



AN EVALUATION OF THE FLIP-FLOP APPROACH TO COMBATING TERRORISM AND RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN NIGERIA FROM 2015-2022

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Abstract

The fundamental responsibility of government is to secure citizens' lives and properties. The ongoing terrorist activities and religious extremism in Nigeria is yet to receive the required attention from the government. In light of the growing influence of terrorism and religious extremism in Nigeria, the study adopted the relative deprivation theory, to explain possible causes of terrorism and the recruitment of terrorists. The paper examines the ideological variations among the terrorist groups, using the quantitative textual analysis of secondary data to evaluate and scrutinize the flip flop approach of the Nigeria government from 2015 to 2022 in combating terrorism and religious extremism in the country. Despite the response by government, insecurity, terrorism and religious extremism have not been defeated due to lack of political will and the inability of government to make good laws to sanction offenders. Thus, endemic poverty encourages the spread of terrorism and religious extremism. The study therefore recommends among others, that the Nigerian government need to shift emphasis in tackling terrorism and religious extremism from military and arms using flip flop approach to a more humanistic economic security strategy, while religious or tribal nepotism should not be condoned. Government at the same time need to address the endemic systematic corruption, bad governance, inter religious and ethnic rivalry aimed at the control of state apparatus for economic and selfish political gains.

Keywords: *Insecurity, terrorism, religious extremism, flip-flop approach*

Introduction

Terrorism is a particular kind of conflict that is increasingly perceived as a major international security threat. Terrorism in its broad sense refers to the use of indiscriminate violence as a means to create terror or fear in order to achieve political, religious or ideological goal (Biswapati, 2018). Terrorism arises from poverty, massive unemployment, coups, ethnic tension, porous borders, conflict, religion fundamentalism, chronic corruption that undermines law enforcement, weak institution, failed state, and the proliferation of arms and light weapons.

According to Falk (1990), "terrorism is as old as government and as pervasive as armed conflict"

Schmidt and Jongmann's definition of terrorism (as cited in Wendy, 2017), is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeat violent action employed by (Semi) clandestine Individuals, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby in contrast to assassination-the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. Human victims of violence are chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population and serve as message generators. Threat and violence based communication processes are used to manipulate the main target (audience), turning it into a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, propaganda is primarily sought.

Terrorism remains a constant challenge in mounting an effective response, particularly in domestic setting, (Wilkinson, as cited in Wendy, 2017). Terrorism on the other hand as viewed in this study as a coercive method by the state on relatively deprived, neglected and oppressed individuals or groups to vest their frustration, on targets indiscriminately, on innocent civilians, military industry using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to provoke the state to accepting their demands. Religious extremism is the behavior, belief of any person or group of persons outside the norm of their religious belief or practice. Religious extremism is a major derivative of terrorism in our present day world, All religions have exhibited diverse levels of violent extremism, which has often resulted in terrorist movements, (Hoffman, Lacquer & Martin, 2011).

In Nigeria, Christians and Muslims have been culpable in various acts of violent extremism and terrorism. In recent times, that of the Islamic religion and its relation to terrorism is most obvious. However, there are differences between those who hold extreme views of their religion, who are fundamentalist in their views of their Holy book. We have those who are single right way in their private beliefs, which do not infringe on the freedom and the wellbeing of others, while the other people who hold extreme view and wish to impose their belief on others by violent means. The one who holds a private belief that do not impinge on the freedom of others on one hand and the other who advocate violence on the other hand are two separate organizations and individuals. These two separate beliefs are with views to give rise to disagreement as to whether their freedom of expression should be allowed in a democratic society.

Freedom is held strongly as a component in a democratic society because it is valued and enjoyed by the individuals who make up the society. A general rule of a democratic society as advocated in the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria and as amended is that individual liberty should only be constrained when it would compromise the freedom of others right to life, right to personal liberty, right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, right to freedom of expression and the press, right to freedom of movement, right to peaceful assembly and association and restriction on derogation from fundamental rights (1999 Constitution). The freedom of citizens taken away by terrorism and religious extremism is what the paper seeks to evaluate and scrutinize government flip flop approach to violators of freedom.

The study's main objective is to critically review Nigeria government's response to religious extremism and terrorism in the country from 2015-2022 and specifically to evaluate the flip-flop approach by the Nigeria government in combating

religious extremism and terrorism. The study identifies with element of historical approach, using the secondary data collected from internet, book stands and news media (electronics and prints), and therefore recommend a more holistic approach using the human security approach instead of the military and arms, and the flip flop approach of the government.

Literature Review

Although religious terrorism has always formed part of social existence (Rapport, 1984), it became "a significant phenomenon" in the 1960s when it increased in frequency (Sandler, Tschirhart & Cauley, 1983) and assumed 'novel dimensions' as a transnational phenomenon (Mickolus, 1980), creating in the process what Jenkins (1975) describes as a new mode of conflict. Specifically, the link between religious extremism and terrorism has a long genealogy in Western Scholarship (Hansenclever & Rittberg, 2000). The nexus between religious extremism and terrorism dates back to David C. Rapport's (1984), in his work "fear and trembling", which analyzed the use of terror in three religious traditions of Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.

As the pioneering comparative study of religious terror groups, Rapport's study provides detailed analyses of the different doctrines and methods of their well-known groups: the thugs, assassins and zealots, Sicarii (Rapport, 1984). Despite a primitive technology, Rapport argues that those groups each developed much more durable and destructive organization that has any modern secular group (Rapport, 1984). Rapport influential work inspired many similar papers primarily in the field of terrorism studies, which sought to explain why violence and religion have re-merged so dramatically at this moment in history and why they have so frequently been found in combination (Juergensmeyer, 2003). In this particular literature, religious extremism and terrorism has been raised above simple label to the set of descriptive characteristics and substantive claim to appear to delineate it as a specific type of political violence, fundamentally different to previous or other forms of terrorism. As argued by Hoffman in his work, this new type of terrorism produces radically different value of system, mechanism of legitimate and justification, concept of royalty and world view. (Hoffman, 2006).

Concept of Terrorism

The term 'terrorism' is inherently difficult to use in a precisely or unequivocally. This view is generally accepted by experts, jurists and policy makers, despite the fact that countless acts of terrorism have been documented during the past 25 centuries. Wilkinson (1986) pointed out, three important factors that contributes to this difficulty. To begin the term "terrorism" is frequently used interchangeably to refer to a concept, human activity, felony, specific event, emotions, method of intimidation, or condition of

being terrorized. Second, perhaps more importantly, the concept of terrorism itself is emotionally charged because it contains expressive content, whose purpose is to elicit feelings, attitudes, or emotions. The concept of fear is inherent in this usage, so the concept automatically acquires an emotive meaning. When attempting to communicate a precise meaning, this emotive quality causes distortion. Third, there is the issue of achieving a precise definition that is universally acceptable; essentially, English words such as terror, terrorize, terrible, terrorism and deterrent are derived from the Latin verb 'terrere' which means to tremble, or cause to trembling and 'deterere' which means to frighten. Despite the difficulties mentioned above, efforts have been made to explain the meaning of terrorism from two major perspectives: Liberal and Radical perspectives. Terrorism according to Edward (1986) is defined as 'the use or threat of use of anxiety inducing extreme violence for political purposes by an individual or group, whether acting for, or against to established governmental authority when such action is intended to influence the attitudes and behavior of a targeted group larger than the immediate victim'. Sample (1987) sees terrorism as "a clandestine act of violence against non-combatants, with the specific aim of bringing about political change". According to him, terrorism is typically characterized by variety of tactics, such as assassination, hijacking, kidnapping, sabotage, and exploitation of innocent victims to affect a third party.

Concept of Religious Extremism

Religious extremism is a major derivative of terrorism in our modern day world. As all religion have exhibited diverse level of violence, which has often resulted in terrorist movement (Martin, 2011). Religious extremism is not a new concept, it is a century old problem; a culture that is in existence prior to the first phase of globalization (Hisami, 2009). According to Prus, (2005) religious extremism is an intense sense of ideology fervor accompanied by highly focused and sustained sets of activities that express the devotion of one or more persons to their particular belief system. Features of religious extremism includes 'monastic seclusion of members, the extended proselytization of non-members, the vilification of outsider as well as sinners within, the criminalization of non-complaint persons, and the eradication of designated enemies'. Prus (2005), however, posits that religious extremism reflects the norm and ritual activities of diverse religions, which are supported, sanctioned and certified by members and are not perceived by members as extreme but a normal mode of doing things sanctioned by a superior being. Thus, for the members their actions are moderate. For Liebman, (2001), religious extremism is the 'desire to expand the scope, detail and strictness of religious law, social isolation, and the rejection of the surrounding culture'.

Religious extremism can either be a 'process or an institution' that is a process of expanding religious laws to the extent that it is incorporated not just in the private but also in the public realm. In other words, extremists strive to enforce their laws on the society hence creating political conflict or isolate themselves and wait for a divine interpolation for their ideals to become reality. Moreover, their laws are elaborated and are strictly to be observed to the extent that leniency in the interpretation of sacred text is prohibited. Liebman, thus submitted that religious extremism is detrimental to collective formation and 'all historical religions recognize the destructive capacity of extremism and sought strategies to contain it'.

In Nigeria following independence, the preponderance of extremist religion sects provided a watershed for the incidents of violence and religious extremism in the country. Of these are the Maitatsine uprisings which some scholars have connected to the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in the 19th Century (Adesoji, 2011; Maiangwa 2014). The Maitatsine movement was formed by Muhammadu Marwaan Islamic preacher (Maitatsine meaning "the one who curses"). Muhammadu Marwa who migrated from Cameroon to Kano in 1945 (Pham, 2012), Marwa was a strong critic against the Islamic authorities in Kano and was condemned by the colonial masters who found him an extremist preacher. In Kano, Marwa became an Islamic Zealot preoccupied with the purification of Islam. He believed that Islam had come under the corrupting influence of modernization (Westernization) (Danjibo 2009).

Marwa attracted the urban poor in the Northern city of Kano with his message that "denounced the affluent elites as infidels, opposed Western Influence, and refused to recognize secular authorities" (HRW, 2012). Some of the poor people and marginalized population of the northern Nigeria-the *talakawa* (commoners) were attracted to Maitatsine because 'he condemned the hypocrisy and ostentation of the *nouveauriche* and promised redemption and salvation to God's righteous people' (Hickey, 1984).

The Maitatsine uprisings led to eleven days of violent clashes with state security forces in Kano in December, 1980 that resulted in the killings of 4, 177 people, excluding members of the police force who lost their lives trying to rein in the Excesses of the sect. Nevertheless, state securities were implicated in extrajudicial killings and arbitrary torture of Maitatsine members in their custody (Agbibo, 2013). Although the Nigerian Military crushed the uprisings and killed its leader, the following five years witnessed the deaths of hundreds of people in reprisal attacks between remnants of the radical movement in the north and state security forces. According to Falola (1999), the Maitatsine uprising of 1980s was the first public religious extremist violence in post-Colonial Nigeria.

The Maitatsine uprisings ended in the 1980s. However, spates of violent religious activism saturated northern Nigeria from the 1990s onward. The emergence of the Boko Haram sect in 2001, represent yet another violent form of religious extremist radicalism in Northern Nigeria.

Boko Haram Religious Terrorism in Nigeria

Nigeria has experienced a lot of tragedies in the hands of terrorist and the terrorist group Boko Haram, who claimed responsibility for a series of bombing in Abuja and kidnapping of school children in Chibok, Kankara and Zamfara. Boko Haram activities in Nigeria and those of its splinter group Ansaru are hardly new. Under a radical agenda, these militants have perpetuated violence across Northern Nigeria since 2001, aiming to rid the country of any “Western Influence”. (Adibe, 2014).

Boko Haram members preferred to be called or known by their Arabic name – Jama’atu Ahlita’alimati wa Jihad”. The group is believed to have been formed in the town of Maiduguri in North East Nigeria where the locals name its members Boko Haram which means “Western Education forbidden”. Boko Haram is founded by Mohammed Yusuf in about 2001, yet the sect is probably believed to have started 1995 as Sahaba.

The group ‘Boko Haram claimed to be opposed not only to Western civilization but also to secularization of the Nigerian state’. There is a fair consensus that, until 2009, the group conducted its operations more or less peacefully and that its radicalization followed a government clampdown in 2009, in which 800 of its members were killed. The group’s leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was also killed after that attack while in police custody. Ansaru, whose Arabic name is Jama’atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan (“vanguards for the protection of Muslims in Black Africa”), is a breakaway faction of Boko Haram. It first announced its existence on January 26th, 2012 by distributing fliers in Kano, shortly after Boko Haram attacks in the city killed over 150 civilians most of whom are Muslims.

It is from this attack that some media reports described Ansaru’s emergence as a reaction to the loss of innocent Muslim lives from inception(Forest, 2012) Ansaru was believed to coordinate its operation in Nigeria with the Northern Mali-based al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the movement for unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA). Both Boko Haram and Ansaru were declared as foreign terrorist organizations by the United States on November 13, 2012. (Forest, 2012) There are many narratives to the emergence of these terrorists sects. It is believed in some quarters that it is Northern politicians sponsored groups to make the country Nigeria “ungovernable” for President Goodluck Jonathan. This narrative is very popular among commentators, and leading politicians from the Southern part of the country (Zenn, 2014). The

Boko Haram terrorist activities has opened opportunities for other religious extremist groups, the bandits and Fulani herders who are of the same Islamic religion to carry out nefarious atrocities using sophisticated weapon of mass destruction. In tackling terrorism and religious extremism in Nigeria, the government is seen to be using flip flop approach instead of combating the phenomena head on using are more holist approach such as human security approach.

Nigeria Government’s flip-flop approach to religious extremism and terrorism

Flip flop approach is a leadership style. Flip flop can be a backward style of leadership, where a leader uses sudden reversal policy or strategy in governance. An example of the flip flop approach as a sudden reversal strategy in the Buhari administration, which can be seen when it gave an order to its military officers to crush terrorists on one hand, while on the other pay deaf ear to their activities, even when reports implicate military officers, some Islamic clerics and even top government officials as having links with terrorists and nothing was done about it. In a popular instance of flip-flop approach, the kidnap and adoption of one Leah Shaibu an innocent school girl from Dapchi Girls Secondary School by the Boko Haram sect come quick to remembrance. In this spectacular case, the President in commiseration with the family of the victim was quoted to have said. “ I convey my emotion, the strong commitment of my administration and the solidarity of all Nigerians to you the mother of Leah and your family as we will do our best to bring your daughter home in peace and safety” (The Guardian of October 3, 2018). Five years down the drain, nothing had been done. Flip flop is different from the Carrot and Stick approach in which ‘Carrot’ is used as a motivational bait such as a promise of economic reward and persuasion for a good behaviour, and the ‘Stick’ involves is coercion, threat, punishment, action, hard power and a negative consequence for poor behavior.

Two major approaches were taken by the Nigerian government to halt what the Human Right Watch (HRW,2012), regard as the ‘spiraling violence’ of BokoHaram in Northern Nigeria.

These may be term as the ‘carrot and stick approach. The carrot approach involves political negotiation with stakeholders. The government of President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua established a committee of inquiry led by Ambassador Usma Giltimari to ‘identify the grievances of the Boko Haram sect to and make possible recommendations on how to improve security in the north-eastern region’(Onuoha, 2012). At the state level, the carrot approach has involved overtures to and rapprochements with Boko Haram insurgency. For example, the former Borno State governor Ali Modu Sheriff allegedly paid the sum of one hundred million naira (100 million Naira) to mollify the anger of the group for the killing of their leader in 2009. The governor after him, Kashem

Shettima, called Boko Haram for dialogue July 16, 2011 (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012).

The recent attempt by the government to negotiate with key leaders was by the Jonathan's administration which established a 26 man amnesty 'committee on dialogue and peaceful resolution of security challenges in the North'. The committee was headed by the then Nigeria special duties minister Kabiru Tanimu and was given a three-month mandate to convince Boko Haram to lay down their arms in exchange for state pardon and social integration (Thurston, 2013). According to Thurston, the committee 'has been given the task of identifying and constructively engaging key leaders of the sect, and developing a workable framework for amnesty and disarmament of members of the group.

However, the Boko Haram's supreme leader, Abubakar Shekau responded to the amnesty move of the government, that his group members has not committed any crime or wrong, and that an amnesty would not be applicable to them. Shekau said, 'instead, it is the government that has committed atrocities against Muslims' and vowed not to stop the group of violence campaigns to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria under a strict form of Sharia law (Agbibo, 2013). True to this threat, less than a week after the rejection of the amnesty, the jihadist group claimed responsibilities for the attacks where Boko Haram members dressed in Nigerian military uniforms disguised in buses and machine gun-mounted trucks, laid siege to Bama town in Borno state killing 55, mostly police and security forces, and freeing over 100 prison inmates. Days later Boko Haram members attacked 13 villages in Benue state killing 53 people and burning down the communities (Agbibo, 2013).

Whatever the practical merits of the modest attempts by the Nigerian government to negotiate with the Boko Haram and strengthen its anti-terrorism laws, there is ample evidence that lends credence to the over whelming investment in the stick approach by the Nigerian state, involving the use of state security forces to mount aggressive pursuit and crackdown of Boko Haram members (Onuoha, 2012). To this end and intent, the Nigerian government established a special Joint Military Task Force (JTF), the JTF are supplemented by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and a small contingent of Chadian and Nigerian forces who were members of a Joint Military Task Force (JMTF) initially created to combat smuggling (IGC, 2014). The establishment of these forces have to some extent destabilized the operational capabilities of Boko Haram "to conduct coordinated bombing like the ones it carried out in major urban cities in 2011 and 2012"(IGC,2014).

One of the major promises of the Buhari administration at its onset was that of combating terrorism head on, but after over seven years of his

administration, insecurity had rather worsened in all regions of the country. This phenomenon had been compounded by age-long bureaucratic corruption in government and series of other national challenges including the Fulani herders/farmers imbroglio the spate of kidnapping and the continuing plunge of the national currency-the naira. Despite government efforts, Nigeria's security situation is fast deteriorating. The lingering conflict between herders and farmers in North-central Nigeria has been estimated to be six times as lethal as the Boko-Haram Insurgency (Ojewole, 2021). The rising insecurity in the nation evidenced a flip flop approach which the government had given to the issues of terrorism in the Nigeria state in contemporary times.

In reality, Nigeria has become safe haven for increasingly active terrorist groups operating around the West African sub-region leaving civilians at serious security risks, including the the growing attacks by armed groups called 'bandits' and as well-known armed extremist groups, Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). According to the UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (CHA), the deteriorating security situation has resulted in a humanitarian emergency, with more than 8.7 million people requiring urgent assistance. Since 2011 inter communal violence, rooted in competition over scarce resources, has escalated in central and north-west Nigeria. Violence between herders and farmers has become increasingly deadly as a result of the proliferation of armed groups and gangs who engage in organized cattle-rustling, kidnapping, plunder, murder and rape.

The emergence and expansion of armed banditry in the north-west resulted in the killing of over 4,900 persons between 2018 and 2020 and has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, with 10,000 displaced in several villages of Zamfara between 2nd-6th January, 2020 (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect GCRP report, 2022)

Since 2009 when Boko Haram launched its insurgency aimed at overthrowing Nigeria's secular government and establishing an Islamic state, at least 35,000 people have been killed in northern Nigeria (GCRP, 2022). There are at least 2.2 million internally displaced persons in Adamawa, Yobe and Borno States, health and education services have been severely disrupted. The terrorist organizations have also carried out attacks in neighboring countries killing and displacing civilians in Cameroon, Niger and Chad. Since 2018 the group has expanded into north-central Nigeria. Kidnapping of students and abduction for ransom by armed extremist groups and bandits have become endemic in northern Nigeria, with more than 1,000 children kidnapping in 2021 (GCRP, 2022).

The table below represents some of the terrorist and extremists activities and fatalities

Table One: Terrorist Incidents in Nigeria 2008-2021

Characteristic	Death	Total Death for 7 yrs
2008	3,564	50,649
2009	3,822	
2010	3,408	
2011	4,372	
2012	5,471	
2013	10,088	
2014	19,924	
2015	15,754	70,192
2016	9,267	
2017	7,539	
2018	8,808	
2019	9,067	
2020	9,495	
2021	10,262	

Source: Statista 2022. <https://www.statsista.com>

In Nigeria, terrorists killing, kidnapping for ransom, and other violent religious extremism have targeted the government, military facilities, and innocent civilians in recent years. Terrorists attacked the Nigeria Defense Academy (NDA) in Kaduna, on August 24, 2021, killing two officers and abducting one other senior officer (Sahara Report, 2021). In addition, on June 7, 2022, bandits attacked St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo in Ondo state, over 50 worshippers were killed and over 80 people were injured (Vanguard, 2022).

On March 28, 2022, a train bound for Kaduna was attacked by terrorists along the Abuja-Kaduna rail line, killing eight passengers and kidnapping over 50 others (Business day, 2022). From a similar string of attacks, the Kuje Prison in Abuja was attacked by about 300 terrorists, on July 5- 2022, resulting in the escape of 879 inmates, including 150 Boko Haram

terrorists held in custody (Vanguard, 2022). Kidnapping of vulnerable, innocent Nigerian citizens, clergy men, and priests, among others occur on a daily basis. The presidential advance convoy on July 5, 2022, was also attacked on Kaduna-Katsina highway, and terrorists threatened to kidnap and abduct the president of Nigeria and Kaduna State governor (The Guardian, 2022).

Nigeria appears to be a safe haven for terrorists as the government seems to be overwhelmed by terrorist strategy, with many quarters alluding to suspected collusion of government with the terrorist (The Paradise News, 2022). A Nigeria soldier once boasted on the social media about sharing in the 100 million Naira ransom paid by Deji Oyewumi, one of the adopted Abuja-Kaduna train victims (The Paradise, 2022).



Some activities of terrorists and religious extremists in recent times in Nigeria

- i. 14th April 2014 Boko Haram kidnapped 276 female students of government girls secondary school Chibok, Borno.
- ii. February 19, 2018, 110 school girls were kidnapped from Dapchi.
- iii. 25th February, 2021, 279 school girls were kidnapped from government girls science secondary school Zangaria
- iv. 27 school children were kidnapped from Kagara secondary school in Niger state (2021).
- v. 27 school children were kidnapped from Kagara secondary school in Niger state (2021).
- vi. 27 school children were kidnapped from Kagara secondary school in Niger state (2021).
- vii. Green field University Kasarami students were kidnapped (2021)
- viii. The Nigerian defense academy NDA was attacked and a major in the Nigeria army kidnapped (2021).
- ix. The global coalition to protect education from attack (GCPEA) reported 2015-2019, 100. Attacks on schools alone in Nigeria by Boko Haram and bandits and since then it has been on the increase.
- x. 13th July 2021, www.vanguardngr.com reported that 2,371 people were kidnapped in the first half of 2021.
- xi. January-February 1181 person reportedly kidnapped 2021 ([https://www.wanap.org/news/January 17, 2022](https://www.wanap.org/news/January-17-2022)).
- xii. 2021 alone 81 students were reportedly kidnapped (www.thecable.ng) February 4, 2022).
- xiii. Between January 2015 to May 2020, not fewer than 4,962 persons were kidnapped across Nigeria many cases are not reported (<https://www.wanap.org/news> retrieval January 17, 2022)

Theoretical Framework

The assumption that terrorism is a growing phenomenon in international politics has wide acceptance in our present day society. However, the existence of religious terrorism as part of our modern world is paradoxical, given that one of humanity's pre-occupation is the maintenance of peace and stability, socially balanced and economically viable environment in order for humanity to surmount the challenges of life. To this end, international relations scholars have long sought ways to reduce and redirect religious extremism and terrorist acts for the benefit of national and international interests. As a result, various theories of international relations have been developed, but opinions on the best ways to combat religious extremism and terrorism differ. However, by focusing on Nigerian government's response to religious extremism and terrorism in the country from 2015 to 2022, the Relative Deprivation theory is adopted in explaining the act of religious extremism and terrorism in Nigeria. When man perceived discrepancy between his value expectations and his value capability persistently, he becomes agitated and continuous agitation will result to frustration and become aggressive. Ted Robert Gurr relative deprivation theory sees tension developing from a divergence between the 'ought' and the 'IS' of collective value satisfaction which disposes men to violence.

Relative Deprivation Theory

Gurr (1968) maintained that "relative deprivation" is a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and their value capability. These value expectations are the

goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities on the other hand are goods and conditions that they are capable of achieving and maintaining given the social means at their disposal. Because material goods are owned individually, the desire for them is aggravated by their perception of the age long Malthusian theory which asserts that "population will ultimately outgrow the means of subsistence". Furthermore their belief that wealth, power and prestige are not distributed equally and fall into the hands of few persons, individuals, groups, and even the state who collectively maintain control over what they claim to be theirs has aggravated their desire to be violent and seek terrorist means to assert their demand.

As a result, conflict of interest between the counter availing forces of the weak and the strong will emerge, resulting in "survival of the fittest", in which the strong become rich; the weak become poor. Relating this theory to the Nigeria society context, the poor are the civil society, whereas the political elite are the rich. The political elites consciously reduce the civil society poverty, through obnoxious policies that dictate the "dos and don'ts" of the deprived. For example, the civil society is not given a decisive voice and where such opportunity presents itself, they can only have a say while the political class will have their way. In circumstances like this, it would be very difficult to bridge the inequality gap between the rich and the poor.

As a result, the inequality gap will continue to grow astronomically. As a result, in order to guard against anarchy and perpetual deprivation

of the powerless by the powerful, there must be a way of authoritatively allocating the scarce resources for the mutual good of the entire citizens of the society and failure to do so result in insecurity and terrorism. Nigeria becomes a breeding ground for terrorists, bandits, kidnappers and rituals.

According to relative deprivation theory, when a man is relatively deprived, it will lead to frustration, aggression as he seeks for survival. The main goal of this section of the study is to use the relative deprivation theory to explain the causes of religious extremism and terrorism in Nigeria. Even though the causes of violence are numerous, complex and closely related, it is the duty of political scientists to contribute as much as possible to shedding some light on this extremely important phenomenon bedeviling Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The recent religious extremism and terrorism in Nigeria and how the government is responding to the phenomenon poses a fiercest challenge to the country's unity. These terrorist groups and the approach of the government has fractured Nigerians along religious lines and thus 'reversed some of the nation's hard-won gains on building national unity and stability'.

The generally scarring insecurity, bombing, kidnapping, raping and killings had dealt a major blow on political and social activities in the country. As the 2023 general elections approaches, the polity is heated up with lots of apprehension. This type of security challenge is one that is combated with great experience and political will combined with expert intelligence. The government should live up to its obligations to protect life and properties of citizens and not with this "flip" 'flop' approach in dealing with terrorist activities.

The study, therefore recommends among others that the Nigerian government should shift emphasis from military and arms, and flip flop approach to a more realistic approach using the human security approach to combat terrorism and religious extremism and also to invest in inter-religious dialogues between leaders of the two dominant religions to search for workable solutions to these terrorist activities.

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