

Effect of Terrorists Reintegration on National Security in Nigeria: A Case of North East Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria has made several efforts at curtailing the menace of terrorist activities in order to enhance her national security. One of these efforts is the adoption of the non-kinetic approach of reintegration programme for surrendered terrorist through the processes of deradicalization, reconciliation and resettlement. The researcher is of the view that effective application of reintegration processes will positively impact on national security in Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study which are: What is the effect of terrorists deradicalization on national security in Nigeria? What is the effect of terrorists' reconciliation on national security in Nigeria? What is the effect of terrorists' resettlement on national security in Nigeria? This study examines the effect of terrorist reintegration on national security taking into consideration the effective application of the processes. The study analyzed qualitative and quantitative data collected from both primary and secondary sources while utilizing Cognitive Dissonance and Structural Functionalism Theories. Reintegration is a safe transition to the community, after an individual has acquired attitude and behaviour that generally lead to productive functioning and thereby proceeds to live a law-abiding life in the society. Reintegration programme involves deradicalization, reconciliation and resettlement which is a process of being remorseful, renouncing violence and being relocated back to, as well as received by the community (Silke, 2013). The three processes are correlated and complement one another starting with deradicalization. Deradicalization focusses on the remolding of the surrendered terrorists while reconciliation targets the victims and the surrendered terrorists with emphasis on the victims forgiveness. Resettlement however targets the empowerment of all with the reconstruction of the community. When all these processes are well executed, law and order will be maintained, socio-economic activities will be improved and national security will be enhanced.

Keywords: Terrorist Reintegration, National Security, De-radicalization, Reconciliation, Resettlement

INTRODUCTION

The dawn of post-cold war era saw most nations faced with more of intra-state than inter-states conflicts (Solf, 2014). These conflicts take the form of kidnapping, ethno-religious crises, farmers/herders' conflicts, armed banditry, terrorism, insurgency among others with negative impact on national security. To contain this threat particularly terrorism, affected governments usually employ both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches to stem the threat (Roberts & Everton, 2011). Non-kinetic approach includes government reintegration of surrendered terrorists back to their communities or into civil society through the processes of de-radicalization, reconciliation and resettlement programme. Reintegration is a safe transition to the community, after an individual has acquired attitude and behaviour that generally lead to productive functioning and thereby proceeds to live a law-abiding life in the society (Huq, 2019). Reintegration programme involves deradicalization, reconciliation and resettlement which is a process of being remorseful, renouncing violence and being relocated back to, as well as received by the community (Silke, 2013). The three processes are correlated and complement one another starting with deradicalization. Relevantly, reintegration has been instrumental in the reconciliation of nations for enhanced national

security (Okolo & Akubo, 2019). Governments conduct reintegration programme for surrendered terrorists in order to achieve law and order and thereby enhance national security (Jones et al, 2005). The ultimate objective is to achieve law and order and enhance national security.

National security entails identification of threats, preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of a nation, protection of lives and property, protection of trade and commerce as well as the protection of legitimate interests for enhanced social and economic well-being of its people (Imobighe, 2003). National security refers to the defense of a nation's citizens, territorial integrity, and sovereignty against all kinds of dangers, both internal and external.

To achieve this goal, protective measures are put in place to prevent threats from developing into acts that could negate government's efforts to ensure the well-being of its people and national survival (Imobighe, 2003). Contemporary threats in Nigeria includes but not limited to banditry, armed robbery, kidnaping, and terrorism. Combating terrorism and enhancing national security involves a combination of efforts which include political, economic, diplomatic, intelligence and military options among others as well as a successful terrorists' reintegration programme (Afzal, 2021). A well-articulated, structured and organized reintegration programme would successfully enhance national security. Countries that have successfully implemented reintegration programme include Sri Lanka for Tamil Tigers, Sierra Leone for the rebels and Egypt.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In 2016, the FGN established rehabilitation and reintegration programme for the surrendered terrorists under Operation Safe Corridor(OPSC) in the NEN. As at March 2022, 1,543 terrorists were reintegrated through OPSC. However, despite the number of terrorists that were supposedly deradicalized, reconciled and resettled back to their communities or society, terrorists' activities and insecurity still abound. It was discovered that the reintegration programme's processes (deradicalization, reconciliation and resettlement), institutional, infrastructural and technical capacities as well as necessary policy were not appropriately put in place for OPSC to achieve its mandate. This action was counterproductive and reopened new line of conflicts.

Sati Sheikh Kubeni(2021) in its survey stated that some of the victims of the insurgency were not in support of the reintegration programme of OPSC and openly condemned the efforts while some of the reintegrated reformed terrorists returned back to active terrorism. The unpleasant attitudes of some community members and victims towards the former terrorists made some of them to return to terrorism. Furthermore, the non-inclusion of the victims in the reintegration programme makes the programme incomprehensive. These issues amongst others brought to fore the challenges that have undermined the core objective of the reintegration programme of OPSC.

Nevertheless, in June 2021, the Borno State Government (BSG) commenced terrorists' reintegration programme referred to as Borno State Model of Terrorists Reintegration Programme (BSMTRP). The programme is being conducted for the members of the BHT group and ISWAP who surrendered to troops of OPHK. As at August 2022, more than 79,000 terrorists and families have surrendered with BSG's plan to rehabilitate the surrendered terrorists through reintegration programme (Eze phone interview, 2022). However, it is feared that if the processes of deradicalization, reconciliation and resettlement are not well conducted, the programme might not achieve its mandate which is to achieve law and order thereby enhance national security. This could result in counterproductive.

Therefore, the study investigated the conduct of BSMTRP in relation to the deradicalization, reconciliation, and resettlement processes and its impact on national security in the NEN and Nigeria generally. The motivation of the researcher is based on the notion that a well-executed reintegration programme will

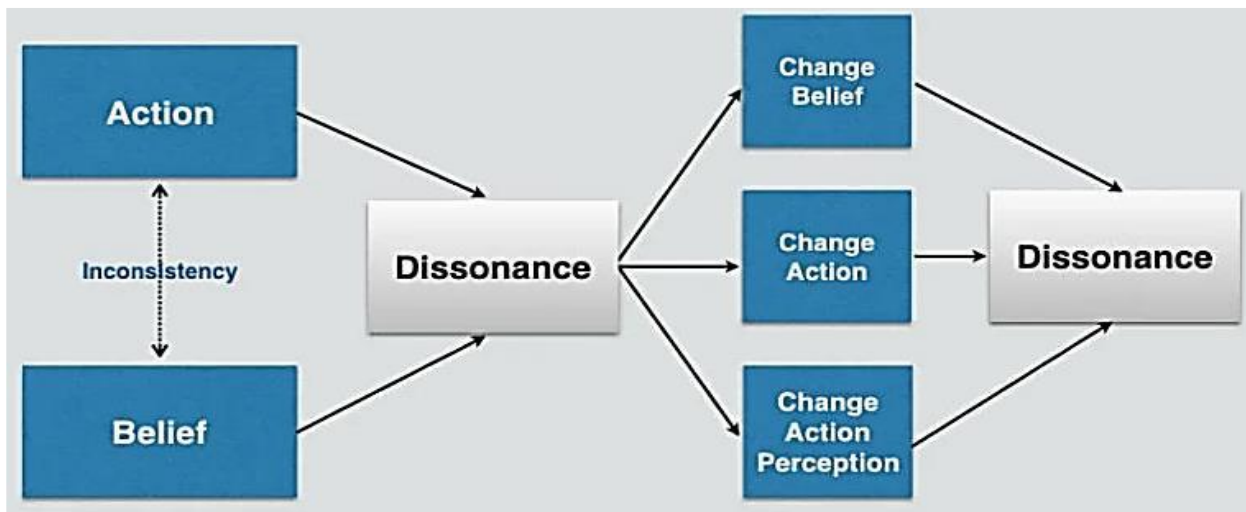
enhance national security. The study specifically covered Borno State in NEN where there is renewed efforts to reintegrate surrendered terrorists. The content of the study focused on the implementation efforts of the BSMTRP.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Festinger’s notion of the CDT holds that when a person’s behavior contradicts with his or her views and beliefs, there is an underlying psychological tension present. The CDT has demonstrated that when a person displays behaviour that are at variance with their attitudes or beliefs (for example, taking a contrary viewpoint on a subject), a shift in attitude that is compatible with the behavior results (Eze phone interview, 2022).

If there is reflection at the stage of increased dissonance, a shift in belief, action, and perception will eventually result in decreased dissonance, also known as consonance, which is what happens when cognitive parts are consistent with one another. Humans have an inbuilt demand for consistency, which is the central tenet of cognitive dissonance theory (Thogersen, 2004). The CDT provides a better explanation of the recipients of the BSMTRP, the terrorists who have turned themselves in (Cooper, 2012). Their actions and beliefs conflict, which causes more dissonance and eventually leads to their capitulation.

Figure 1: Diagrammatic Illustration of the Cognitive Dissonance Theory

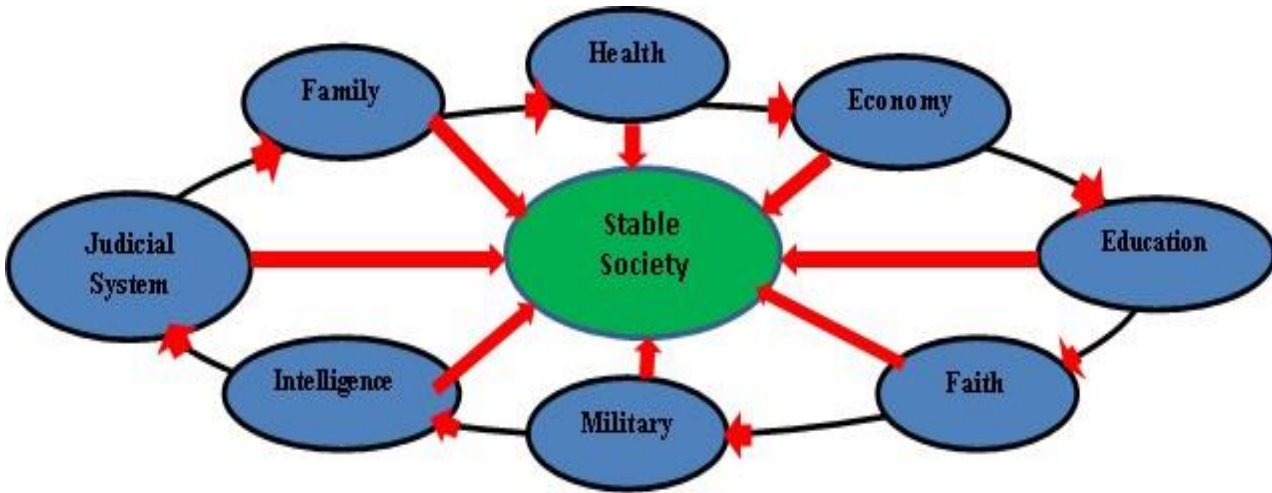


Source: Festinger, L. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

According to the Structural Functionalism Theory (SFT), “social systems are made up of interrelated components like the institutions shown in the Figure 2. The arrows connecting each component of the system show their solidarity (interaction), and the arrows from each component to the center (society) show how each portion contributes to the stability of the society.” This is accomplished by highlighting the connections among the various social institutions that make up the society, as seen in Figure 2. The theory “provides a comprehensive analytical tool for an understanding of the role of institutions in a political system.”

In this regard, from the perspective of SFT, the FGN, BSG, AFN, paramilitary agencies, and OPHK are social institutions that may guarantee national security through effective terrorists` reintegration programme. According to the idea of SFT, a more secure and stable society will be attained through the different initiatives and procedures these institutions set in place for an efficient programme for reintegrating terrorists.

Figure 2: Diagrammatic Illustration of the Structural Functionalism Model

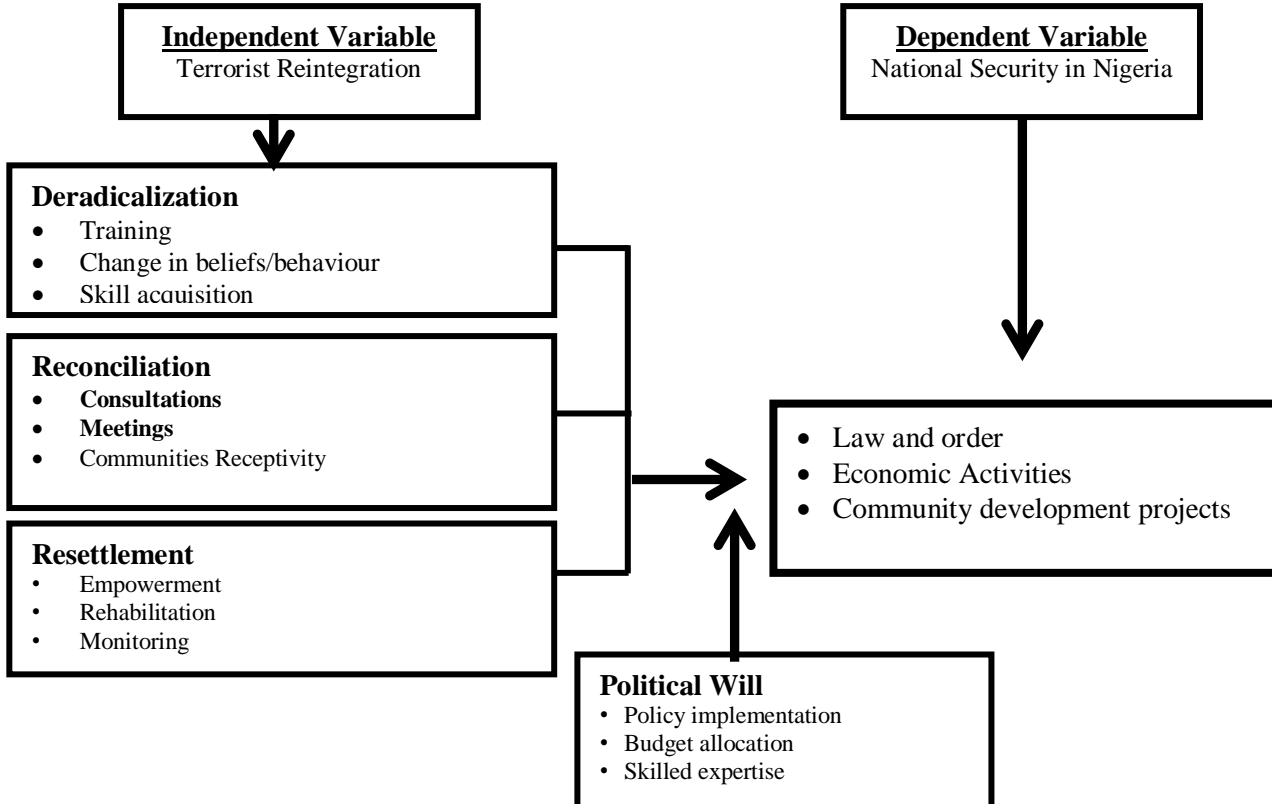


Source: Research Illustrations, 2022.

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE OF TERRORIST REINTEGRATION AND NATIONAL SECURITY

The 2 key variables in this study are terrorist reintegration and national security. These are the independent and dependent variables respectively. The 2 variables were conceptualized and their relationship established.

Figure 3: Diagrammatic Illustration of the Conceptual Framework Model



Source: Research Illustrations, 2022.

Relationship Between Terrorist Reintegration and National Security

Terrorist reintegration is the social absorption of former insurgents into civil society on the economic,

political, and social levels. Relatedly, the stability of government and its institutions, as well as the defense of the country and the welfare of its residents, are among the elements of national security. If effectively accomplished through economic, political, and social means, assimilation of ex-insurgents into society would enhance societal well-being, governmental efficiency, and national security. Therefore, there is a clear connection between reintegration and national security.

METHODOLOGY

The field survey design was used as it offered enough primary and secondary information from a sizable population and other reliable sources for quantitative and qualitative analysis. The target population which included personnel of OPHK, BSG officials, representatives from pertinent MDAs, NEDC, NEMA officials, SEMA officials, CSOs, UN agencies and NGOs were used to gather primary data. The study used a sampling frame which is the set of source materials to select or choose specific members of the population that were interviewed in the survey. The perspectives of senior officers in OPHK, para-military officers, BSG officials, CJTF members, MDAs, NEMA, SEMA, NGOs, and important figures in the field of study were included using this sample technique.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The primary objective of the study was to ascertain the effect of terrorist reintegration on national security in Nigeria focusing on the BSMTRP in Maiduguri NEN. The surrendered terrorists numbering approximately 20,909 consisting of 4,800 men, 5,509 women and 10,600 children were deradicalized, reconciled and resettled back to their communities within Borno State. The programme also involves media houses in reaching out to the general public of its activities and to appeal to the active terrorists to embrace the initiative. The reformed surrendered terrorists were then resettled to their communities after reconciling them with their victims and the communities' members. The resettlement process go with empowerment of the reformed terrorists. So far, the programme has been adjudged successful as more reformed surrendered terrorists have been resettled and empowered with financial incentives and equipment to enhance their employment and productivity in the society. So far, the effect of terrorists` reintegration on national security has been positive and worthwhile.

Effect of Terrorists Deradicalization on National Security in Nigeria

Deradicalization is a counterterrorism operation that transforms surrendered terrorists into better citizens through training, guidance, and counseling at rehabilitation camps. Most respondents praised the efforts at BSMTRP, stating they were above average and a smart effort to change terrorists` mentality. Most respondents agreed that the surrendered terrorists would become good citizens through training, guidance, and counseling at the rehabilitation camp. A survey result showed that the majority of the respondents conceded that the deradicalization process will have a beneficial impact on the surrendered reformed terrorists, which will eventually convert to positive effect for the society. Hence, one can evidently states that terrorists deradicalization have positive effect on national security in the NEN.

Effect of Terrorists Reconciliation on National Security in Nigeria

The BSMTRP terrorists` reconciliation efforts have been adjudged to be recording success due to the cooperation of stakeholders and the willingness of the people of Borno State to forgive and accept the reformed terrorists. The BSMTRP included all stakeholders in the reconciliation process, including the terrorist attack victims. The State Government convened conferences with participants from the political and security fields, as well as CSOs, NGOs, religious figures, and victims, to consider forgiveness and pardoning reformed surrendered terrorists. Hunt stated that the essence of reconciliation is to restore broken

relationship and it requires a commitment of both quality time and quantity time. Achieving an effective reconciliation process can facilitate the reintegration of reformed surrendered terrorists, improve law and order, and enhance national security.

Effect of Terrorists Resettlement on National Security in Nigeria

Over 70,000 surrendered terrorists have been deradicalized, reformed and reintegrated back into their communities. These deradicalized, reformed and reintegrated terrorists have played crucial roles in the ongoing fight against insurgency in Borno and Yobe States. During farming season, reformed terrorists assist their communities in performing surveillance duties, following farmers to their farmlands and observing terrorists that might harm them. Borno State is more peaceful than some North-West and North Central states. The bumper harvest of food crops by farmers in 2022 supports the assertion that peace is returning quickly to Borno State.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria has made several efforts at curtailing the menace of terrorist activities in order to enhance her national security. One of these efforts is the adoption of the non-kinetic approach of reintegration programme for surrendered terrorist through the processes of deradicalization, reconciliation and resettlement. Reintegration programme involves deradicalization, reconciliation and resettlement which is a process of being remorseful, renouncing violence and being relocated back to, as well as received by the community. Resettlement however targets the empowerment of all with the reconstruction of the community. According to a survey's findings, the majority of respondents agreed that the deradicalization process will benefit the terrorists who have turned themselves in after undergoing reform and will ultimately have a good impact on society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The reintegration programme founded on well-structured and coordinated processes of de-radicalization, reconciliation and resettlement should be sustained. Surrendered terrorists should undergo a thorough assessment process to determine their level of involvement, potential threat, and readiness for reintegration. Access should be provided to education and skill development programme for successful reintegration of surrendered terrorists. Efforts should be made to build trust between the surrendered terrorists and the communities they are reintegrating into so as to promote reconciliation and social cohesion. The FGN and state governments should sustain the reintegration programme with political will, policy and budgetary allocation.

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