



POLAC INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ECONS & MGT SCIENCE (PIJEMS)
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT SCIENCE
NIGERIA POLICE ACADEMY, WUDIL-KANO



SOCIO ECONOMIC EFFECT OF POLICY ON DERADICALISATION AND REINTEGRATION OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENTS IN NORTH EASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Boko-Haram Islamic Fundamentalist been declared as an international terrorist organization and described having links with another terrorist group, the Al-Queda by the United States of America was born following the 2011 general elections in Nigeria. This group has unleashed mayhem that has hocked the socio-economic foundation of the North East Nigeria and the country as a whole. They have unleashed a reign of terror that resulted in callous destruction of lives of Nigerians and especially the foreigners who came to invest in the country. The study examines socio-economic effect of the policy of deradicalisation and reintegration of Boko Haram insurgent in North Eastern Nigeria, with perspective focus on the federal government blueprint for Demobilisation, Reintegration, and Reconciliation (DRR) strategy. In achieving the said objectives, qualitative secondary source of data and descriptive method was employed to gain an insight into the nature and situation of government policy on deradicalisation and reintegration. The research found that such policy faces certain backlash as clarifying eligibility, public disorder, oppressive arrangement etc. The study therefore recommends a well-structured policy modernisation with sincere kinetic and non-kinetic warfare approach to eradicate the menace. The position of this article is for such recommendations been implemented appropriately.

Keywords: Socio-economic. Policy, Deradicalisation, Reintegration, Insurgents

Introduction

In an efforts to reform and bring the Boko Haram sect back to the community for a better socio relation, the Nigeria government established an action plan refer to as deradicalisation and reintegration through the office of the National Security Council (NSC) in September 2015 and later form a conjunction with the International Organization for Migration in 2017. This coordinated effort was necessitated due to the security threats posed by the group. The deradicalisation and reintegration program stationed under Operation Safe Corridor and handled by Office of the National Security Adviser in collaboration with security-based and relevant government organisations aims to exhibit the soft side of government towards bringing a lasting and effective solution to the protracted violence. The insurgents who either surrendered or were captured during clashes with Nigerian security forces were deradicalised and reintegrated. Meanwhile the key agencies involved in Boko Haram

counter-insurgency operations in Nigeria are National Security Adviser (NSA), Nigeria Military, Department of States Service (DSS), Nigeria Police Force (NPF), National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Ministry of Justice, Economics and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency Centre, Jaji (CTCIC), and Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Their coming together is to establish concerted effort in rebelling and reintegrate Boko Haram, this in line with (Cline 2016) that say.....*effective interagency cooperation is important in enhancing intelligence gathering, information management and government communications toward mitigating both real and potential threats posed by terrorists group.*

Also, a non-military approach established by the Nigerian government in synergy and cooperation

with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) help in preventing violent extremism and its manifestation, it was established in form of blueprint referred to as Demobilisation, Reintegration, and Reconciliation (DRR) for safe alignment of interested Boko Haram combatants. The big question is ‘Do Operation Safe Corridor makes provision to secure the host communities, should in case the repent sects’ strike again?’ Answer to this is asserted by Ike et al (2010), that “.....non-military approach encompassing deradicalisation, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration serve to effectively address terrorist ideology and its basis”. While much attention has been paid to the mechanism of deradicalisation and reintegration, communities have been hammering on compelling evidence establishing the potentiality of the process as an effective counterterrorism. This is expected to make the host communities feel secured with the repentant sect, especially confidence on the ceasefire and the signer of reattach. It is against this backdrop; the study conceptually examined the socio economic effect of deradicalisation and reintegration of Boko Haram combatants and suggests policy ideas to effectively bring an everlasting peace to the Northeast of Nigeria and the country as a whole.

Objective of the Study

- i. Examine the extent of the policy of deradicalisation and reintegration on Boko Haram insurgency in the North Eastern Nigeria.
- ii. Identify the effect of non- military approach to eradicate insurgency in the North Eastern Nigeria.

Literature Review

Early stage of Boko Haram

According to Iyekekpolo (2018) based on state – centred theory, the rise of Boko Haram militancy could be attributed to the dealings of fractionalized political elites, who in their jostle for power and domination facilitate local militia groups like Boko Haram that have evolved to an international terrorist organization with captured territories known as a caliphate. More to the argument, the country couldn’t harmonise these elites who are different along ethno-religious fault lines. This problem is now being complicated due to the corruption

ravaging *the military* (Onuoha et al 2020). In addition to the above, the prevalent pillage of public resources and the ineffective management of affairs trigger the sectarian violence (Olofinbiyi and Steyn, 2018).

Putting the above as a background, the Boko Haram insurgency became an issue of security concern in 2009 when the security forces clamped down on the sect’s members that later resulted in the extrajudicial killing of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf in police custody and hundreds of members (Agbibo 2013).

Sequence to the clampdown, the group became disorder and went into hiding and then reappear in 2010 as a deadly terrorist group. They came up with sophisticated and global links with international terrorist groups such as Islamic State (IS), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Shabab among others. They were declared a terrorist organization by the United States in 2013 (Campbell, 2013). Along this period, it has caused various degree of destruction on the civilians and military in the northeast and neighbouring states within Nigeria. Though, the root cause and continuation of the terrorism have been traced to be closely related to religious extremism, poor condition of living, state failure, institutional weakness of the security forces among others.

Consequently, it becomes problem to the peace and stability beyond northeast region of Nigeria and the Lake Chad region.

Theoretical Framework

Symbolic interaction theory of society was established by an American philosopher professor George Herbert Mead in a book titled “Mind, Self, and Society in his name”. The theory seeks to understand human relationship with their society by focusing on the symbols that help us give meaning to the experiences in our life. He argues that the meaning we ascribe to the world around us depends on our interactions with people, ideas, and event.

Basically, it focuses on how social interactions and people assign meanings to things around them based on interpretation of their interactions with others.

This idea was in tandem with Max Weber's philosophy of social action theory or symbolic interactionism. The theory believes that society is a product of human activity and society action should be the focus of study when analyzing a society.

Application of Symbolic Interaction theory of Society to the Study

This concept states that when communication flow between the government and the governed, the North Eastern community of Nigeria stand the chance of better understanding of each other. Symbolic interaction negate the structuralist view that society exists independently of the people that make it up and rather argued that a society is a product of social actions.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research in a pure qualitative approach. This secondary data were sourced from relevant textbooks, journals, internet, government documents, and publication by international organisations and agencies.

Conceptual Clarification

Government intervention before operation safe corridor

Operation safe corridor was in charge of the deradicalisation and reintegration program. Before its formation, government had been responded through the Nigeria Police via roadblocks, arrest and other law enforcement strategies to curb the operational spread of the group. When the operation got to a stage in 2009, Operation Flush came into execution in identifying and arrest insurgents in the areas of northeast and was later replaced with Operation Restore Order within two years (Gana et al. 2018). Due to the tactfulness of the conflict, a Special Military Joint Task Force (SMJTF) comprising of Nigeria Police Force, the Department of State Security, the Nigerian Immigration Service and the Defence Intelligence Agency was created in 2011 (Onapajo, 2017; Nnam et al 2018).

Later, a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) encompassing vigilante groups, hunters and youths known as "Kato da gora" (men with stick) from the conflict zones also came into operation in 2013 (Agbibo, 2020). Subsequently, series of military

formation has been conducted under different codenames; Operation Boyona Operation Ruwan Wuta II, Operation Gama Aiki, Operation Deep Punch I and II and Operation Zaman Lafiya. Additionally, Operation Lafiya Dole was also introduced to decimate Boko Haram insurgent, free hostage and discover bomb making factories (Vanguard, 2017) and was subsequently replaced with Operation Hadin Kai in April 2021 with the aim of promoting efficiency in counterinsurgency operation in Northeast Nigeria. On January 7 2021, the Nigerian Army added Operation Tuka Takaibango to the existing military operations with the view of adding strength to Operation Hadin Kai tackling evolving menace arising from continued existence of Boko Haram, its faction; ISWAP and their hideouts (Team Premium, 2021). Later, a regional military formation tagged Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was created in 1998 comprising of militaries from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin Republic (Bala and Tar, 2021; Varin, 2015) to contain the internationalization of the sect and the threats it posed to the peace and stability of the Lake Chad region.

The National Assembly of Nigeria passed the Terrorism (Prohibition and Prevention) Bill 2011 into law to statutorily strengthen security forces in the crackdown against the terrorists (Udeh, 2013). The extension of government policy to cater for the vulnerable population brought about The North East Development Commission (NEDC) and later Operation Safe Corridor Program (OSCP). The Operation Safe Corridor Program is a non-kinetic approach of 2013 that came from various calls by the northerners to the federal government on the need to address the Boko Haram menace politically and socio-economically.

Advent of Operation Safe Corridor

The failure of the military option has brought about the relevance of deradicalisation and reintegration strategy, tagged Operation Safe Corridor. It was conceived under the general framework of counter-terrorism operations with aim of deradicalising, rehabilitating, and reintegrating ex-fighters of Boko Haram (Felbab-Brown 2018).

To understand deradicalisation, we must first

comprehend radicalization. Radicalization is simply the process by which people develop a mindset that becomes amenable to extremist views over a period [Neumann, 2003,p. 874]. Also, deradicalisation which is the Nigerian government's ultimate objectives, is a wholly complicated subject and literature on it has generally avoided providing a working definition [Hafal, 2017, p, 124]. As a result, it has been used interchangeably with anti-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation. In the absence of a generally accepted definition, it could simply be the reverse process of radicalization [Hafal,2017]. Also, it might merely be an effort aimed at preventing radicalization from taking place [Bjorgo/Horgan, 2009, p. 3.

This process of deradicalisation and reintegration as a political settlement is to allow the demobilized and disarmed sect get back to the community under a peaceful alignment. The settlement mechanisms came under Operation Safe Corridor. A small intergovernmental program aimed at rehabilitating low risk 'repentant' Boko haram fighters. As an established means for redeeming the image of repentant sect, an eligible one undergo several weeks of religious, re-education, psychosocial support and vocational training at a military-run facility in Gombe and Maiduguri as rehabilitation center. The groups under this arrangement are the former Boko haram members as well as those who had been abducted by the group or were arrested for living in an area controlled by the group.

Meanwhile the scope and nature of negotiating the terrorist back to the community were unclear, and this had been a major concern before the host communities. At the beginning the process of screening the low level fighters and low-risk women and children previously affiliated with book haram by the military were been criticized, it was said to lack transparency ie the criteria for screening detainees by the military are blurred. Thousands of suspects remain in military detained, held, without charges and often in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

Though under the system of deradicalisation and reintegration, suspected Boko Haram members captured during military operation are subjected to an internal military screening process, and those

deemed to pose security risk are placed in military detention. Yet the screening criteria and evidence used to detain these suspects are not clear before the populace. Various human rights groups have criticized the military's for being too indiscriminate.

Socio-Economic Effect of Deradicalisation and Reintegration on the Northeastern Nigerian

Conflict of Eligibility

In the DRR contexts peace agreement lay out by the military for eligible reintegrated sect are not clear before the host communities. This absence of agreement means it is not easy to determine who should be eligible for rehabilitation on what criteria and on what terms. Bear in mind that, some people who are unfortunate to be in the captured areas by the sect are refer to as low-risk repentant as against the light weapon carriers. However, the unwillingness of these communities' leaders to explore the prospect of dialogue with Boko Haram ranged from fear for their safety and security, and dilemma of appearing to know who the members of the insurgents are and where they can be found [Nwankpa, 2017, p, 98]. This is the reason why the host community opposed to the arrangement, unless it provides for the victims of the conflicts.

President Muhammadu Buhari announce at the period that the 'government is ever ready to accept the unconditional laying-down of arms by any members of the Boko Haram' [premium times, march23, 2018]. The pronouncement by Mr. President triggered push back from civil society groups, who argue that a general amnesty will perpetuate impunity.

Public Disorder and Opressive Arrangement

Villagers saw the treatment offered to the ex-combatants as preferential while the interest of the affected villagers is suffering unexpected neglect. The situation leads to oppression, misunderstanding and socio disorder among villagers and the operator of RDD.

Action of socio disorder came up in some host communities in form of punishment on the repentant group, a vengeance for their criminal act. The low-risk detainees that are expected to be reintegrated

back to the IDP camps were held up even in some state like, Gombe facility for after completing deradicalisation program out of fear that they might face retaliatory violence upon release. According to the kukah centre and conciliation Resources for example, women and girls who were abducted or lived under Boko Haram strongholds often face suspicion and distrust upon their returned. In similar situation, when one have been noticed with Boko Haram experience such person faced greater hostility as they often assumed them to have been voluntary and active combatants.

Retribution

The process of getting repentant militant back to the community was exploited by the sect. It was discovered that, certain people among the group insincerely embraced reintegration and deradicalisation. They wanton series of attack on host villagers, Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camp, and some time on military base. This is the reason, Omenma et al (2020), noted that ex-combatant who repented and subsequently released back to the society re-joined the sect due to their incapacity to reintegrate effectively.

Recommendations

This study contributes to the growing literature on Boko Haram's insurgency by inquiring into the socio-economic effect of deradicalisation and reintegration of Boko Haram in the northeast Nigeria. The recommendation is of two fold, one is basic on adequate and self-explanatory kinetic approach and secondly, the non-kinetic method in managing insurgency. Though, there has been a combination of both approaches to truncate the continuation of the threats and their manifestations, but this time

around, it must be serious and adequate. While the kinetic approach is expected to focus power on supersize administration to harness common interest by means of smarter technology in certain areas of; using computers to discover crime, mobile phone location to track down miscreants, armed drones, micro drones, and armed robots to fight on the battle field alongside regular soldiers. Series of unmanned grand vehicles can also be established to detect explosives. A well-structured robot can as well save our uniform men from danger. Also, the robots can do things that people find impossible, such as lifting tanks, surviving explosions, and surviving for days on end without food or water.

The non-kinetic warfare is a method of managing terrorists or insurgency by means other than direct military actions. This is a sincere and holistic approach that make an opponent surrender psychologically, this further stress that, opponent must not be beg, or call upon before surrender. A classic example can be traced to the era of the 1967 civil war in Nigeria, where the government changed the country currency and supply of food before the opposition. India government also explored non-kinetic approach against Malaysia's undiplomatic comments on India's internal affairs. Same mechanism can be adopted before the said bandit, thereby, reducing their capacity of operation. Other recommendations such as renewing partnership among neighboring countries, localization of efforts through advocacy, entrepreneurship programs and other youth engagement should be encouraged. If the above is adequately and efficiently used, it will give decline in the supply of miscreants within the society especially the North Eastern Nigeria.

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