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 life 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 recommend among others, the need for government to properly police the borders, religious or tribal nepotism should not be condoled and not until systematic corruption, bad governance, inter religious and ethnic rivalry aimed at the control of state apparatus for economic and political selfish gains are seriously addressed and curtailed. The paper suggests that acute poverty and relative deprivation are precursor to the serial insecurity and terrorism that Nigeria is facing today.

Keywords: Insecurity, terrorism, religious extremism, flip flop approach, combating

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is a particular kind of asymmetric 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 goals (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 & JongMann's definition of terrorism (as cited in Wendy 2017), is an anxiety- inspiring method of repeat violent action employed by (semi) clandestine individual, 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 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, Christian and Islamic religions identities 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 to be a strong proponent 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 not to do so would be to 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

1. Evaluate the government political will and integrity in tackling the phenomenon (Terrorism and religious Extremism)

2. Scrutinize the flip flop approach system of combating religious extremism and terrorism by the Nigeria government.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although religious terrorism has always formed part of social existence (Rapport, 1984), it become "significant" for the time 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 idea of nexus between religious extremism and terrorism dates back to David C.Rapport's (1984), in his work "Fear and trembling terrorism in three religious traditions", which analyze 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). Rapports 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 a simple label to set of descriptive characteristics and substantive claims 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 systems, mechanism of legitimate and justification, concept of royalty and world view (Hoffmann, 2006).

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 an 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, 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 realm but in the public realm. I n other words, extremist 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 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 religion recognize the destructive capacity of extremism and sought strategies to contain it'. In Nigeria following independence, the Islamic religion group or organization falls within the sect who held extreme view and wish to impose their belief on others by violent means, which had led to various uprisings of religious extremism in the country.

The Maitatsine uprisings in Northern Nigeria

The first major religious, extremism experienced in Nigeria, is the Maitatsine uprisings which some scholars have connected to the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in the 19th Century. The Usman Dan Fodio Jihad established the Sokoto Caliphate which is a strong power broker in Nigeria politics today, under the supreme law of Sharia (Adesoji, 2011; Maiangwa 2014). The Maitatsine movement was formed by an Islamic preacher known as Muhammadu Marwa (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 security were Implicated in extrajudicial killings and arbitrary torture of Maitatsine members in their custody (Agbiboa, 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 n1990s 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 across 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 the called or known by their Arabic name – Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awaiti-Jihad – meaning "people committed to the propagation of the prophet's teachings and 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, some believed that the sect actually 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'atuAnsaril Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan ("vanguards for the protection of Muslems 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, 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. 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. However, despite Boko Haram's activities, it is a stretch to describe the complexities of a vast country, whose economy has been growing by an average of 7 percent since 2000 such that it now has the largest economy in Africa and 26th largest economy in the world as a failed state. 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 such as on the picture below and also to mention a few of such religious terrorist barbaric acts.

Source: https://www**. Sahara reporters, Com. Retrieved February 16, 2021**
Boko Haram Terrorist and their Foreign Partners in the Sanbisa Forest in Borno

Some of Boko Haram, Bandits and Fulani headsmen activities of recent time 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 Zanfara

iv.   27 school children were kidnapped from Kagara secondary school in Niger state (2021).

v.   In Kaduna, federal college of forestry mechanization, Faka. Students were kidnapped (2021)

vi.   Green field University Kasarami students were kidnapped (2021)

vii. The Nigerian defense academy NDA was attacked and a major in the   Nigeria army kidnapped (2021).

viii. The global coalition to protect education from attack (GCPEA) reported 2015- 2019, 100. Attacks on schools alone in Nigeria by book harm and   bandits and since then it has been on the increase.

ix.   13th July 2021, www.vanguardngr.com reported that 2,371 people were kidnapped in the first half of 2021.

x.   January-February 1181 person reportedly kidnapped 2021 (https://www.wanap.org/news January 17, 2022).

xi.   2021 alone 81 students were reportedly kidnapped (www.thecable.ng February 4, 2022).

xii. 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 fact that religious terrorism to be a part of our modern world is paradoxical,

given that one of humanity pre occupation is the maintenance of political peace and stability, socially balanced and economically viable environment in order for humility 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, given the nature of this paper, which focuses on Nigerian government 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 aggression. The relative deprivation theory by Ted Robert Gurr has the tension that develops 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 that 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 Malthusion theory of "population on the means of subsistence". And because wealth, power and prestige are not distributed equally and fall into the hands of few persons, individuals, groups, and even the state maintain control over what they claim to be theirs.

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.

The government of Nigeria flip-flop approach to religious extremism and terrorism

Flip flop approach is a leadership style adopted by leader to achieve goals. 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, is when he gave an order to crush terrorists and at the same time pay deaf ear or attention to their activities, even when it is reported that military officers, Islamic cleric and top government officers are linked with terrorists. Leah Shaibu's case, a Christian school girl from Dapchi girls' secondary school kidnapped and adopted by the Boko Haram sect, the President in his words. " 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' approach is a motivational, promise of economic reward and persuasion for a good behaviour, while the 'Stick' approach 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 'spiralling 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 and rapprochements to 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 President Goodluck Jonathan who 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 to not to stop the group of violence campaigns to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria under a strict form of sharia law (Agbiboa, 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 (Agbiboa, 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).

President Muhammadu Buhari, a former military dictator defeated president Goodluck Jonathan in 2015 presidential election on the promise of combating terrorism head on, but after over seven years of his democratic rule, insecurity had become worsen in all regions of the country due to the high level of corruption and the body language of the ruling class particularly the president has complicated the fight against Boko-Haram. Beside the conflict of interest in the military, uneven distribution of oil revenue, corruption, Fulani herdsmen violent attacks in the middle belt region of the country, the Economic and political challenges pose significant threat to

Nigeria Security.

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, evidence suggests that the government downplay the dynamics of the narrative.

In reality, Nigeria has become safe haven for increasingly active terrorist groups. Including the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Jama' at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslim in (JNIM); AL-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb; a splinter of Boko Haram popularly called Islamic State in West-Africa Province (ISWAP); the Fulani herdsmen of West-Africa once ranked as the world's fourth deadliest terror group and the bandits (Ojewole,2021). *The recent train attack March 28, 2022, bears the operational foot prints of the bandit group that has perfected the act of terrorism through previous abductions of school girls in Chibok, Dapchi, and Kankara among others in Nigeria. These incidents give credence to the Jihadist's perpetual attempt to forge an alliance with splinter terror groups in the north-west of Nigeria who are responsible for the incessant violent civilian attacks.* The multiple security threats in Nigerian leave civilians at serious risk, including growing attacks by armed groups called "bandits" and as well-known armed extremist Islamic groups, Fulani herdsmen, 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 2-6 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. 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 neighbouring 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 majority of Nigerians describe the Nigerian government's response to the violent killing of innocent civilians by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, Fulani herdsmen and bandits as carrot and stick approaches or kit Globe treatment, also known as the "flip" "flop" approach. The Buhari administration non-political will to combat the Boko Haram, the Fulani herdsmen and the bandits head on, shows the approach of the government in tackling religious extremism and terrorism, thereby making Nigeria a safe haven for religious extremist. The terrorist attacks in Nigeria, such as those carried out by Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen bandit and other insurgencies are depicted in the table below. The table, depict some of the terrorist and extremists activities and fatalities. It shows that the Nigerian government has the worst terrorist year in 2014, with 19,924 deaths recorded from terrorist activities.

Regardless, the analysis revealed that from 2008 to 2014, a period of seven years, the total recorded was 50649 while the period of 2015 to 2021 the death toll is 70192, this indicated that the government in power from 2015 to date had experienced more deadly attacks on the citizens, military/security formations and personnel than ever in the history of religious violent extremism and terrorism in Nigeria.

Characteristic	Death	Total Death for 7 yrs
2008	3,564	
2009	3,822	

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

Source: Statista 2022: Https://www.statista.com.August **10, 2022**

Terrorist 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 of 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 injuring 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 over 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 Buhari 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).

CONCLUSION

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. With the approach of the 2023 general elections, the polity is heated up with a lot of apprehension due to the frequent kidnapping, arbitrary killing of citizens by bandits, Fulani herdsmen, unknown-gunmen, Boko Haram and other insurgencies in the country. This type of security challenge is one that is combated with great experience and political will compared to conventional military forces, the government leave up to its obligations to protect life and properties of citizens , therefore the government should have long-term working relationship with traditional and religious leaders in a comprehensive effort to combat religious extremism and terrorism head on, not with "flip" 'flop' approach or kit globe treatment for terrorist as in this administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. The study, therefore

recommend that the Nigerian government should invest in inter-religious dialogues between leaders of the two dominant religions of Islam and Christianity and also to reach out to religious, traditional and political elites in the country.

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