic in nature. He said conventional armies struggle against asymmetric armies. Nigerian security forces constantly reviewed "lessons learned on the field." General Buratai, the former Chief of Army Staff, introduced the military unit that uses motorbikes and civilians to the joint task force to fight Boko Haram, who also used motorbikes in the forests. Lafia Dole, Sharan Daji, and Awatse were other military tactics. Field conditions determine these codenames' engagement rules. He thinks winning over the public will help contain Boko Haram since the Nigerian government is absent from most strongholds. He suspects a plot to destabilize Nigeria and seize our mining, agriculture, and Lake Chad Basin oil and mineral reserves.

Corroborating some of earlier asserted views Prof. Shal (2022, Interview) identified the fact that the counter-terrorism efforts in Nigeria does not have a known documented policy book or framework known to him or the rest members of the civilian population. "The policies are not usually written down in a paper, they deploy security forces at will; to either go on a rescue mission, counter attacks and what they do is they try to protect private important citizens to crossover through danger areas and return and to secure the City mainly. For us the civilians the Military only give us verbal instructions not to go to certain places or be at some other places, but we do not have a written down document that defines their mode of operation. The government act spontaneously, they only react to Boko Haram attacks. If they have a policy document maybe they may share it with NGO's that assist them but to the general public the beneficiary, we are not aware of any written policy document.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated the Nigerian government policies and strategies on counter-terrorism against the Boko haram insurgency. Over the years the Boko-Haram sect has remained the greatest security nightmare faced by the Nigerian State with large chunk of national budget allotted towards eradicating the embarrassing consequences of Boko-Haram operations which has not only destroyed lives and properties with dire socio-economic implications but at certain points threatened the sovereignty of Nigeria. The constituent of Nigerian counter-terrorism policy; the quantitative data revealed that the government counter-terrorism policy is largely driven by visibly Kinetic approach as was averred by (48.8%) of the respondents. This finding is supported by the systematic review done by Ike *et al.*, (2021) which found that military interventions represent a dominant intervention perceived to be abused by the security forces. Interestingly efforts are also made towards harmonizing inter-agency capacity as a policy direction most of the respondents (34.9%) agreed to this. The respondents did not associate human rights abuse with the counter-terrorism efforts of the Nigerian government. The Nigerian government was found to have adopted a policy on a multi-national military offensive against the Boko-Haram as averred by (43.1%) of the respondents. The qualitative data corroborated with the quantitative data though more insights were brought out. While most of the respondents alluded that the Nigerian government counter terrorism policy is driven by the Kinetic approach some others argued that the Nigerian government does not have a specific written document as its counter-terrorism policy. Rather what obtains is deployment of military for intervention, rescue and defence of citizens and other code-named operations of the military. Some respondents argued that there is no specific guiding policy document, beyond reactionary strategies. However, studies suggest that the harsh use of repressive measures drives radicalization rather than prevent it (HRW, 2012; Mercy Corps, 2016). The findings are congruent with existing literature that argues that intensive military actions increase rather than decrease terrorism (Brophy-Baermann & Conybeare, 1994; Enders & Sandler, 1993).

This finding is supported by Temitope Faluyi *et al.*, (2019) who argued that the Nigerian government has a history of adopting ad-hoc approaches to resolve violent conflict. They further stated that the Nigerian government had no policy framework or strategy to respond to armed insurrection and this seems contradictory due to the country's participation in peacekeeping and peace-making in other countries that experienced insurgency. This supports Olumu *et al.*, (2020) assertion that the nation's counter-terrorism policy/strategies have been ad-hoc and limited to dealing with the aftermath of terrorist acts. This counter-terrorism strategy is not entirely flawed, but it cannot defeat terrorism in the long run. Multiple times, the strategy failed as anticipated.

CONCLUSION

The tides of Boko Haram insecurity have remained unabated despite the resources - human and material deployed to combat the terror organization ravaging the north-eastern part of Nigeria. In view of the above response apparently the core counter-terrorism approach adopted by the Nigerian military is kinetic approach. Because the Boko Haram terrorists are still in operation, it therefore implies that there is a gap between actualizing the goal of ending the Boko Haram terrorist attack and the Nigerian government's counter-terrorism approach which is found to be kinetic. It is against this backdrop that the study highlights the need for policies aimed at addressing counterterrorism to work closely with the community through trust-building, accountability for perceived acts of human rights abuses by security agencies and addressing the perceived root causes of terrorism. Hence, it is imperative to provide meaningful means of livelihood for the youths within the region, restoration of homes and provision of infrastructural facilities, and changing the narrative of radical religious fanatics might go a long way in taming the tides of insecurity in North-east Nigeria. In addition, the government must eliminate the financiers and other supporters of Boko Haram as the terrorist group seems to have emerged as a major economy for some political and war merchants who would rather prefer it be sustained for their nefarious businesses.

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Taming The Tides; Nigerian Counter-Terrorism Policy on Boko-Haram Terrorist, Empirical Mixed Method Analysis

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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