

TERRORISM IN SUB-SAHARA AFRICA: A STUDY OF ELITE COMPLICITY IN NIGERIA 2015- 2022

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Abstract

The unabated and rising phenomenon of terrorism in Sub-Sahara Africa raises serious concern in the International arena. It appears some hidden elements have some interests in the increasing and unchallenged cases of terrorism in this area. The spate and pattern of violence suggest that some states and non-state actors conspire to instigate the crises. This seems to be typical of the situation in Nigeria. The paper, thus examined some indicators from 2015-2022. The paper is descriptive and qualitative. It analyzed documented data based on logical reasoning and rigour. Mosca, Parato and Michel aspects of Elite theory were used to explain elite complicity in terrorism in Nigeria. Findings established that terrorism in Nigeria is beneficial to some highly placed state and non-state actors bent on satisfying group economic and political interests at the expense of the state and the people's security. Competent leadership and strong institutions of the state are recommended as workable tools to check the excesses.

Keywords: Terrorism, Sub-Sahara Africa, Elite Complicity, Boko Haram, ISWAP

INTRODUCTION

The history of terrorism is traced to human existence, but special attention of scholars and the international community was drawn lately to the debilitating activities of terrorists in the early 2000s when the late Osama Bin Ladin led Al-Qaeda launched an attack on World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001 (Walker, 2012). Nigeria's security system started receiving serious international attentions following the Boko Haram attacks on the United Nations Headquarters' building in Abuja in August 2011. This attack was described by the then Nigeria's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Viola Onwuliri, as an attack on Nigeria and the international community (Plaut, 2011). In 2013, terrorists also attacked Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, Kenya killing about 71 persons including 4 of the attackers (BBC News, 2020). Since then, terrorism has become a global phenomenon; an instrument for achieving group or individual aims. This has become more pervasive in Sub-Saharan Africa, with special reference to Nigeria.

One begins to wonder why terrorist groups keep increasing in Sub-Sahara Africa, Nigeria in particular. Could it be that the Nigerian military is weak, or the security architecture wrongly structured? Could it be that some persons are benefitting from the overwhelmed military, Para-military agencies? Concerns of Nigerian leaders do not meet expectations especially when continuous and increased activities of terrorists pose some negative effects on Nigeria's international security profile cum international socio-political and economic

relations. Ezeanya and Owoeye (2022) had suggested that it could be as a result of this, that Nigeria's economic relations is in doubts, as her Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has experienced a downturn due to low patronage. More so, could this be the reason why Nigeria had been frequently listed in the list of states to be denied some kinds of visa by some countries cum inclusion of Nigeria in the terror watch-list by the United States? This might have also been the reason why Nigeria's quest for the position of non-permanent seat in the Security Council of the United Nation remains unachievable as she is yet to overcome her own internal security challenges, similarly, this must have influenced the perception of other African countries about Nigeria as the 'Giant of Africa'. The trending menace of Boko Haram might have also instigated the special security checks of Nigerian nationals, diplomats abroad and the denial from procuring certain military weapons by in some states (Ezeanya & Owoeye, (2022).

METHODOLOGY

The paper is qualitative and descriptive. It relied on documented evidence, such as annual security related reports, journal articles, media publications and textbooks. Data were presented using tabular and textual tools and analyzed via logical reasoning and scientific vigor. Elite theory rooted in Polybius and popularized by Pareto, Mosca and Michels was adopted as our guide to the study. Polybius argued that a monarchy, aristocracy or democracy would eventually corrupt itself into a leadership by few. Accordingly, the theory explains the phenomenon of small but organized sub-set of a community bearing disproportional influence on the entire community and thereby controlling all facets of the affairs of such community in their own interest ultimately limits access to well-being of other social classes. It describes and explains power relationships in contemporary society and posits that a small fraction, consisting of members of the wealthy elite and policy-planning cabals, hold the most power and this power is independent of democratic elections (Deric, 2011). This group of individuals, through their positions in multinational corporations or in government boards, and influence in policy-planning nexus, exert significant power over corporate and public policies. The basic characteristics of this theory are that power is concentrated, the elites are united, the non-elites are not organised and, therefore, powerless. Elites' interests are unified due to common backgrounds and positions and the defining characteristic of power is institutional position. (Gilens, & Page, 2014).

The theory does not support plurality, a tradition that emphasizes how multiple major social groups and interests maintain an influence and various forms of representation within more powerful sets of rulers. **Vilfredo Pareto** emphasized the psychological and intellectual superiority of elites, believing they were the highest accomplishees in any field. He discussed the existence of two types of elites: governing elites- the members of the elite group who are directly or indirectly involved in government and process of governance. Non-governing elite are those who control and determine government policies from behind the scene. He also extended the idea that whole elite can be replaced by a new one and one can circulate from being elite to non-elite.

Gaetano Mosca emphasized the sociological and personal characteristics of the elites. For him, elites are an organized minority and the masses are an unorganized majority. He divides the world into two groups: political class- this class according to Mosca refers to the relatively small group of activists in the society that is highly aware and active in politics and from whom the national leadership is drawn. Non-Political class- the non- political class are the masses who are ruled over by the political class. Mosca asserts that elites have intellectual, moral, and material superiority that is highly esteemed and influential.

Robert Michels developed the iron law of oligarchy through which he asserts that social and political organizations are run by few individuals, and social organization and labor division is key. He believed that all organizations were elitist and that elites have three basic principles that help in the bureaucratic structure of political organization:

Application: Nigeria evolved from a British colony to an independent parliamentary and later presidential democracy. Power tussle has been a persistent occurrence among contending economic, ethnic, religious, military, party and family and friendship ties over the decades. Each of these groups is mobilized as an instrument for political bargaining yet only a few, selected from different groups belong to an inner caucus for decision making, influence and benefits accruing from there. It is on this note that politics is a madness of many for the benefits of a few.

Elite involvement in terrorism in Nigeria is tied to this benefits be it economic or political. Those who are desperate to achieve a political or economic interest or those who lost favour from the government or are hunted, intimidated and harassed by the government find solace in financing and supporting terrorist groups as instruments for revenge or coercing the government to negotiate with them. Some do it as a reaction to the unfavourable governance to the group or attempt to pull the government down to give way for another government of their choice.

On the other hand, officials of government might have instigated terrorism to justify huge security budget and cover fraudulent security expenditures. For such officials, this means offers the access to government treasury. The outcome is over-bloated security budgets and expenditures without corresponding visible military arsenals, training and other logistics for combating terrorism. So, in line with the elite theory, Nigeria's democracy has corrupted itself to a rulership by a cabalistic few bent on achieving group interest at the expense of the state and the people.

Terrorism

Terrorism is a criminal acts, against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act (UN Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004). Terrorist acts are certain criminal acts listed as serious offences against persons and property which: given their nature or

context, may seriously damage a country or an international organization when committed with the aim of seriously intimidating a population; or unduly compelling a government or International organization to perform or abstain from performing any act; or seriously destabilizing or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organization (European Union Article 1 of the Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism (2002)).

Terrorism is also an act designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system (The United Kingdom's Terrorism Act, 2000). It is activities that involve violent or life-threatening act that violates the criminal laws or appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion or affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping (United States Federal Criminal Code) For the African Union (AU) terrorism as any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a state party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any member or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage.

Sub-Sahara Africa

Sub-Sahara Africa is usually used to describe the region of the African continent located south of the Sahara Desert and has about 48 countries - Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina-Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini (Formerly Known as Swaziland), Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Djibouti is normally excluded from the list of Sub-Saharan Africa, because it is administratively handled as part of the Middle East and North Africa.

Terrorism in Nigeria

Terrorism has become a worrisome global phenomenon in the last two decades. Nigeria has had its fair share of the activities of terrorists. "Since August 2011 Boko Haram has planted bombs almost weekly in public or in churches in Nigeria's North-East. The group has also broadened its targets to include setting fire to schools. In March 2012, some twelve public schools in Maiduguri were burned down during the night, and as many as 10,000 pupils were forced out of education" Andrew Walker, (2012). From 2011 till date, Nigeria has not seen a month pass without experiencing a major terror attack. Nigeria has continued to experience acts of terrorism in various forms and in varying degrees without any significant resistance from the government of Nigeria. Boko Haram, ISWAP, and others that have been tagged Unknown Gunmen have claimed responsibility for almost all the terror acts carried out in Nigeria without anybody having been arrested, charged to court and successfully prosecuted. This raises a lot of

concern that many security watchers begin to wonder if there are state and non state actors who benefit directly or indirectly from the continued and unabated insecurity in the country. Of course politicians are the prime suspected beneficiaries of the unending insecurity in Nigeria. This triggered the interest of the researchers to investigate this subject matter, hence the title of this article.

Elite Complicity in Nigerian Terrorism

The huge amount spent on insecurity in Nigeria with no reasonable results leaves one with no choice than to think that there may be some vested interests benefiting from the current spate of insecurity in the country. Who could they be? This forms core of the focus of this research work. On January 31st 2022, the erstwhile Chief of Army Staff General Tukur Buratai stated that

"There is strong religious affinity between the people in the town and the bandits and terrorists in the forests". The former Chief of Army Staff stated this on Channels Television. Now, we may ask what this affinity is all about and who created it.

On the 3rd of December 2016, Governor Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna State had revealed how his administration traced some violent and aggrieved Fulani herdsmen and paid them to stop the killings in Kaduna. Daily Post, (2016). Now a sitting governor traced terrorists to their abode, negotiated with them and paid them. What he did not disclose is how much was paid and as approved by which agency or arm of government. The governor did not show any evidence of the payment. Could someone or some group of persons be harbouring some criminals somewhere and be using them as conduit pipe to siphon state funds? This of course triggers suspicion of complicity in insecurity management.

The same Governor of Kaduna State, said the way bandits and Boko Haram terrorists operate is different from that of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra led by Nnamdi Kanu. El-Rufai also argued that bandits...are just carrying out their activities as a form of business... BBC Pidgin (2022). El Rufai does want Boko Haram and bandits in Northern Nigeria to be treated with the same swiftness that led to Kanu's arrest. The above really suggest that there is a calculated attempt by El Rufai and some others still to be known to shield terrorists for whatever gain. If this is not so, which one is easier? Getting someone in a far away London/Kenya arrested in the person of Kanu and getting terrorist leaders within the country arrested? This suggests some complicity.

On the 25th of February 2022, as reported by Vanguard newspaper while featuring at the weekly ministerial press briefing organized by the Presidential Communications Team at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, Nasir el-Rufai again came to the defense of the Nigerian military for their inability to confront terrorism in the country when he argued that the military had been reluctant to fully engage bandits terrorizing the country for fear of being dragged to the International Criminal Court. He however admits that preliminary investigations had indicted some security operatives who are working for terrorists. He admits that the locations of the terrorists are known and that the Fulanis involved in criminality would never abandon the business on their own as they make more money from it than they would have made from legitimate cattle business.

It beats researchers' imagination why a government with so much information on insurgents and their collaborators would chose to be reluctant to act. This can only be for a reason of interest. This again shows complicity.

On Saturday 24th March, 2018 Theophilus Danjuma, a former Nigerian Defence Minister, and one time Chief of Army Staff accused the Nigerian armed forces of aiding the ongoing killings in Nigeria. He said "the armed forces are not neutral," Mr. Danjuma laid this allegation at the maiden convocation of the Taraba State University in Jalingo, the state capital. Premium Times (2018). The Nigeria military did not do anything serious about the grave allegation other than to simply deny it. Mr Danjuma is experienced enough as a retired General, former Chief of Army Staff and former Defence minister. He knows the consequences of this allegation if they were not true and the military also did not invite him for further clarification. The military may after all be aware that such a highly place individual may be armed with a number of evidences, hence the decision of the military not to invite him lest he exposes their complicity.

On June 1, 2022 a Chief Superintendent of Police attached to the Rapid Response Squad (RRS) of Abia State Police Command accused the Nigeria Military of aiding Fulanis in kidnapping. The officer also declared that the Nigerian Army was working with criminal gangs. "They go to cattle market to spend the money after collecting ransom. The Army is not helping us (Daily Post, 2022). Instead for the Police Authority to address the allegation or investigate it, they only chided the alleging officer and sought the continuous cooperation between the accused military and the police. This is surely a case of complicity.

On June 4, 2022 the prelate of Methodist Church of Nigeria, Samuel Kanu-Uche, recounted his ordeal in the hands of kidnappers and insists that soldiers at the check point close to where they were kidnapped were complicit. The prelate and two other priests were kidnapped and freed after they claim to have paid ₦100 million ransoms. The Nigeria Army again quickly denied the claim that its troops were complicit in the kidnap of the cleric and his colleagues without any preliminary or full investigation. There seem to be complicity herein in this account.

Why the Complicity?

Nigeria has budgeted over \$22billion on security in the last seven year. Buhari is a man believed to have zero tolerance for corruption, especially stealing of public funds. There could be no other way for political elite to amass wealth without justification, hence the deliberate fueling of insecurity. The more insecurity is high, the more money is voted, and the easier to justify spending. When the maximum Kuje prison in the nation's capital was attacked and prisoners freed, the president, after assessing the level of laxity and complicity, he lamented the huge amount of money invested in security and asked rhetorically "where is the intelligence?" (thisdaylive.com, 2022). Well, the crowd had no available answer to Mr. President's question. This study therefore attempts an answer - the intelligence was not provided as a way to attract more funds.

Nigeria's Defence Budget 2015-2022

Security index, (high), 2022 rankings:	s/n	Year	Defence Budget in dollar	Global rank	Available data
	1	2015	\$2.07b		
	2	2016	\$1.72b		
	3	2017	\$1.62b		
	4	2018	\$2.04b		
Countries	5	2019	\$1.86b	Global rank	Available data
	6	2020	\$2.10b		
	7	2021	\$4.5b		
	8	2022	\$5.7b		
	9.7	Total	\$22.08b		
Afghanistan	10			1	2015-2022
Mali	9.7			2	2015- 2022
Syria	9.5			3	2015-2022
Philippines	9.4			4	2015-2022
Somalia	9.4			5	2015-2022
Libya	9.3			6	2015-2022
Yemen	9.1			7	2015-2022
Burma	9			8	2015-2022
Guinea	9			9	2015-2022
Nigeria	8.9			10	2015-2022

Source: World Bank

threats (low) - 10 Country

Measure: index points; Source: Fund for Peace

The average for 2022 based on 177 countries was 5.09 index points. The highest value was in Afghanistan: 10 index points and the lowest value were in Portugal: 0.3 index points. The indicator shows that Nigeria still ranks high (10th) with 8.9 index point in Security threat index and this is because heavy amount of money have been spent on security without a commensurate security improvement.

Fragile state index, 0 (low) - 120 (high), 2022 - Country rankings:

Countries	Fragile state index, 2022	Global rank	Available data
Yemen	111.7	1	2015-2022
Somalia	110.5	2	2015-2022
Syria	108.4	3	2015-2022
C.A. Republic	108.1	4	2015-2022
DR Congo	107.3	5	2015-2022

Countries	Fragile state index, 2022	Global rank	Available data
<u>Sudan</u>	107.1	6	2015-2022
<u>Afghanistan</u>	105.9	7	2015-2022
<u>Chad</u>	105.7	8	2015-2022
<u>Burma</u>	100	9	2015-2022
<u>Haiti</u>	99.7	10	2015-2022
<u>Guinea</u>	99.6	11	2015-2022
<u>Ethiopia</u>	99.3	12	2015-2022
<u>Mali</u>	98.6	13	2015-2022
<u>Zimbabwe</u>	97.8	14	2015-2022
Nigeria	97.2	15	2015-2022

Measure: index points; Source: Fund for Peace

The average for 2022 based on 177 countries was 65.81 index points. The highest value was in Yemen: 111.7 index points and the lowest value were in Finland: 15.1 index points. The indicator also shows that Nigeria still ranks high (15) in this index and this is also because huge amount of money have been spent on security without a commensurate security improvement, hence the Nigerian State is still fragile.

Indicators of Elite Complicity in Terrorism in Nigeria

(a) Boko Haram

Government's evidential inability to use the once ever-combatant Nigerian Army to curb the excesses of Boko Haram is an indication of a possible compromise. General T. Y Danjuma had warned Nigeria's to defend themselves against armed attacks because of the perceived complicity by security officials. Andrew Walker (2012) in his United States Institute of Peace Special Report on Boko Haram, observes that Boko Haram started as an Islamic sect that believes politics in northern Nigeria has been hijacked by a group of corrupt, false Muslims. It wants to wage a war against them, and the Federal Republic of Nigeria generally to create a 'pure' Islamic state ruled by Sharia law. The sect started gaining attention when it started to plant bombs in August 2011 almost weekly in public places or in churches in Nigeria's northeast. Boko Haram then formed an alliance with other international terrorist groups including Al-Qaida and ISWAP. Such alliance and funding could not have been possible without elite support. They have carried out a number of attacks in Nigeria in the recent past including the Abuja-Kaduna train bombing and subsequent kidnapping of over seventy passengers on board a train for ransom on March 28 2022. The sophistication of the methods and instruments of operation show they have a strong elite finance base.

(b) ISWAP

The Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) came about as a splinter of Boko Haram shortly before the *death* of Abubakar Shekau Aymenn Tamini,

(2021) ISWAP has since then recorded some military successes and created affinity with Muslim civilians by treating them better than its parent organization. This may be what the immediate past Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff, General Tukur Buratai (2022) referred to when he said "there is strong religious affinity between the people in the town and the bandits and terrorists in the forests". This has made the group to grow in power and influence. Its aims and objectives include but not limited to "building up basic government services and focusing efforts on attacking Christian targets, attacking humanitarian personnel and selecting Muslim communities". The movement launched an insurgency against the Nigerian government following an unsuccessful uprising in 2009 aiming at establishing an [Islamic state](#) in northern Nigeria (TRADOC, 2015). This adventure is not a child's play. It is a product of a well organized and financed project political and/or economically motivated. Such project is the hand work of the elite.

(c) Owo Catholic Church Attack

On the 5th of June 2022, there was a heavy attack on the church worshippers at St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo, Ondo State. Shortly after the attack, the Minister of Interior, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola was quick to announce that the attack had no ethnic-religious connection. Why would Aregbesola take such stand when no group had claimed responsibility, no arrest had been made and report of preliminary investigation had not been released. Was Aregbesola shielding any group of persons? There was later a flop after the investigation when the Chief of Defense Staff, General Lucky Irabor listed Idris Ojo and Abubakar Mohammed among ISWAP members who were being accused of attacking the Owo Church. Owo church was attacked on 5th June 2022 and Kuje prison in Abuja was attacked one month later by same ISWAP on July 5th. The list of the escapees from Kuje Prison in Abuja was released before that of Owo Church attackers. When the list of Owo attackers was released, it was discovered that the duo of Idris Ojo and Abubakar Mohammed were also in the Abuja prison escapee list. This is the puzzle: Kuje was attacked on July 5 while Owo was attacked on June 5, same year. The military listed Idris Ojo and Abubakar Mohammed as two of those who escaped from Kuje prison in Abuja on July 5. The complicity: did the duo attack Owo Church and went to Kuje prison without having been arrested only to be released by ISWAP after one month on July 5? As usual, the military was quick to say that it was a mix up. How does a so sensitive organization like the Nigeria military not do a proper background double check on such high profile criminality before going public? Were they trying to cover up something somewhere? Are those paraded really the perpetrators of the Owo Church attack? To this end, people became worried that the military could not arrest the perpetrators of the various terrorist acts in North and other places including Kuje Jail breakers but was able to arrest and parade attackers of Owo Catholic Church with names listed within two months. This is really a complicated case of complicity.

Mailafia, (2021) had accused the Nigerian Military of aiding terrorists in killing Nigerians and ordering the broadcast section of the media industry to profile and downplay their reportages on terrorists' activities. He believes that this is evident following the body language the government.

Government's Ineffective Responses and Propaganda

When in 2015, General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) won the 2015 general election, he promised to root out terrorism threatening the very foundation of the existence of Nigeria as a corporate entity. Of course Nigerians believed him given his military background and the very fact that he is of the Northern Nigeria extraction, the very region most devastated by the volume of insurgency that existed at that time. Those who knew him as military ruler back in 1984 also believed him as he was previously known for his zero tolerance for indiscipline and corruption. Soon after his emergence however, insecurity in Nigeria quickly spread like wild fire from the Northern part of the country to other parts of the country. The South-East began to grapple with unknown gunmen, while kidnapping raged across the country, particularly, mass abduction in schools and communities. At the heat of insecurity after assuming office, president directed the military service chiefs to relocate to the North-East to face insurgency squarely. They never did. The president again ordered the Inspector General of Police to relocate to Benue and remain there with his team until the security challenges there are surmounted. He never did. Many other such orders were given by the President but were never adhered to and in all of them nothing happened to any of the erring officer. The directive was a good one but it seemed to be said in deception otherwise why no punitive measures for failure to adhere to the directives.

Besides, national budget allocation between 2015 and 2022 in Nigeria has been high at the expense of other sectors such as Education, Health, Works, Housing and Transportation. In the past 7 budget cycles, over \$22 billion has been allocated to the security. Meanwhile, the country has since 2015 continued to experience worsening insecurity, against the President's campaign promise of a secure and stable Nigeria. What this simply reflects is that the agencies of government saddled with the responsibility of securing the country are ineffective. This is evident in the way operations are carried out on security matters. The military and Para-military officials are more interested in the money allocated to security than solving security problems. This may be reason the government officials and their elite collaborators refused to let General Tukur Buratai go as Chief of Army Staff even when there was pressure from the citizenry emphasizing ineffectiveness. Some elements in the government with their non-state collaborators collude to siphon state funds under the guise of security spending.

Conclusion

Government's failure to arrest the growing insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria is evidence in elite complicity resulting in government's ineffectiveness. Elite political and economic group and personal interests at the expense of national security are the underlying motives behind the complicity. This is evidence in the extravagant allocation and spending of security funds without corresponding positive result in the national security. Besides, government failure for effective use of the available Nigerian military capacity is unbelievable and suspicious.

Governments in Sub Sahara African should come up with serious policy actions such as name-shaming, arrest, prosecution and jailing of those who are directly or indirectly involved in the sponsorship or any act relating to terrorism. Consequently, Sub-Sahara African nationals at home and in Diaspora are encouraged to step up their campaigns against terrorism in their distinct countries, particularly, against elite involvement. This will go a long way in reducing the menace of terrorism in the region. In addition, elections and appointments into political and leadership positions in Sub-Sahara African countries should be strictly based on merit for those who have good track records and clean character in terrorism related matters.

Nigerian Government should stand firm, shorn elite, religious and ethnic sentiments in making positive use of the full Nigerian military capacities in intelligence and physical operations to safe the nation from further danger. Negotiation is also a viable option for success but the government must not mortgage the interest of the nation in negotiation.

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