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COMBATING ARMED BANDITRY AND TERRORISM IN NIGERIA: THE IMPERATIVE OF EXPLORING PEACE EDUCATION OPTION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Over the years, terrorism and armed banditry have become two of the most gruesome threats to lives and property in Nigeria. This has hindered progress towards sustainable development targets, exacerbated poverty and worsened human security index across the country. While the Nigerian State have had to deploy kinetic force involving the use of brute military force towards combating this menace, less attention has been paid to the non-kinetic approach to peace building. The paper adopted qualitative methodology anchored and descriptive research design; and used textual analysis of data which entails examining and interpreting the relevant texts to uncover the underlying themes, messages and the context of their creation as well as their application to the study. It adopted the structural functional theory as its theoretical framework. Findings of the study revealed that high rate of terrorism and armed banditry have hampered sustainable development in Nigeria; the root causes of conflict in the country stem largely from economic deprivation drawn from the lack of access to means of livelihood property and that intensive peace education as a tool for peace building has largely been side-stepped by various tiers of government and the civil society organizations over the years. The paper recommended for the application of a mixture of both kinetic and non-kinetic mechanism for countering terrorism and armed banditry by disorienting the perpetrators and the wider citizenry from engaging in the act through the use of peace education techniques.
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Keywords: Armed Banditry, Terrorism, Sustainable Development, Peace Education

Introduction

The twin problems of Banditry and Boko Haram terrorism have become two of the most dreaded security threats in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern states of the country. Describing the dreaded nature of banditry in Northern Nigeria, Auwal (2021) stressed that there are approximately a hundred and twenty (120) bandit gangs working with 60,000 AK-47 rifles in 6 northern states in Nigeria, with its origin

traceable to Zamfara State. These group of armed criminal elements have laid siege on the region and engaged in violent crimes notably armed robbery, cattle rustling, gangsterism, thievery, marauding and mass execution of defenceless civilians. The membershipstrength of the group doubled in 2013, when renegades from the Niger Republic, Mali, and Chad, majority of whom are Tuaregs with ties to Sahelian insurgents joined the group and carried out illegal gold mining and transborder crimes in the North (Yahaya & Bello, 2020).

On the other hand, the emergence of the insurgent militant group called Boko Haram remains a threat to the survival and the cohesiveness of Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan countries including Chad, Cameroon, Benin and Niger respectively. The evolution of Boko Haram has painted the image of the Giant of Africa, Nigeria, black as the group goes on killing spree, launching rampant and deadly terrorist acts that have claimed the lives of many Nigerians and caused widespread fear across and beyond Nigeria. Boko Haram is only one of many groups that have committed atrocious acts with impunity. Boko Haram is an Islamic Religious sect that has been in existence way before the beginning of their brutal politically-motivated attacks in Nigeria. The group opposes not only Western Education but Western culture and modern science as well. The founder of the group Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, however vowed that "the war which is yet to start and will continue for long if political and educational systems were not changed (Lanre & Shaibu, 2020).

Increasingly, Boko Haram has become a transnational terrorist movement. Its activities have continued to penetrate the fabrics of the society in and outside Nigeria. The permeating nature of the activities of Boko Haram provoked the concern of governments of the West African region. For example, prior to the formation of the multinational force, the Chadian President, Idriss Déby had in 2012, raised concern about the potentials of Boko Haram in terrorizing the entire Lake Chad Basin, if not contained, hence the formation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The actions of the jihadist movement have led to the disruption of communities and livelihoods in the basin area; have created refugee flows and internal displacement, putting populations at risk of food insecurity and creating urgent humanitarian needs (Ahmed, 2018). The Paris summit in May 2014 gave another push to enhance regional cooperation in the fight against Boko Haram, by means of coordinated patrols and border surveillance, pooling intelligence and information exchange (Zamfir 2015). The implications of Boko Haram's operation include the slowdown of the country's economic growth and development, worsened unemployment, food scarcity due to the inability of traders to transport food from the North to the South due to insecurity reasons, dented Nigeria's public image, increased fear and a false sense of security, recourse to self-help by people and citizens on most occasions such as the emergence of "Civilian JTF in Borno", loss of life and damage to properties, and so forth. It is against this backdrop that the present study examines the imperative of combating terrorism and armed banditry by exploring the option of peace education towards sustainable development in Nigeria.

Basic Conceptualizations

- **Boko Haram**

The term Boko Haram in Hausa word means "Western education is forbidden."Boko Haram Terrorist Group: is a Jihadist group based in north-eastern Nigeria,also active in Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon. The group is officially called"Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad" which is an Arabic term meaning"People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad" (Chotia, 2015). Similarly, Obamwonyi and Owenvbiugie (2015) noted that the Boko Haram sect, the insurgent and terrorist group which is mainly based in the north eastern part of Nigeria, started its heinous crime in 2009, the year it was widely known and gained relevance. But the group has been in existence before this time. The original name of Boko Haram is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnai Lidda'awati Wat Jihad, meaning "people committed to the propagation of the prophet's Teachings and Jihad". Boko Haram is also commonly known as "Western Education is a Sin". Some analysts and commentators are of the view that the deadly sect has been in existence before 2002, and that the sect has been operating with different names, namely, "the Nigerian Taliban; and Yusuffiyya".

Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) cited in Mbah and Nwangwu (2014) opined that beyond ethno-religious explanations however, Boko Haram is a terrorist group that romances with some desperate politicians in Northern Nigeria. The sect enjoys effective support from some well-to-do individuals, religious leaders, allies, admirers of their ideology and highly placed politicians in the North who claim to be Nigerians but are clandestinely working against the state. Mbah and Nwangwu (2014) noted that the Boko Haram group has transformed from a sect of Islamic fanatics to one with the overwhelming support of disgruntled politicians and other paid thugs who find the sect's ideology appealing. It is now widely accepted as a destructive political tool with a cosmetic pretension to religiosity. The sect has provided a safe haven for disgruntled, deprived, desperate, frustrated and opportunistic politicians who were dislocated in the political configuration within the terror-infested states and the country at large.

According to Onuoha& Oyewole (2019), the emergence of Boko Haram can be traced to 1995, when Abubakar Lawan established the Allusunna wal'jama'ah hijra sect in the University of Maiduguri. Lawan then left the country for studies in Saudi Arabia at the University of Medina and since then nothing has been heard about him. The sect gradually developed, spreading to Adamawa, Bauchi, and Yobe, and eventually could be found not only in many parts of northern Nigeria but also in the neighbouring countries of Chad, Cameroon and Niger. The sect continued to move about with its slogan that Western education and civilisation are sinful. The sect has concentrated on destroying government establishments because it believes that the government imposes Western education on it, and it blames the government for not managing the resources of the state for the benefit of the people.

From the going, observed Obamwonyi & Owenvbiugie (2015) maintained that the Boko Haram group is a security threat to Nigeria. Its first known violent attack, in which approximately 30 people were killed, was on local government installations, police stations as well as public buildings in Yobe State on 24 December 2003. Similarly, Okoli & Loryer (2014) noted that in a bid to stop these attacks on police stations and other government buildings, the government of Nigeria in July 2009 launched a counter-attack against the insurgents which resulted in at least 700 deaths, mostly members of the group, and including the group leader Mohammed Yusuf, who was killed while in police custody. argued that because its activities have not come to the open, it was not known. What brought the sect to the world and public glare was the extra judicial killing of their leader, Mohammed Yusuf, which triggered anger and vengeance among the sect. Boko Haram was founded by two persons, namely, Mohammed Ali and Mohammed Yusuf. Mohammed Yusuf started an armed insurrection on what was known as the Yobe Taliban. Mohammed Yusuf migrated to Maiduguri and started his preaching, campaigns and recruitment drive.

According to Selkida (2009) cited in Obamwonyi and Owenvbiugie (2015), in early 2002, Yusuf was seen by many as a likely heir to the renowned late Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam in Maiduguri on account of his brilliance and closeness to the late renowned scholar. But all that changed shortly after one late Mohammed Alli approached the late Yusuf with reasons to boycott democracy, civil service and western oriented schools. The late Yusuf then disengaged his service with the Yobe State government. In a 2006 press release signed by the sect's Shura (Consultative) Council, they stated that Islam permits them to subsist under a modern government like Nigeria but has explicitly prohibited them from joining or supporting such governments in so far as their systems, structures and institutions contain elements contradictory to core Islamic principles and beliefs (Selkida, 2009).

Onuoha & Oyewole (2019) are of the view that members of the militant group pay daily levies to their leaders, thus providing a financial base for BH in addition to loot from attacks on banks, ransoms from kidnapping and donations from political sponsors and other organisations within and outside Nigeria. For example, in 2007 Mohammed Yusuf and Mohammed Bello Damagun were arraigned in a Federal High Court at the Federal Capital Territory Abuja for receiving monies from Al-Qaeda operatives. It was alleged that Damagun for his part received a total of US$300 000 from Al-Qaeda to recruit and train Nigerians in Mauritania for terrorism. Similarly, Yusuf reportedly received monies from Al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan to recruit terrorists who would attack the residences of foreigners, particularly Americans living in Nigeria. Stated that despite this government crackdown, the group which appeared to have gone into hibernation re-emerged in more deadly and highly militarized form, orchestrating a large scale prison break in September 2010 that saw the release of 700 prisoners, including over 100 of its own members. The group's attacks have since increased substantially in frequency, reach and lethality, and are now occurring almost daily in a majority of northern states in Nigeria. The increased militarisation of the Boko Haram group, resulting in frequent attacks on both civilians and foreign nationals in Nigeria, has caused a large dent to the nation's image. Indeed, its citizens

and the international communities now interact with the state in an extremely cautious manner. Also, no investor would want to invest in a terrorist-prone zone where the watchword is insecurity, thus, creating a generalised sense of insecurity in the country and beyond due to acts of terrorism.

Dami (2021) noted that a number of different theories have been advanced as to why Boko Haram appeared and to what factors one can attribute its success. These can be grouped into five major categories, which will be summarized here:

1. Poverty and underdevelopment of the Muslim north
2. Islamic radicalism
3. Kanuri tribal particularism
4. As a standard African Guerrilla movement
5. As a result of climate change or the desiccation of the Sahel.

Far and away the most popular explanation for the rise of Boko Haram, is the issue of poverty and underdevelopment. Both of these are certainly characteristic of northern and especially northeastern Nigeria. These regions of Nigeria at independence (1960) had been only loosely administered by the British colonial authorities and had not approximated the southern economic and educational development. Although subsequent Nigerian governments have frequently been dominated by northerners, usually in the form of military rule (ending in 1998), the north still lags considerably behind the south in development.

- **Banditry**

The concept of banditry is vague. However, some definitions are useful. Accordingly, it is argued that the concept has been changing over the time, space and circumstances. A bandit in the 19th century Europe and America was seen as a freedom fighter whose aim was partly to ensure the emancipation of the downtrodden from upper class or colonized over the colonizer. In pre-industrial societies, peasants see bandits differently from the state not as outlaws, hoodlums and miscreants but as ‘‘avengers’’. However, a bandit in traditional setting is entirely opposite to that of America and Europe, the former specialized in armed robbery and other related crime (Madubuegwu*, e tal,* 2021). Similarly, Okoli and Okpakele, (2014) cited in Ogbu, *e tal* (2017) defined armed banditry as occurrence or prevalence of armed robbery or violent crime. It involves the use of force, or threat to that effect, to intimidate a person with the intent to rob, rape or kill. Banditry is a crime against persons. In a broader perspective to accentuate the motive and peculiarity of banditry in Nigeria, Dami (2021) opined that banditry refers to armed violence driven principally by the criminal intent to steal and plunder. It is motivated by the quest for economic accumulation. The victims are individuals and communities with material valuables. The most common examples of rural banditry in Nigeria are armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling and village raids. Rural banditryin the northwestern states of Zamfara, Kaduna and Kastina has reached alarming heights in recent years. Bandits terrorize villages with impunity. They have actually settled in the Zamfara state, setting up fortified enclaves in the hinterland and on the frontiers, from where they

plot and carry out their operations. Dami's submission on banditry showed discernible attributes of terrorism. In attempt to establish the affinity between armed banditry and terrorism, Aminu, *e tal* (2021), argued that the bandits and terrorists share same attribute and exhibit equally the same nuances. They inflict bodily harm, inquiry or death on their victims amidst other socio-economic dislocations such as rape, captivity, demand for ransom and assault.

Furthermore, Okoli and Loryer (2014) argued that although, the causal factors for banditry and terrorism differ, both phenomenon locally thrived on exploiting the fragile or weak state capacity evident in human rights abuses, inequality, poor service provision and unemployment. While banditry, predominantly in the North-West contrasts the predominance of violent extremism in the North-East, both constitute a common thread of the overlapping nature and characteristics of organized crime as well as its mirrored impact on peace and human security in the affected state. Beyond this, it further poses significant challenges to focused strategies to counter violent extremism which increasingly requires broader initiatives to address organized crime. For instance, cattle rustling attributed to bandits are also a strategy applied by Boko Haram to support their operations. In addition, robbery and kidnapping constitute a dominant criminal enterprise that is similar in the operations of bandits and extremist groups.

More so, Mbah, P. & Nwangwu (2014) also stressed that another commonality is the tactical use of difficult and often inaccessible operational terrains by state security such as the use of Sambisa forest by Boko Haram and the reported use of Falgore, Kamara, Kunduma, Sububu, Kamuku and Kiyanbana forests by bandits. It offers opportunity for quick retreat and buffer for their attacks within the axis of their operations. In the light of this, the exigencies of banditry, insurgency and counter insurgency have transformed the forests areas into highly militarized area. Emphatically, banditry in North-West is a serious threat to national security. Security as a concept has several strands embellishing in political, economic, financial, social etc. However, the most significant is the national security. Accordingly, Ighodalo (2012), indicated that national security implies the appropriation and deployment of state apparatus of coercive force to deal with situation of crisis, nationally or internationally. Human security involves protecting the citizenry from hunger, disease, poverty, unemployment, natural disasters, etc. however, all these can only take place where there is peace and stability in the polity. Basically, national security underscores the essence of state territorial safety and defence. In other words, restive action or activity that creates climate of terror and fear among the civil population and against the institutions of the state is a potential national security threat (Kabuiru, 2020). t. Again, violent action of non-state actors or state actors that threatens lives and lawful activities of the civil population is also a national security question. The emergence and onslaught of banditry against unarmed civilians, government establishments and security personnel is indeed an insurrectional action against territorial sovereignty. In this regard, critical assessment of the severity of this threat is pertinent and insightful in this discourse to identify the underlying causes, intensity and prospects.

Overview of Operational Strategies Adopted by the Nigeria State in Combating Boko Haram Terrorism

It is imperative to note that the military offensive against the Boko Haram notorious rampage began in 2015 following the deployment of the Multi-National Joint Task Force, and 2016 when the forces became fully operational. But prior to that, the security responses to the Boko Haram were largely unilateral military offensives from countries of the Lake Chad basin community, especially the Nigerian Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and the Special Joint Task Force (JTF). The CJTF is a local youth and vigilantes (Yan gora) armed with Dane guns, machetes, and sticks that mobilized themselves to complement the counterinsurgency effort of the Special Joint Task force (JFT) against Boko Haram.

The Special Joint Task Force (JTF) on the other hand was made up of 8,000 soldiers deployed to the restive region of Northeast Nigeria in a direct military offensive. Sequel to the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), the following strategic counter-insurgency military operations against Boko Haram terrorists have been taken:

a. Operation Lafiya Dole

Operation Lafiya dole was launched in 2015 to replace Operation Zaman Lafiya as part of the Nigerian front in the multi-national coalition against a common enemy, Boko Haram. The Hausa name Lafiya dole can be translated to mean 'peace by all means or peace by force'. According to Assanvo (2016)., Operation Lafiya Dole is the army's code name for the war on terror in Nigeria's northeast. It comprises both Nigerian troops, and troops of the MNJTF. It is the umbrella that covers other military exercises against Boko Haram in the northeast Nigeria, which includes other specialized operations like: Operation Thunder strike, Operation Crackdown, Operation Rescue Finale, Operation Gama Aiki, Operation Deep punch, Operation Safe Corridor, and most recently, Operation Last Hold. The Theatre command of this operation is located in Baga, Maiduguri; northeast Nigeria with Maj.-Gen. Rogers Nicholas as the commandant.Also, Operation Lafiya Dole, aside holding tactical defensive positions to block the insurgents from access to logistics, has also gone ahead to insert Mobile Strike Teams in the theatre of operations to effectively patrol localities as well as seek out and neutralize the insurgents from their hideouts. Operation Lafiya Dole has further carried out massive assault against the Boko Haram position in the Sambisa forest in collaboration with Operation Thunder Strike of the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) and the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF).

b. Operation Crackdown

The military onslaught tagged 'Operation Crackdown' was launched to support the military gain of the Operation Lafiya Dole and clear the remnants of Boko Haram terrorists out of the Sambisa forest and Nigeria's borders with Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. It comprised the combination of ground forces assault, Nigerian Air Force (NAF) Jets provision for combat air support and monitoring of the operation

directly by the Acting General Officer Commanding 7 Division, Brigadier General Victor Ezugwu on board of the Air Force reconnaissance aircraft. It also involves a special clearance and rescue operations within the Sambisa forest". The responsibility of Operation Crackdown is to flush the Boko Haram out of their hiding enclaves and bases. The operation comprised the whole of northeast Nigeria, Lake Chad islands and other Boko Haram hideouts within the Lake Chad region.

c. Operation Gama Aiki

The launch of Operation Gama Aiki by the MNJTF was aimed at completing the job of clearing all remnants of Boko Haram insurgents in its area of responsibility. In fact, Gama Aiki is targeted at terrorists fleeing "Operation Crackdown." The intensified military offensive of Operation Crackdown has caused massive movement of Boko Haram Terrorists escaping from Sambisa Forest towards Northern part of Borno state border with Niger, Cameroon and Lake Chad Islands. But these decimated, degraded, and outnumbered members of Boko Haram running for their lives still posed a grave threat. Essentially 'Operation Gama Aiki' is an expanded part of the 'Operation Lafiya Dole' aimed at ensuring that the terrorists displaced from their hideout in the Sambisa forest, Camp Zeiro and other places are prevented from establishing another sanctuaries and enclaves in the Lake Chad region. Operation Gama Aiki involved the MNJTF troops and National Air and ground forces from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroun and Niger Republics(Assanvo, 2016).

d. Operation Deep Punch

The MNJTF in its fight against the insurgents utilized large scale military operations alongside the national units of the relevant countries towards flushing out the Boko haram insurgents. Therefore, the Nigerian Army in collaboration with the Multi-National Joint Task Force has launched Operation Deep Punch to clear Sambisa Forest of the remnants of already weakened insurgents to pave way for normalcy in the zone so that socio-economic activities can take place without fear of attacks. This operation was launched to complement the efforts made by other operations in different parts of the Lake Chad basin. The scope of the operation spanned beyond the traditional Areas of Responsibility to include states such as Kogi. According to the then Nigerian chief of army staff, Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai, "the climax of different military exercises and operations was the 'Operation Deep Punch 2' in the North East, which led to the fall of the Sambisa Forest. "The exercise has notably gone a long way in curbing and reducing criminality and other crimes across the country, in the border towns of the Northeast.

e. Operation Safe Corridor

The launching of Operation Corridor Safe by the Nigerian military and forces of the joint coalition was a strategic departure from the kinetic military offensive that has characterized the counterinsurgency campaign of the multi-national joint task force. Akinbi (2015) established that the program for repentant Boko Haram members who were ready to give up their arms and embrace peace. The focus of the

operation was geared towards deradicalization, rehabilitating and re-integration of the insurgents back into normal life in the society. The repentant insurgents in the camp were taken through different vocational training so that they could be useful to themselves and be empowered to contribute meaningfully to the economic growth of Nigeria. The Defense Headquarters (DHQ) appealed to other recalcitrant terrorist members that were and are still carrying arms against their fellow citizens in the region to repent and benefit from numerous opportunities offered by the camp. The DHQ stated further that the final onslaught against the remnant group of the terrorists would continue unabated and would not relent until the power of evil forces in the North East is completely neutralized. The DHQ further urged the reluctant Boko Haram members to see wisdom in surrendering now, thereby saving themselves from imminent calamity that is about to befall them in the event of military mop-up if they continue in their unwholesome acts.

f. Operation Amni Fakat

In April 2018, MNJTF launched Operation AMNI FAKAT, which aims to continue attacking Boko Haram's capabilities and consolidate the gains of Operation RUWAN KADA. Despite these setbacks, the threat posed by Boko Haram made the MNJTF a more applicable and effective tool for fighting terrorism at the regional level. Cameroon, Niger and Benin improved their coordination and operation reach significantly.MNJTF implemented several counterterrorism strategies aimed at preventing the territorial expansion of Boko Haram in an attempt to reclaim territories earlier captured by Boko Haram and to restrict its ability to fund operation (Akinbi, 2015).The MNJTF initiated a "five-year trade blockade" on the "Dikwa, Gamboru-Ngala, and Maiduguri" road in attempt to stop the illicit movement of products across the Lake Chad region affected the financial strength of Boko Haram in terms of funding and expanding its territorial base. The MNJTF further banned the production, marketing, and distribution of smoked fish, cattle, and other agricultural produce in the "Diffa Area" and other parts of Lake Chad to control the flow of cash to Boko Haram (Akum et al., 2019).

Table 1: Military weapons/hardware deployed by the MNJTF in the assault against Boko Haram Terrorists

S/N	Weapon/Equipment	Category	Country of Origin	Sample Image
1	Heckler and Koch MP5	Submachine gun	Germany	
2	Beryl M762	Assault Rifle	Poland	
3	OBJ-006	Assault Rifle	Soviet Union (Russia) soviet and Nigeria	

4	NR1	Battle Rifle	Belgium and Nigeria	
5	FB Mini-Bery	Compact assault r (carbine)	Poland	
6	Browning Hi-Power	Bullpup assault rifle	Israel	
7	Alex-338	Sniper rifle	Poland	
8	T-54/55	Main Battle Tank	Soviet Union (Russia)	
9	Vickers Tank	Main Battle Tank	United Kingdom	
10	Panhard VBL	Scout Armored Car	France	
11	KrAZ-6322	Utility Truck	Ukraine	
12	Bozena5 2016	Unmanned ground antitank land mines and IED removal Assistance	Slovakia	
13	Toyota Hilux and Inno Hilux	Light Truck, and weaponized Jeep	Japan and Nigeria	
14	Mi-35 attack helicopter	helicopter	United States	
15	ATR-42 surveillance aircraft	Surveillance aircraft	United States	

Sources: Doukhan (2020) and compiled by author.

The aggressive activities of Boko Haram in North Eastern Nigeria have not only affected the security dynamics in Nigeria, also affected by the group's uprisings is the insecurity it also constitutes to governments of Niger, Chad and Cameroon in the Lake Chad Basin. Boko Haram fighters have made communities around the Lake Chad basin their hideouts and recruitment grounds. Military alliances are an important strategy for curbing threats and the MNJTF as a military alliance has contributed in no small way in combating Boko Haram terrorism within the Lake Chad sub-region. There is no doubt that since the establishment of the MNJTF, it has recorded some degree of success in the fight against terrorism

within the sub-region. The MNJTF in Nigeria has so far succeeded in dislodging the Boko Haram group to an extent that their capabilities to launch attack on military garrisons, police stations, and other very sensitive areas as it was at the peak of its attacks has been drastically reduced.

The deployment of these sophisticated lethal weapons and equipment have help the multinational coalition forces to easily identify and strike Boko Haram's positions around the Sambisa forest and lake Chad islands. It enables them conduct a simultaneous military offensives and patrols around the borders using surveillance and communications equipment. Equally, the sophistication of the MNJTF trainings and equipment has made it easy to identify some pockets of Boko Haram enclaves and hideouts, and respond with appropriate force. As succinctly capturedby the International Crisis Group (2020), with the acquisition of improvised explosive device (IED) and land mines detecting gadgets and equipment, the MNJTF was able to solve the long overdue issue of land mines hindering them access to the Sambisa forest. The night vision equipment donated by the Turkish government has since improved the quality of operation, enabling them to haunt down the sect even in the night. The MNJTF operations have continued to dislodge the Boko Haram from their hideouts and flushed them out of a vast majority of territories hitherto under their control. Majority of these offensives were concentrated in the Sector 3 of the MNJTF, and its theatre command based in Baga, north east Nigeria codenamed "Operation Lafiya Dole" which covers the Nigerian 7 brigade and subdivided into 4 main sections that correspond to 4 battalions and covers the Extreme North Eastern deep into the Sambisa forest**.**

Figure 1: States Largely Threatened by Bandit Attaacks in Nigeria



Source: Omoniyi (2023).

From the figure 1 above, it is observable that states in the North West of Nigeria such as Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina and Niger are bedeviled with grave attacks by armed bandits. As Auwal (2021) aptly captured, there are approximately a hundred and twenty (120) bandit gangs working with 60,000 AK-47 rifles in 6 northern states in Nigeria, with its origin traceable to Zamfara State. These group of armed criminal elements have laid siege on the region and engaged in violent crimes notably armed robbery, cattle rustling, gangsterism, thievery, marauding and mass execution of defenceless civilians. The membership strength of the group doubled in 2013, when renegades from the Niger Republic, Mali, and Chad, majority of whom are Tuaregs with ties to Sahelian insurgents joined the group and carried out illegal gold mining and transborder crimes in the North(Garba; Doyin & Tmedi, 2021).

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative and documentary research approach by gathering necessary information through government policy statements and publications such as online journals, articles and texts while the descriptive research design was employed and textual analysis was utilized for data analysis with which the variables associated with the subject matter of terrorism and armed banditry as well as their occurrences and implications for peace, security and development over time were analysed.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted the relative deprivation theory as its theoretical framework of analysis. The relative deprivation theory was propounded by Dollard et al (1939); Davies (1962) and Gurr (1970) as part of scholarly efforts to understand and link socio-political and economic inequalities in the society to rebellions and insurrections. As individual and group-based theory of conflict and aggression, the relative deprivation theory upholds that when expectation outstrips achievement regardless of the absolute levels of economic consumption or the provision of political rights, frustration is generated. Thus, social psychologists have underscored the fact that at the heart of every protest, agitation, aggression and violence are grievances and frustration, be it experience of illegitimate inequality, feeling of relative deprivation, perceived and real marginalization, feeling of injustice, moral indignation about some state of affairs, or suddenly imposed grievances. According to Ijaiya (2000) cited in Udoh et al (2018:170) aptly captured the description of relative deprivation in a five-dimension matrix that culminates to grave threat to human security and violence. Thus, this arises from:

i. Personal and physical deprivation experienced in as a result of health, nutritional, literacy and educational disability and lack of self-confidence;

ii. Economic deprivation drawn from the lack of access to property, income, assets, factors of production and finance.

iii. Social deprivation as a result of denial from full participation in social, political and economic activities.

iv. Cultural deprivation in terms of lack of access to values, beliefs, knowledge, information and attitude which deprive people of control of their own destinies;

v. Political deprivation in terms of lack of political voice to participate in decision making that affects lives.

The relative deprivation theory is germane for the analysis of this paper owning to the fact that the rising wave of armed insurrections, banditry and terrorism that are at various times carried out against the Nigeria state and its citizens are traceable to bad governance, economic frustration, political exclusion, social disorganization as well as perceived and real marginalization by aggrieved elements and groups in the society. This is further worsened by poverty and joblessness which poses grave threat to human security. For instance, Niger Delta militants, the armed robbery, kidnapping, crude oil theft, sea piracy, child trafficking, Boko Haram insurgency and secessionist agitations are as a result of frustration being experienced by the Nigerian people in the hands of the country's leaders.

Combating Terrorism and Armed Banditry in Nigeria through Peace Education

As noted by Galtung in his master piece "Violence, Peace and Peace Research" published in 1969; and Harris's work "Peace Education" published in 1988, it is not enough to strive for negative peace otherwise referred to as the cessation of violence, the absence of organized and collective violence between people or groups, hence negative peace according to Galtung is insufficient. They rather stressed that to create a peaceful world, humans have to strive for positive peace, a condition brought about by establishing standards of justice, human rights, and sustainable development in communities. It is further stressed that for peace education to be realized, emphasis must be placed on not just stopping the presence of violence in order to create a positive classroom learning environment but also establishing within students' minds (in this case the Nigerian citizenry) a commitment to peace principles (Galtung, 1969; Harris, 1988). This calls for radical and urgent educational reform which is a necessary component of the peace process that could engender equity, justice and national unity. Peace education, in the present circumstance, is inevitably necessary because every citizen should be educated so that he/she can understand the society and the dynamics of social harmony. Peace education should be inclusive because, educational inclusion is critical for maintaining peace as it can redress grievances that can motivate individuals to engage in conflicts/violence (Dupuy, 2011).

Findings/Discussion

To buttress the subject matter under study, it is imperative to underscore the fact that various options for the entrenchment of peace and security in Nigeria remain germane which include but not limited to the following:

- Addressing the issues of poverty, socio-economic and political exclusion. The root causes of conflict in the country stem largely from economic deprivation drawn from the lack of access

to property, income, assets, factors of production and finance. This reality predisposes people to violence and crime in form of terrorism, armed banditry and kidnapping.

- Without doubt, Nigerian armed forces have made significant achievement in the fight against Boko Haram and these groups as shown in the number of territories it has recovered from the insurgents. However, a lot still needs to be done as the insurgents have fought back on several occasions. The use of kinetic force alone may not totally end terrorism, hence, achieving positive peace in the country requires addressing socio-political, religious and ethnic agitations that distorted peace and security, trust and confidence among the ethnic and linguistic groupings of the federation. Education for peace remains a viable option through orientation and re-orientation of the citizenry.
- In order to ensure equality and equity which can forestall direct or indirect violence, educational provisions and resources should be equitably distributed in terms of locations and numbers. Where educational provisions are available to all, it will offer citizens ample opportunities to actively participate in the process of national development. This is because if educational opportunity in any country is not equal, invariably, it will create both immediate and long-term disparities that can metamorphose into conflict or violence that could be of high magnitude and dimension, or even result in full scale war. For this reason, peace education cannot be divorced from moral re-orientation, which inclines everyone to do what is right and shun what is wrong. The individual's sense of what is right and appropriate must not be based on religious imperatives.
- Terrorists and Bandits have been seen to be in possession of sophisticated weapons. The armed forces do not have adequate weapons to prosecute the war against insurgents and the required intelligence and professional discipline, hence the government and the private sector should collaborate to finance the defence sector. There are also reports of a third force within and outside the armed forces that sabotage the efforts of the armed forces. This third force are politically and financially exposed persons who are involved in corruption. Perhaps, as aptly captured byMaza, Koldas, & Aksit (2020) the best approach to fish out and prosecute this third force is to first and foremost de-glorify corruption by exposing and prosecuting the culprits publicly.

Conclusion

Nigeria's counter-terrorism operations have made appreciable gains in recent time. However, for a nation that is not at war with another sovereign state, Nigeria's defence spending raises several critical concerns. The paradox of course is that the more government spends on defence, the more insecure Nigerians feel. Travelling inside the country has become so perilous that it is now advisable to get a security report of all towns and villages on our way before setting out. Today, all major defence-related structures in Abuja, and the North-east which supposedly should be the safest place in the country are so barricaded and are constantly attacked. The non- investment of previous administrations on robust

peace education, absence of truth and reconciliation and non-involvement of the security sub-sector has both internal and international security implications for Nigeria and her population. In an effort to justify this lack of investment Michael et al (2022) posits that inadequate funding, corrupt procurement and poor maintenance result in serious equipment and logistics deficits. Training institutions are short of facilities and instructors, lack training modules, and because they are largely focused on conventional operations, somewhat outdated. Personnel are under-motivated due to low pay, poor welfare services and bleak post-service prospects. To diversify the above counter-insurgency strategies through peace education, it is now imperative for re-orienting people on the need to embrace the next phase after peacemaking and peacekeeping. It involves establishing normalized relations between ordinary citizens on both sides of a conflict. This also comprises of various conflict transformation activities embarked upon in an environment where violent conflict has been de-escalated.

Recommendations

1. The paper recommends adequate funding and monitoring of funds of the armed forces to enable them purchase modern military equipment to fight the insurgents. The armed forces themselves should be motivated through training and adequate financial and material incentive.
2. Despite military spending by successive administrations, conflict and insecurity still remains very high in Nigeria. Thus, it is imperative to combine military or defence spending with addressing the underlying causes of insecurity such as economic structural conflict, marginalization, poverty and bad governance, ignoring this will continue to be counter-productive.
3. The managers of the educational system and policy planners should develop concrete modules for implementation through early school programmes grounded on the philosophy of education for peace from kindergarten to tertiary levels of schooling.
4. It is suggested that the one of the most sustainable way to achieve the goal of counter-terrorism and banditry in the Northeast and Northwest of Nigeria is to broaden the terrorism/banditry management apparatus beyond the use of military force and to evolve the practice of power sharing and political engagement with the people so as to get their support in the fight against the insurgents/bandits.

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