
TERRORISM SYMPATHISERS, CONFLICT ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND WAR AGAINST TRANSBORDER TERRORISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examined terrorism sympathizers, conflict profit tearing and war against trans-border terrorism in Nigeria. The dynamics of conflict reveals complex interplay of actors who derive significant benefits from ongoing violence and insecurity. Among these are conflict commodity dealers, arms dealers, and military contractors. Arms dealers profit from supplying weapons to conflicting parties, often operating through either unstructured black markets or more organized networks. The paper relied heavily on the use of secondary sources, such as official gazettes, textbooks, journals, internet materials and financial documents from local and international anti-money laundering organizations. It involved conducting extensive and critical content analysis of extant literature on terrorism sympathisers, conflict profiteering, criminal financing in Nigeria. The paper found out that terrorist groups like Boko Haram are using the licit financial infrastructure in the country to generate critical funds for their illicit activities. The paper recommended, amongst others, that the Boko Haram insurgency, along with associated banditry and kidnapping, does not solely lead to suffering, property destruction, and underdevelopment. A significant number of individuals and groups actually profit from these crises, which contributes to the prolonged duration of conflict, often beyond the immediate issues at stake.

Key Words: Conflict, Terrorism, Boko Haram, Insurgency

Introduction

Every organized illegal activity, be it terrorism, insurgency, militancy, or banditry requires funding. Funds are needed to recruit members, purchase equipment, pay for salaries and intelligence

information, logistics, support for cells, and upgrading equipment. Funding is therefore the livewire of all organized illegal or illicit activity (Levitt & Jacobson, 2005). Terrorist and criminal groups also require funds in order to be able to conduct their operations. In Nigeria, terrorist organizations like Boko Haram (BH) and criminal actors like bandits, cattle-rustlers, pirates, and kidnapers have integrated their illegal financial architecture into the overall financial system of the country. This has enabled such malign non-state actors to have unrestricted access to funds that they have used to procure materiel to launch devastating attacks against the state and to undermine the financial integrity of the country.

The effects of terrorism and criminal financing (TCF) are inimical to both global stability and the peaceful existence of any nation. In Nigeria, the country's porous international borders, with multiple official and unofficial entry points, and an unregulated and highly differentiated informal financial and economic sector, made it easier for malign non-state actors to establish foothold in the state (Hoffman, 2015; Falode, 2020). Criminals and terrorists also take undue advantage of the cash-based economy in Nigeria to move resources to finance terrorist and criminal activities. Curbing those sources is, therefore, the most effective and practical way to combat, disrupt and curtail the operations of such malign non-state actors.

Conflict is a universal feature in socioeconomic and political relations, emerging where competition for resources and self-interests intersect. This phenomenon supports the classic notion that "point of contact is point of conflict," indicating the likelihood of disagreements where interactions exist. Moliki and Oyekanmi (2020) affirm this, describing conflict as a global occurrence with enduring regularity, resistant to permanent solutions from state actors. Conflicts manifest at both large, state-centered levels, referred to as macro-public conflicts—such as wars and terrorism led by groups like ISIS, AlQaeda, and Boko Haram—as well as at micropublic levels, encompassing individual and communal disputes that lack overt political motives. In Nigeria, conflict has varied in form and intensity since independence in 1960, encompassing the Biafran Civil War, military coups, resource control issues, and ongoing ethnic tensions. A significant escalation occurred in the 2000s with the rise of Boko Haram, founded by Muhammad Yusuf. Initially opposing Western education and state systems, Boko Haram introduced a wave of violence and insurgency that has exposed Nigeria's vulnerabilities in maintaining security. In response, successive governments have invested in weapons, technology, and intelligence to counter Boko Haram and other insurgent threats. However, these measures have struggled to contain the conflict's persistence, which has been fueled by what Akinwale and Gbeke (2018) identify as "third-hand" influences, including arms deals and political manipulation. Berdel and Malone (2000) describe these financiers of violence as "Conflict Entrepreneurs," who sustain conflict for personal economic benefit.

The above scenario incites questions which the study will investigate. The questions bother around what is the nature of transborder terrorism? What is the impact of terrorism sympathizers, conflict entrepreneurship and war against trans-border terrorism in Nigeria?

Literature Review

Terrorism

While the official definition of terrorism adopted by many countries today limits the term's application to non-state actors, terrorism is not strictly a phenomenon committed by individuals or groups. Terrorism is a political term derived from state terror. In his study, Combs (2017) viewed terrorism as a phenomenon that is becoming a pervasive, often dominant, influence in our lives. It affects how governments conduct foreign policy and the way corporations transact business. It causes alterations in the role and even the structure of our security forces. It forces us to spend vast amounts of time and money to protect public figures, vital installations, citizens, and even government systems. It influences the way we travel and the places we travel to see. It even affects how we live our daily lives. According to the most often used definition of the term in modern times, terrorism is essentially political. It is also, of course, inevitably, about power—pursuing, obtaining, and using power to effect political change. Terrorism is defined as the use of violence, or more significantly, the threat of violence, for the purpose of achieving a political goal.

The French Revolution is credited with popularizing the term "terrorism" throughout history. At the time, terrorism was associated with something beneficial, in contrast to how it is used now. In order to maintain order during the brief anarchic era of unrest and instability that followed the revolutions of 1793–1794, the regime de la terreur, from which the English word originated. As such, it differs from modern definitions of terrorism, which associate it with revolutionary or anti-government actions carried out by non-state or sub-national organizations. The freshly formed revolutionary state employed the régime de la terreur as one of its tools of governing. By scaring counterrevolutionaries, subversives, and other dissidents who the dictatorship viewed as "enemies of the people," it was intended to solidify the power of the new administration (Hoffman, 2006, p. 3). The precise meaning of terrorism is up for debate. Many people view terrorism as a type of political violence that resembles insurrection and revolt that results in chaos and political protest (Ukaogo, 2004, p. 96).

Others see terrorism as nothing more than a multi-phase process and plan. It may be interpreted as a revolution as well (Lodge, 1988, p.1). The difficulty of defining and classifying terrorism is more intricate and multifaceted than one man's terrorism when seen as a moral dilemma. The challenge here is the disparate intellectual and ideological foundations from which the idea is evaluated. A

country may see a terrorist attack as "legal" or "an end justifying a means," whereas another country may view the same activity as illegal (Ukaogo, 2004, p. 97). This adds to the complexity of the problem overall. The dispute between the Israelis and the Arabs, which gets more intense every day, is a stark illustration of the problem with the terrorist argument. No matter how justified the deed may be, every suicide bomber is considered a terrorist by the Israelis. Thus, those who support Palestine, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, which specialize in grenade lobbing and bomb hurling, are terrorists. Conversely, the Arabs consider the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the ongoing denial of the Palestinians a separate state to be acts of terrorism. Indeed, they believe that the invasion of 1982 is still the worst act of terrorism in the Middle East and that it has to be avenged.

Therefore, all of these opposing viewpoints and points of view thwart any attempt at a shared understanding and appreciation of terrorism. Thus, terrorism can be said to be the intentional and organized killing, maiming, and threatening of innocent people in order to sow fear for political purposes is known as terrorism. The phenomena gained popularity as one of the characteristics of global politics and conflict in the latter half of the 20th century. Until now, terrorism has been used by individuals, small, ideologically focused groups, state operatives, and large insurgent movements to pursue military and political objectives that may have seemed hard or impossible to accomplish in the traditional political arena or in a combat zone against an army (Harmon, 2000, p.32). Terrorism is not limited to unusual situations or foreign regimes. It has the ability to occur in both common and uncommon settings, including regular institutions. It has been called a criminal and a holy thing, a technique and a plan, among other things. If reigns of terror are only thought of as transient states of crisis brought on by daring events or as foreign forms of rule, then they are not fully comprehended. Under specific stress situations, "normal" political processes might give rise to terror networks that are often classified as "abnormal" according to Western social and political thought standards (Ojukwu, 2011, p.16). There is a distinct character to terrorism in Nigeria as opposed to other regions of the world. This is the case because to the fact that Nigerian terrorists typically lack recognizable and charismatic leaders but instead have goals they feel can only be attained via clandestine and covert guerrilla war on the Nigerian state.

Where by attacks are carried out on churches and other places of worship, buildings belonging to foreign organizations like the UN office in Abuja, state institutions like the Police Headquarters in Abuja, certain schools, and rest areas, among other targets, in order to wage a clandestine guerrilla war against the Nigerian State. Actually, it appears that acts of religious terrorism represent the peak of terrorist activity in the nation. These acts can take many different forms, such as suicide bombing, hostage-taking, bomb-throwing, assassinations, and periodic shootings into public gatherings that result in many casualties. The most prominent is the Boko Haram group, which has severely damaged Nigerians' mental health as well as the state's security system in the wake of attempts to

crack down on them. Their actions are antidemocratic, hostile to the nation's general progress, and have a significant impact on the nation's foreign policy (Onuoha, 2010, p. 36).

Conflict

Conflict is a common phenomenon in every society, and affects us as individuals, families, communities, organizations, nations, and states. Indeed, conflict does affect every individual group's behavior (Aja-AkpuruAja, 2007). Egobueze (2023) perceives conflict as “a disagreement among groups or individuals characterized by antagonism and hostility (p.168)”. This is usually propelled by the opposition of one party to another in an attempt to achieve an objective different from that of the other party. He further opines that conflict is a state of discord cost by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values, and interests between people. It can result in stress or tension and negative feelings between disputants, to mention but a few. Conflict may be seen as a result of a dynamic relationship between interested parties, struggling to gain control of valuable resources. According to (Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019; Otite, 2001), conflict arises when individuals or groups in a defined environment pursue divergent goals, interests, and ambitions when there is a change in the social environment, for instance, the discovery of new resources from development in the physical environment, a fertile ground for conflict is created. The ensuing conflict usually involves individuals and groups who are interested in using the new resources to achieve their goals. The concept, of conflict, has been variously conceptualized over time; Coser (1956), opines that conflict is “a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources, in which the opponents aim to actualize, injure, or eliminate their rivals. Conflict occurs when competing groups, goals, objectives, needs, or values clash aggressively, although not necessarily violence (p.8)”. The conflict has remained a dominant feature of modern democracies because of the lack of service delivery by the state to the citizens, the unhealthy rivalry of the ruling elites for access to political and economic power, and widespread corruption (Egobueze, 2016). Nations are almost sliding to selfdestruction as a result of conflicts; civil conflict has become the dominant mode of violence in the post-code war era.

Put differently, conflict, though has its denotation when considered as a single word, but its connotation, which may convey factors of underdevelopment may be pursued, conflict, a point of movement of history could be located at various levels of human social interests, and could be sharpened by power. All be it, every conflict can emanate from associations between persons and may escalate to national conflict if such persons represent nations. However, conflict could be located at the family, workplace, community, national, regional, and global levels.

Conflict, as noted by Moliki and Oyekanmi (2020), is an inherent aspect of human nature, often manifesting as aggression and a quest for superiority. This phenomenon occurs not only at the individual and group levels but also within broader state interactions. Morgenthau (1949) supports this view, suggesting that the chaotic nature of humanity leads to conflicts as individuals vie for dominance over one another. In this context, conflict can be characterized by hostility, rivalry, and misunderstanding. Adebayo (2018) further emphasizes that conflict arises from irreconcilable differences in articulated interests, suggesting that the potential for chaos increases when human interests diverge significantly.

Conflict Profiteering/Entrepreneurship

Recent shifts in conflict studies have redefined conflicts primarily as negative phenomena, leading to the emergence of new paradigms. These include the realization that state violence and instability can create lucrative opportunities for certain individuals and groups—termed conflict entrepreneurs. Finkel (2019) and Yaronisa (2016) describe entrepreneurship as the creation of business opportunities with the expectation of profit. Conflict entrepreneurship, as defined by Ganson (2021), involves individuals or groups orchestrating and prolonging conflicts to generate financial gains or facilitate business growth. These conflict entrepreneurs can be seen as crisis mongers and provocateurs, shaping the dynamics of conflicts at various stages.

Bishirua (2018) posits that conflict entrepreneurs typically seek profit through illegal activities that perpetuate violence and lawlessness. There are several categories of conflict entrepreneurs, including:

- 1. Arms Dealers:** These individuals have significant stakes in extractive resources and often arm opposing groups, undermining government peace efforts (Adelaide, 2020).
- 2. Latent Conflict Entrepreneurs:** Operating at local levels, these individuals provide essential services to insurgents, such as food, fuel, drugs, and even sexual services, often charging inflated prices. Their economic interests keep them from cooperating with security forces or peacekeepers.

Methodology

This paper which is largely a qualitative study made a review of existing literature using secondary data. Secondary data are the major sources of data used for this study; the need to obtain data mainly from secondary studies comes ready, specifically intending to adopt a content analysis method for reliable investigation and analysis based on its efficiency in helping the researcher read meaning into

the materials collected from diverse sources such as books, journal publications, newspapers, official documents; thereby giving the researcher a robust premise upon which inferences were drawn for verifiable conclusions.

Results and Discussion

What is the Nature of Transborder Terrorism?

The international community is seeing an increase in transnational crime, in which criminal activity in one country has an influence on another or perhaps several others. Drug trafficking, human trafficking, computer crimes, terrorism, and a variety of other crimes may include people acting beyond the borders of a country that has a vested interest in putting a stop to the activity and prosecuting the culprit. Contemporary transnational crimes make use of globalization, trade liberalization, and booming new technology to commit varied crimes and instantly transfer money, products, services, and people for the goal of committing violence for political reasons (Dan, 2013). These crimes often involve complex networks of individuals and organizations operating across multiple countries, making it difficult for law enforcement agencies to effectively investigate and prosecute them. Furthermore, the rapid advancement of technology has enabled criminals to constantly adapt their methods, making it a constant challenge for authorities to keep up with the evolving nature of transnational crimes.

The last few years have seen a considerable growth in worldwide criminal activities such as money laundering, trafficking in human and nuclear technologies and materials, trafficking in human organs, and migrant smuggling. Simultaneously, new crimes such as contemporary piracy and the trafficking of hazardous waste, counterfeit medications, precious metals, or natural resources have been added to the list of classic criminal enterprises such as prostitution, drug trafficking, and arms trafficking. Transnational crime has lately expanded in scope and is defined by an increasingly global reach, involvement in many types of criminal activity, and the expansion of criminal markets to encompass large-scale financial fraud and cybercrime. These developments have been facilitated by advancements in technology and the increasing interconnectedness of the global economy. As a result, transnational criminal organizations have become more sophisticated and are able to exploit loopholes in international law enforcement efforts.

As things stand, no location is immune to the worldwide reach of transnational criminal syndicates. Since the Cold War's conclusion, we've seen international organized criminal organizations expand outside their conventional boundaries, seize new possibilities, and migrate more easily into other geographic regions. The biggest international organized criminal groups have operations in the

United States, Latin America, West Africa, Southeast Europe, Asia, Russia, and other locations (Ering, 2011). These criminal syndicates have demonstrated their ability to adapt and exploit various economic, political, and social factors in each location where they operate. Their operations often involve drug trafficking, human smuggling, money laundering, and cybercrime, among other illicit activities. As globalization continues to connect the world more closely, it is crucial for governments and law enforcement agencies to collaborate internationally in order to effectively combat these transnational criminal networks. Cross-border crime has existed in West Africa since the 1970s. Initially, they appeared as individuals or groups of traders, businessmen, and women smuggling products across borders. Human trafficking, for the sake of domestic servitude and unlawful sexual activities, finally took on worrying proportions when global syndicates joined such operations as drug peddling and car-jacking, among other things (de Andrés, 2008). These global syndicates brought with them sophisticated networks and resources, enabling them to expand their criminal activities across multiple countries in West Africa. As a result, the region has seen an alarming increase in organized crime and the exploitation of vulnerable individuals for profit.

What is the Impact of Terrorism Sympathizers, Conflict Entrepreneurship and War Against Trans-border Terrorism in Nigeria?

The dynamics of conflict reveal a complex interplay of actors who derive significant benefits from ongoing violence and insecurity. Among these are conflict commodity dealers, arms dealers, and military contractors. Arms dealers profit from supplying weapons to conflicting parties, often operating through either unstructured black markets or more organized networks. Some of these dealers function autonomously, while others forge partnerships with political powers to secure their profits.

Another category of beneficiaries includes conflict commodity dealers, who capitalize on the scarcity of essential goods that often accompanies conflict, leading to inflated prices and increased revenues. This black market activity is distinct from the profits made by regular commodity brokers, emphasizing the unique role of those who exploit conflict for financial gain (Abdulrasheed, 2020).

Military contractors also represent a significant group of conflict profiteers. Major companies such as Aegis Defense Services, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon have the capacity to gain substantial returns from conflicts. These contractors sometimes influence military policies to their advantage, further intertwining their interests with the dynamics of war.

In Nigeria, the political class also stands to gain from ongoing conflicts. Political elites may instigate or exacerbate conflicts to serve their interests, engaging in lobbying for war-related policies and

securing favors from arms production companies. Notably, Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State has pointed out that the bandits terrorizing the country include not just members of the Fulani ethnic group but also politicians from various ethnic backgrounds who benefit from illicit trades.

Moreso, terrorism sympathizers and conflict profiteering can take the form of the following:

Kidnapping for Ransom

Terrorist activities could also be funded through kidnapping for ransom. Criminal actors, such as bandits, kidnapers, and terrorists, usually use this mechanism to access millions of dollars. A veritable example is the 50 million Euros paid for the release of 104 Dapchi girls in 2018 (Maza, Koldas & Aksit, 2020). The spate of banditry and kidnapping for ransom are all linked to terrorist activities. In fact, in 2013, FATF reported that most kidnappings are connected to Boko Haram cells involved in criminal activity (FATF, 2014).

Taxation/Extortion

Boko Haram terrorists have an organized system for compulsory taxation and daily collection in communities under their control, this is called Harji (Maza, Umut & Sait, 2020). Terrorists and other organized criminals engage in extortion as a source of raising funds for their operations. Amongst the notorious terrorist groups in the region, Boko Haram's practice of extorting monies and valuables from members of captured communities is high. For example, BH levies different kind of taxes on conquered communities, such as Abadam, Gwoza, Damasak and Dikwa in Borno State, and Gaidam in Yobe State (Maina, 2021).

Cattle-Rustling

The activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group in the Lake Chad region have increased the spate cattle rustling in the region. There are reports of bandits/rustlers who storm herder's farms, settlements and markets wielding automatic rifles with the sole aim of killing, maiming herders, and rustling cattle. Over 7000 cows from Chad were rustled in the Dikwa community in the Borno state (FATF, 2013 p.12); the Kastina State government reported the recovery over 30,000 heads from rustlers within few months. The rustled cows are diverted to other markets where they are sold, and the profits find its way back to the terrorist for financing their reign of terror.

Drug Trafficking

Vittori (2011) affirmed that cultivation, refining and distribution of illegal drugs within and outside the country have proved to be a good source of infrequent financing for criminal activities and terrorism in the world. The UN reported in 2007 that over 4 billion dollars in value of drugs were exported for such purpose (UNODC, 2017).

Counterfeit Goods and Human Trafficking

Blanchard (2014) believes that criminals and terrorists get funding through illegal activities like trafficking counterfeit goods. Terrorist also get funds from human trafficking. Kidnapped people (mostly females) are sold as sex slaves in the Arab booming sex slave market. Boko Haram kidnapped 276 Chibok girls in 2014 and started negotiations to exchange some of them for prisoners. However, such process has had major obstacles since some of the girls are believed to have been sold into sex slavery (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017).

Bank Robbery

Fanusie and Entz (2017) opine that Boko haram, at the beginning of its terror campaign, engaged in several bank robbery attacks in which an estimated of 6 million dollars was raised by the group. Most of these robberies took place in Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa states.

Legitimate Commercial Activity

Some of the funds also come from legitimate means. Brantly (2014) reported the involvement of terrorists in lawful fishing activities in the Lake Chad. FATF (2016) reported the arrest of members of Boko Haram with 463 bags of fish in April 2016 who confessed that they were engaged in fish selling business to fund and support the group's activities. Other legitimate businesses include the operation of commercial motorcycles (Achaba), business centers, and mobile phone charging and repair shops.

State Sponsorship

Criminal funding also includes indirect activities, for example, when members of the state have had to pay ransoms to terrorists. In December 2020, the Kastina state government was said to have secured the release of over three hundred boys abducted in Kankara by paying about \$76,000 (Campbel, 2021).

Donations

Terrorists are also funded by personal donations from sympathizers, charity organization and NGOs, but especially from prominent politicians and businessmen from diverse ethnic groups. One prominent example is the case of Ali Ndume and the late Alhaji Buji Foyi, who were accused of being major financiers of the Boko Haram terrorist group (Maza, Koldas & Aksit, 2020). They were said to have provided money, motorcycles, and other logistics (Maza, Koldas & Aksit, 2020). The earliest known case of a major foreign donation to fund terrorism in Nigeria was the 2002 reception of \$3million from Al-Qaeda to fund activities in the north-east of the country (McCoy, 2014a). In 2012, a report suggested the existence of \$40 million received from ISIS (Sommerlad, 2018). Funds have also been found from ethnic groups sympathetic to the Boko Haram terrorists cause as well as to the Niger Delta militants and other ethnic militants.

ICT Businesses and Crypto Currencies

Wittig (2011) unveiled an unknown area of funding and stated that the development of ICT aggravated the complexity of the issue of criminal and terrorism financing in Nigeria. Credit card fraud, online trading, and financial transfer platforms have further widened the stage for criminal and terrorist financing, especially within those with little governmental control such as crypto currency.

Conclusion

Terrorism and conflicts are the bane of the Nigerian Fourth Republic since 1999. Malign non-state actors have both compromised the integrity of the financial system and threatened the sovereignty of the Nigerian state. This study has shown how criminal and terrorist groups like Boko Haram are using the licit financial infrastructure in the country to generate critical funds for their illicit activities. It highlights in stark detail how unrestricted access to illegal funds has made it possible for these malign non-state actors to destabilize the state. Crucially, the study has shown how money is both a means to an end and an end itself to such malign non-state actors. To Boko Haram, resources are a means to an end, the end being the ability to conduct more deadly operations in the country, while criminal groups consider funds as an end that allows them to live a life of opulence and splendor. For them resources are also a means that enables them to keep up with such a lifestyle by provisioning them with the necessary tools to conduct more of such malign acts. Thus, in order to effectively hobble the activities of these malign non-state actors, one will have to target their most vulnerable but crucial center of gravity: funds. This realization is what prompted Nigeria to deploy a mix of both institutional and legal-cum-financial instruments to counter TCF in Nigeria.

Suggestions

The paper recommends the following:

1. This paper affirms the inevitability of conflict, albeit with varying magnitudes across different contexts. The complexity of conflict cannot be adequately measured by monolithic indices; instead, the struggle for power, relevance, and resources remains at the core of conflict dynamics. While conflicts cannot be eradicated entirely due to ongoing public and private interests, it is possible to de-escalate their intensity and mitigate negative consequences through appropriate state measures and coordinated policies.
2. The paper emphasizes that the Boko Haram insurgency, along with associated banditry and kidnapping, does not solely lead to suffering, property destruction, and underdevelopment. A significant number of individuals and groups actually profit from these crises, which contributes to the prolonged duration of conflict, often beyond the immediate issues at stake.
3. The paper recommends that the government and relevant state actors invest in credible intelligence to identify and apprehend conflict profiteers and war entrepreneurs infiltrating Nigeria's security architecture. While acknowledging the role of conflict entrepreneurs as business and political hegemons, swift and just legal actions against them are essential to curtail the Boko Haram insurgency. This approach should serve as a deterrent to others who may be tempted to exploit volatile situations for personal gain.
4. The federal government's current policy on rehabilitating repentant Boko Haram members, gun runners, bandits, and militants should be critically reviewed or halted. Such policies may inadvertently reward criminal behavior and undermine the sacrifices of security personnel who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

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