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Non-kinetic Counter-insurgency Approach: De-radicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DRR) in Nigeria's North East, 2015-2021

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Abstract

In response to violent extremism and faith-inspired insurgency in Nigeria's north east, the Nigerian government deployed both kinetic and non-kinetic counter measures. In furtherance of Nigeria's counter-insurgency strategy the authorities instituted rehabilitation and reintegration as a non-kinetic component. This is expected to serve multiple purposes, including the encouragement of the surrendering of active Boko Haram insurgents, which will then be followed by their de-radicalisation, rehabilitation, and subsequent reintegration into civilian and community life. The activities of the DRR progamme as well as concerns raised by the establishment of OPS Necessitates this study. The study adopts the historical descriptive method and utilizes Galtung's Positive Peace Theory for theoretical framework. The study employs both primary and secondary sources of data. Some of the identified concerns include, a poorly conceived and executed DRR programme, matters of negative public perception, inadequate funding, dearth of personnel and institutional capacity, the lack of political-will from some authorities, inter-agency misgivings and absence of synergy, issues of transitional justice and restitution for victims and victims' families, palpable fear of recidivism, among others. The study concluded that without adequate reforms OPSC and importantly the political-will, the programme will degenerate further and constitute threats to national security. As such OPSC should be restructured and the mandate amended for more effectiveness.

Keywords: de-radicalisation, insurgency, rehabilitation, reintegration, violence.

Introduction

As the Boko Haram conflict became increasingly more violent, experts within the government recommended a blend of kinetic / hard and non-kinetic / soft approaches to the fledging insurgency. The Nigerian authorities in 2010 created the Presidential Committee on Dialogue in the North to seek prospects of resolving the BH insurgency through non-kinetic means. The committee recommended a de-radicalisation programme for BH members willing to surrender.

About four major rehabilitation and reintegration programmes were simultaneously conducted in the North East. There is the United Nations

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Children Fund UNICEF programme specially designed for under-aged persons who have come in contact with armed violent extremist tagged Children Associated With Armed Groups (CAAFAG). Second, is Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) the officially sanctioned and acknowledged DRR programme. Third, is the clandestine Sulhu Project coordinated by the Nigerian military and the DSS which targets Boko Haram field commanders. And the more recent "Borno State Model" coordinated by the Borno State government and designed to a lure BH insurgents (*awam, rijal*, *munzul*and *nikab*) in a civilian controlled rehabilitation environment. Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) however is the focus of this paper.

This paper is divided into six main parts. Section 1 Theoretical Framework, section 2 Non-kinetic Counter-terrorism and Counter-Insurgency, section 3 Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC), section 4 Challenges to Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) and Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programmes from Other Countries, section 5 overcoming obstacles to OPSC, section 6 Strategies for Action in Instituting an Efficient De-radicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DRR) Programme

Theoretical Framework

Johan Galtung's positive peace theory will be used for the analytic framework. Positive peace theory seeks to explain why peace could and should be maintained in certain periods and contexts of the past and under which circumstances and through which mechanisms it can be preserved in the future.[1] Peace in the context of violent conflict describes relations between two or more parties (a person, a state or nation, a region or civilization) pulling in different directions and attempts at a lull to hostilities. Galtung identifies three main types of peace: negative, disharmonious (what is bad for one is good for the other); indifferent (a non-relation, they do not care about the other) and; positive, harmonious: (what is bad-good for one is bad-good for other).[2] The negative relation between the Nigerian State and BH insurgents has brought about direct violence and harm, just as inequitable structures have produced harm through indirect means. Positive peace is the presence of harmony and the construction of more harmonious relations, which is achieved through the removal of the conflict, by provision of creative solutions or its transformation so that it can be handled in a nonviolent empathic way. Positive peace is more than the absence of violence but the construction of clear concise positive values, fusion and integration as against fission, isolation and value assumptions.[3] Positive peace through justice is the route best taken. DRR programme must be designed and conducted within the tenets of rule of law and criminal justice, and not become a replacement for, neither should it impugn on the existing criminal justice system.

[1]Johan Galtung, "Theories Of Peace: A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking International Peace"; Research Institute, Oslo September (1967)
[2]Galtung, "Theories Of Peace: A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking International Peace", 1967
[3] Galtung, "Theories Of Peace: A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking International Peace", 1967

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Non-kinetic Counter-terrorism and Counter-InsurgencyApproach

Following the recommendation of the Presidential Committee on Dialogue in the North and in line with its multi-pronged approach to the twin problems of insurgency and violent extremism, the Nigerian government in 2014 started making attempts at a "soft approach" to the BH insurgency. A framework for the non-kinetic/soft approach was designed in 2014 by the Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) initiated by late National Security Adviser General OwoeyeAzazi.[4] This act by the BAU was in line with the global effort of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) as championed at the time by the former United States President Barack Obama and his Secretary of State Hilary Clinton.[5] The PVCE methodology emphasised the need to address underlining grievances by shifting from state-centred approach to people-centred approach. This new approach included a particular focus on strategic communication and law enforcement-based interventions. Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) was built around four main pillars: strengthening institution and coordination of PCVE programme, strengthening rule of law and access to justice, engaging communities in capacity building and building community resilience and integrating strategic communication.[6] Moreover, the PCVE approach is channeled through four major mediums engagement, dialogue, rehabilitation and reintegration.[7]

This soft approach initiative was then operationalized by then National Security Adviser, Col. SamboDasuki (rtd), who outlined a holistic strategy, including de-radicalisation programmes, community engagement and economic regeneration.[8] Nigeria's countering violent extremism (CVE) programme was publicly launched in March 2014 with the aim that it would operate horizontally and vertically across government and work with non-state actors. A prison-based counter violent extremism (CVE) programme was also launched in March 2015 at Kuje medium-security facility in Abuja by Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) headed by Dr Ferdinand Ikwang.[9] The European Union (EU) supported national de-radicalisation programme had interlinked projects designed to tackle economic and social triggers of BH recruitment.[10] Also it was designed to lay the groundwork for disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration (DRR) effort once Boko Haram is defeated or a peace agreement is reached. Using the Nigerian prison facility at Kuje, Abuja,

[4]Interview Session with Barrister Mijiyanwa the Special Adviser on Extremism and Behavioral Matters to the National Security Adviser (NSA) at ONSA Abuja on the 15th of August 2018
[5]Interview Session Barrister Mijiyanwa, 15th August 2018
[6]Federal Republic of Nigeria, "Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism - Partnering for Safer and Resilient Communities", Abuja: *ONSA,* 2017
[7]Federal Republic of Nigeria, "Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism", 2017
[8]Daily Post Newspaper, Speech given by the National Security Adviser, Mohammed Sambo Dasuki, 'Nigeria's Soft Approach to Countering Terrorism', March 2014, Abuja. https://dailypost.ng/2012/03/19/sambo-dasuki-nigerias-soft-approach-countering-terrrorsim/
[9]Obi Anyadike, "Road to Redemption? Unmaking Nigeria's Boko Haram", *IRIN*, 2015.
[10]Anyadike, "Road to Redemption", 2015

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the European Union (EU) provided assistance and support in the areas of de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation, strategic communication, joint terrorism analysis and civil military relations. The project which had forty-three (43) Boko Haram ex- insurgents as participants was designed to assist the low-level Boko Haram fighters go through Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) programme and were eventually considered for release albeit under surveillance.[11]

Legal framework for an expanded de-radicalisationand reintegration programme was provided later in the year with the September 2015 approval by the National Security Council of the creation of Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC).[12] Operation Safe Corridor was given the mandate to encourage the surrender of willing and repentant BH insurgents, as well as the creation of a viable platform to implement an incremental process of de-radicalising, rehabilitating, and reintegrating back into society reformed former BH insurgents.[13]

The European Union (EU), under the EU Technical Assistance to Nigeria's evolving Security Challenges (EUTANS), played a very significant role in the entire process and assisted in the development of the de-radicalisation official guide.[14] This guide was officially adopted in October 2015 by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA). Following up on this, the Federal Ministry of Justice in July 2017 provided further legal backing and authorization to OPSC with the production the Legal Framework on OPSC operations.[15] For possible reasons of bureaucratic bottlenecks, the document is yet to have the presidential accent. Barrister Mijiyanwa from ONSA asserts that entire programme is designed and executed within the ambit of the rule of law and criminal justice.[16] OPSC he maintains is not a replacement for neither would it impugn on the existing criminal justice system.[17]

Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC)

Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) is expected to both incentivize a top-level deal and to encourage defections among rank-and-file fighters. With the launch of Operation Safe Corridor, a safe haven was created by the security forces in which Boko Haram members are persuaded and encouraged to surrender. General Beyidi Martins of OPSC describes the programme as a multi-sectoral programme involving 17 government Ministries, Department and Agencies

[11]Anyadike, "Road to Redemption", 2015
[12]Defence Intelligence Agency –DIA (Counter-Insurgency Section), "Reintegration of Repentant Terrorists and National Security Operation Safe Corridor in Perspective", *Maiduguri Field Office*, 1st September 2021
[13]Defence Intelligence Agency, "Reintegration of Repentant Terrorists and National Security Operation Safe Corridor in Perspective", 1st September 2021
[14]Defence Intelligence Agency, "Reintegration of Repentant Terrorists and National Security Operation Safe Corridor in Perspective", 1st September 2021
[15]Defence Intelligence Agency, "Reintegration of Repentant Terrorists and National Security Operation Safe Corridor in Perspective", 1st September 2021
[16]Interview Session Barrister Mijiyanwa, 15th August 2018
[17]Interview Session Barrister Mijiyanwa, 15th August 2018

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(MDAs) administering specific projects.[18] The Armed Forces, Nigerian Security Civil Defence Corps NSCDC, NPF, DIA, DSS and NIA provide security at the camp while other agencies provide expert supports in Psycho Therapy, Psycho-spiritual counseling, Drug Therapy, Social Counseling and Vocational Training amongst others.[19] In addition, OPSC partners with several agencies such as the North East Development Commission (NEDC), European Union (EU), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Borno, Adamawa and Yobe State Governments.[20]

The operation commenced with the aerial dispersal by the Nigerian Air Force of information leaflets encouraging Boko haram members to surrender to government authorities, assuring them of safe passage and fair treatment.[21] This strategic information dispersal approach proved quite invaluable, and was followed by mass media targeting through radio, television and social media broadcasts. There was an initial reluctance from conflicted and repentant Boko Haram members who doubted the sincerity of the government forces and believed it was actually a ploy to lure them into government-controlled locations where they would be summarily executed. However, repentant Boko Haram members started to surrender first in trickles and later in droves as the aerial assault and bombings of BH camps and positions became increasingly relentless.[22]

The OPSC conducted DRR programme isorganised in three (3) phases, it commences with de-radicalisation, then re-habilitation and concludes with reintegration stage.[23] The OPSC has so far rehabilitated 6 batches of ex-insurgents and successfully reintegrated them with their families in various States in the North East in collaboration with international partners and state governments albeit with certain reservations.[24] The OPSC process will be explained in details.

Repentant Boko Haram insurgents surrender to military operatives of the MNJTF, civilian JTF (Vigilante groups), community and religious leaders, and at camps set up for the internally displaced persons (IDP). Surrendered BH members are initially detained at a Nigerian Army Centre Giwa Barracks Maiduguri, Borno State, North East Nigeria. They are debriefed by military personnel, evaluated by a physiatrist and subsequently classified into groups after the extent of their involvement in the insurgency and extremist activities have been ascertained and future risk assessment conducted by the Joint

[18]Interview Session via telephone with Gen Beyidi Martins of Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) on the 11thof August 2021
[19]Defence Intelligence Agency, "Reintegration of Repentant Terrorists and National Security Operation Safe Corridor in Perspective", 1st September 2021
[20]Defence Intelligence Agency, "Reintegration of Repentant Terrorists and National Security Operation Safe Corridor in Perspective", 1st September 2021
[21]Interview Session with Gen. Emmanuel Aladeniyi at Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) Headquarters, Abuja on the 9thAugust 2018
[22]Interview Session Gen. Aladeniyi, 9thAugust 2018
[23]Interview session Gen Martins, 11thof August 2021
[24]Defence Intelligence Agency –DIA, "Assessment of the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs in Nigeria", *DIA headquarters*, Abuja, 30thJune 2021

Investigative Committee (JIC).[25] At the completion of the profiling exercise, surrendered insurgents are classified into three main categories which include dangerous extremists, moderate militants and non-violent / low level offenders.[26] General Abubakar Ndalolo of the Office of the National Security Adviser insist that detainee profiling exercise is very rigorous and has often been cited as one of the factors responsible for the backlog of yet to be processed detainees.[27] The JIC is made up of both military and civilian experts in particular fields crucial to the COIN process.[28] A number of Nigerian security personal possess the knowledge and expertise from participation in previous DDR exercises in, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan among others.[29]

Surrendered Boko Haram insurgents who after profiling are classified as moderate militants and non-violent offenders and are considered low risk, are eligible for the rehabilitation programme. However, participation is voluntary and not forced. De-radicalisation and rehabilitation programme is only for disarmed and disengaged ex Boko Haram members who voluntarily surrender and accept rehabilitation either through confession or court order pronouncements at judgment. Consent forms are passed around and filled by those willing to undertake the rehabilitation programme. Rescued, escaped captives as well as all minors qualify as victims are thus eligible for rehabilitation. Distinction is also made between civilians who lived in Boko Haram-controlled areas but were non-combatants nicknamed *Awam* (commoners), and low level Boko Haram recruits known as *Rijal* (Arabic for Men).[30]

Boko Haram members captured in battle and those classified as dangerous combatants after the profiling are considered high risk and not eligible to participate in OPSC.[31] They are instead transferred to a military detention centre in Kanji, Niger State to be subsequently tried according to the law.[32] A complex case centre was established at Kanji military camp to expedite judicial action at the detention centre. Between October 2017 and July 2018, authorities conducted three rounds of trials of over 1,500 Boko Haram suspects in a military base in Kanji, Niger State.[33]Some defendants had been in detention since 2009 and the majority faced charges of material and non-violent support to Boko Haram. Some of the detainees from the Kanji military camp that have

[25]Interview Session Gen. Aladeniyi, 9th August 2018
[26]Vanda Felbab-Brown, "The Limits Of Punishment: Transitional Justice And Violent Extremism Nigeria Case Study"; *United Nations University and Institute for Integrated Transitions*, May 2018
[27]Interview session via zoom with Gen.Abubakar Ndalolo of the Office National Security Adviser (NSA), Abuja, on the 26thAugust, 2021
[28]Interview sessionGen.Ndalolo,26th August, 2021
[29]Interview Session with Gen. G. A. Wahab (Rtd) Director General, The Nigerian Army Resource Centre (NARC), Abuja on the 18th of August, 2021
[30]Interview Session via telephone with Gen Beyidi Martins of Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) on the 2nd of September 2021
Felbab-Brown, *The Limits Of Punishment, 2018*
[31]Interview SessionGen. Martins, 2ndof September 2021
[32]Interview Session Barrister Mijiyanwa,15th August 2018
[33]Interview Session Barrister Mijiyanwa, 15th August 2018

been tried and found not guilty or have served their jail time are also eligible to participate in OPSC.[34]

De-radicalisationat the DRR Camp

The willing participants are taken to the rehabilitation camp at *Mallam Sidi* Gombe, Gombe State (former NYSC Camp that was supposed to be six months temporary site). Gen Beyidi Martins of OPSC provides some details on the camp activities. At the camp participants are registered and the programme commences. Participants are classified into three main groups of male, female and minors depending on their composition.[35] Males and females through a process of intake, assert profiling and screening are grouped into two major sets- leadership and foot soldiers, depending on the level of involvement.[36] The participants undergo a 24 to 48-week course of de-radicalisationand rehabilitation therapies under certified operatives. Basic and religious education is included in the curriculum alongside vocational studies and sporting activities. There are religious de-radicalisation sessions as well as regular participant's physical and psychological assessment and revaluation.[37]

The programme aims to change the beliefs, views, values and attitudes of the participants through the de-radicalisationconstituent rather than only changing their behaviour (disengagement from violence). OPSC uses a number of indicators of the impact of interventions including: changes in the prisoners' behavior, level of engagement with the interventions, number of institutional incidents, and number of interventions completed.[38]

The camp authorities while acknowledging the need for tough love and discipline in order to run an efficient centre however, insist that participant's welfare is not taken for granted while safety and security of all participants and staff is given utmost priority.[39] Inmates are treated fairly and their rights are respected including the right to religious worship. Moreover, despite the absence of an institutionalised gender sensitive structure in place, women inmates are adequately taken care of and separated while their privacy is respected.

Family and stakeholder visits are allowed at the camp at the latter stages of the rehabilitation programme in order to assist in effective participant transition back into civilian life while also aiding community reintegration.[40]

Final assessment and evaluation are conducted before recommendation for release of participants. Before final graduation, an oath is sworn before

[34]Interview Session Barrister Mijiyanwa, 15th August 2018
[35]Interview SessionGen. Martins, 2ndof September 2021
[36]Interview SessionGen. Martins, 2ndof September 2021
[37]Interview Session Gen. Martins, 2ndof September 2021
[38]Interview SessionGen. Martins 2ndof September 2021
[39]Interview Session with Mr. Musa Chantu Director Behavioural Modification at the National Orientation Agency (NOA) Abuja on the 16th of August 2018
[40]Interview SessionMr. Chantu, 16th of August 2018

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common law and sharia judges not to ever get involved in violent or extremists acts or pick up arms against the Nigerian State.[41] A package is given at graduation after the completion of the skills acquisition programme. The starter pack consists of materials and items that would assist the reformed participants in practicing their learned trade. Upon release and hand over to the respective State governments, the repentant BH insurgents are given some money.[42]

The Set Up at DRRCamp

The military provide security for the camp, however, the work of the military ends at the camp and civilian reintegration commences immediately. The Nigerian prison service provides the bulk of the staff present at the camp and deploys their expertise in ensuring effective camp administration. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) assists in vocational skills training of reformed Boko Haram members. National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) supplies the camp with food while United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) supplied cloth beddings, house and office furniture.[43]

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) provides counselors, interpreters, chaplains, clergy, and the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) Brigade, which assist in ensuring order at the camp. Moreover, NOA is in charge of the drama troupe, which provides camp entertainment. Furthermore, NOA has been assigned significant duties outside the camp, which include community engagement and sensitisation in anticipation of returning reformed ex-Boko Haram members. Staff members working in the camp are deployed on a six-month rotational basis (12 weeks at a minimum and 16 weeks at a maximum work schedule).[44]

The re-habilitation phase also involves keeping the clients in a transit camp for a period not more than 3 months for further profiling and preparation for release. State governments receive and take custody of rehabilitated ex-members for onward transportation to less restrictive facilities in preparation for community reintegration and reinsertion. This is done in conjunction with receiving communities.

An initial group of six people, three (3) men and three (3) women, from different states of the federation were admitted into the camp in 2017. Bauchi State accepted one of the participants on the 28th of February 2018, while Adamawa State accepted four (4) in the months of April and May 2018. Ninety-one (91) people graduated on the 13th of August 2018 and all were taken in by the Borno State government, even though six (6) of them were from Yobe State. Of the 85 from Borno state, 50 were from the Gwoza area alone.[45] The Borno

[41]Interview SessionMr. Chantu ,16th of August 2018
[42]Interview session with Mr. Mustapha M. Kukawa, Senior Special Assistant to the Borno State Governor on the 3rd September 2021
[43]Interview SessionMr. Chantu, 16th of August 2018
[44]Interview SessionMr. Chantu, 16th of August 2018
[45]Interview Session Mr.Chantu, 16th of August 2018

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State Ministry of Women Affairs runs a rehabilitation centre which also doubles as a halfway house for ninety-one (91) returnees.[46]

The second batch comprising of one hundred and fifty-four (154) participants completed the programme and left the camp in July 2019. New figures of ninety-five (95) were given as the number of the first batch graduates as against the initial figure of ninety one (91).[47]

All new graduates were subsequently moved to a Borno State government facility at UmaruShehu in Maiduguri which serves as a half-way home before their final reintegration into society. The group comprises of mainly Borno indigenes, and few others from Adamawa and Yobe States. The two foreigners among the second batch after the successful completion of their programme were handed over to the Nigeria Immigration Services (NIS) for erstwhile repatriation to their respective counties Chad and Niger Republics.[48]

The Bulumkutu rehabilitation centre was commissioned in 2019 by the Borno State government to carter for the mental and psychological needs of the victims of the Boko Haram insurgency. However, the centre was transformed to a transit camp for de-radicalised BH insurgents about to be re-integrated.[49] As the need for psycho-somatic care increased, the Borno State government recovered the facility from OPSC and a new half-way home was built at Shuwarin/Shokari for about to be re-integrated repentant Boko Haram insurgents.[50]

Reintegration of Repentant Boko Haram Insurgents at the Community Level

The major re-integration phase is handled by state governments in collaboration with international partners such as the International Organisation for Migration(IOM) and EU. Upon final release back into their respective communities, a sum of 25,000 Naira was initially given by the Borno State government, and this was increased to between 100,000-120,000 Naira over time.[51]

Members of the first batch were successfully re-integrated into civilian life in their respective communities. While some chose to move back to their old neighborhoods, others requested to be relocated to new abodes.[52] Traditional and community leaders as well as other members of community receiving the DRR graduates were informed and involved in their resettlement and

[46]Interview Session Mr. Chantu, 16th of August 2018
[47]Interview Session with Mr. Musa Chantu Director Behavioural Modification at the National Orientation Agency (NOA) Abuja on the 20thof August 2019
[48]Interview SessionMr. Chantu, 20thof August 2019
[49]Defence Intelligence Agency –DIA (Counter-Insurgency Section), "Reintegration of Repentant Terrorists" 2021
[50]Defence Intelligence Agency, "Reintegration of Repentant Terrorists" 2021
[51]Interviewsession Mr. Kukawa,3rd September 2021
[52]Interview session Mr. Kukawa, 3rd September 2021

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reintegration.[53] The vocational training and skill acquisition acquired at the *Mallam Sidi* Camp Gombe alongside the start-up pack was put to use by these graduates, many of whom previously possessed no life or livelihood skills.[54]

Furthermore, NEDC was to provide each client with dry ration and basic needs such as toiletries and cloths for a period of 6 months while IOM was to provide them with vocational equipment as a means of economic empowerment.[55] In addition, the NEDC as part of its mandate is expected to assist in community development especially in conflict ravaged communities to help ease the return of repentant Boko Haram to those communities.

Monitoring and supervision of the reintegrated ex-Boko Haram members is expected to be conducted by the NPF, DSS IOM, traditional, religious and community institutions including the CJTF and local vigilante groups and NOA.[56]However, NOA was and still is ill-equipped and not adequately funded enough to appropriately undertake this duty. The DSS are also pre-occupied with monitoring the SULHU project, thus leaving the Police, IOM and civilian authorities as the monitors of ex Boko Haram insurgents in their resettled communities.

As time went by the programme expanded considerably as the Nigerian authorities stepped up the disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration campaign in the North East. The Programme took in more participants including foreign nationals involved in the insurgency. Between 2015 and 2018a total of 2,234 Boko Haram associated persons surrendered to the MNJTF, including 99 in Sector One (Mora, Cameroon), 1,914 in Sector Two (Baga Sola, Chad), 204 in Sector Three (Baga, Nigeria), and 221 in Sector Four (Diffa, Niger).[57] The year 2019 was especially busy at Mallam Sidi. On Saturday, November 22nd 2019, two hundred and ninety (290) were brought to the camp. This was followed by another three hundred and sixteen (316) on the 14th of December, making a total of six hundred and six (616) people. Among these 606 participants were 14 foreigners: eight from Cameroon, five from Chad and one from Niger.[58] This was the highest number admitted to the programme so far since its inception in 2015.

[53]Interview Session Mr. Chantu 20thof August 2019
[54]Interview Session Mr. Chantu 20thof August 2019
[55]Interview Session Gen. Martins 2nd September 2021
[56]Interview Session Mr. Chantu, 20thof August 2019
[57]African Union, PILLAR PAPER for Screening, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration-Lake Chad Basin Region; *Lake Chad Basin Commission Report* 2018. https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/annex-3-lcbc-strategy-pillar-paper-screening-prosecution-rehabilitation-and-reintegration.pdf
[58]Crisis Group Africa, "An Exit from Boko Haram? Assessing Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor", *Crisis Group Africa*,Briefing N°170 Dakar/Maiduguri /Brussels, 2021.https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/b170-exit-boko-haram-assessing-nigerias-operation-safe-corridor

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Challenges to Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC)

The DRR programmeofficially known as Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) has faced a number of challenges that has hindered the process, as well as create a state of apprehension and fear of threats to national security. This apprehension and skepticism is not without basis. From available information, the DRR as presently constituted and conducted, is disjointed, haphazard, not properly planned or thought out. There is clear lack of an integrated policy. These identified challenges will be discussed under five main topics: poorly conceptualised and delivered DRR, negative public perception and fear of reprisal, lack of capacity and inadequate funding.

Poorly Conceptualized and Delivered De-radicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DRR) Programme

Good intention notwithstanding the DRR as presently constituted and executed is facing problems. The programme seems stuck in the second phase of rehabilitation and participants seem trapped there for a considerable period of time, which is detrimental to the whole process.[59] The participants are supposed to be in the halfway house for a period of time and then move on to the final stage where they are resettled in communities as designed in the programme. However, once their stay in the halfway house becomes indefinite, it leads to a feeling of desolation.

Some of the state governments assigned to handle the third and final phase of the programme, which is the reintegration process, are uncoordinated and, in some instances, uncommitted.[60]Some states refuse to bring their repentant insurgents back home to their home states and in other instances, receiving communities are not well informed of the returning ex-insurgents. This problem manifested itself glaringly in November 2020, when seven repented BH were rejected by their communities in Adamawa because of the haphazard process of their return while a young returnee was murdered by Boko Haram.[61]

Also quite noticeable is the inter-agency rivalry. The military increasingly argued that other agencies involved, both civilian and paramilitary were not often adequately trained for the task and roles they were assigned thus forcing the military to perform their duties.[62] Other agencies in turn such as the police accuse the military of usurping their role and getting too involved in civil authority-related issues.[63] The police in particular accuse the military of command overreach.

[59]Interview Session with Jasper Ukuwachukwu and Nnenah Abahat Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) Abuja on the 25th of August, 2021
[60]Interview session Ukuwachukwu and Abah, 25th of August, 2021
[61]Interview session Ukuwachukwu and Abah, 25th of August, 2021
[62]Interview session Gen. Wahab (Rtd), 18th August 2021
[63]Interview session with Commissioner of Police Umar and Deputy Commissioner of Police Haruna at the Borno Police Headquarters, Maiduguri on the 2nd September 2021

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Furthermore, against DRR global best practices, some of the personnel who took part in combat missions against BH insurgents are also involved in supervisory roles in the DRR programme.[64]An obvious conflict of interest immediately arises. Similarly, the DRR programme shouldn't be a stand-alone programme but ideally should be linked to other activities such as Security Sector Reform (SSR), community stabilisation, recovery and development frameworks. As such the Ministry of Interior and not the ONSA should be the coordinating agency.[65]

Negative Public Perception of OPSC and Stigmatisation of Repentant Boko Haram

Society's perception of Operation Safe Corridor and its de-radicalisation and rehabilitation is still quite negative. Many members of the public believe dangerous irredeemable criminals and terrorists have been returned to society. Others argue that perpetrators of violence are the beneficiaries of a generous reward system which, ironically, is denied or unavailable to their victims.[66] Another major challenge is the lack of commensurate efforts at rehabilitating and resettling IDPs in like manner, when they are both going to eventually live side by side in the same community. This has fed into the erroneous belief that violent extremist are prioritised over their victims.[67]

Inadequate Personnel and Institutional Capacity of OPSC

There is a dearth of required DRR experts. The DRR programme is a specialised area of conflict management that require professional expertise in fields that are uncommon and not usually in abundance. Specialisation in DDR include psychology, sociology, psychiatry, psycho-therapy, psycho-spiritual, pharmacology, anthropology, and medicine, among others.[68] The huge and ever increasing number of participants is further putting a strain on the available experts who are becoming increasingly overworked. Furthermore, the profiling system is very cumbersome and time consuming, and has created a backlog of many yet to be profiled detainees.[69]

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[64]Interview session with Gen. Ndalolo,26th August, 2021
[65]Interview session with Gen.Wahab (Rtd), 18thAugust, 2021
[66]Interview sessions (focus group discussion) with some Internally displaced persons at Bakassi, Dalori 1 and Teachers Village IDP Camps on the 3rd, 4th and 5thof September 2021
Interview Session with Adamu Maina Macina (community leader) on the 5th September 2021in Maiduguri
[67] Interview session with Hajia Aisatu Ashabe (trader) on the 4th September 2021in Maiduguri
Interview session with Adamu Haladu (student) on the 6th of September 2021 in Maiduguri
Interview Session with Alhaji Aliyu Muhammed Sayoji (community leader) on the 12thAugust 2021in Gombe
Interview session with Yarima Muazu (trader) on the 13thAugust 2021in Gombe
[68]Interview Session Gen. Martins, 7th of September 2021
[69]Interview session Gen. Ndalolo, 26th o of August, 2021

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Insufficient Funding of OPSC

There is a need for more commitment to non-kinetic schemes the same way heavy investments has been made in kinetic/military approaches.[70] In addition, the concerned state governments particularly Adamawa and Yobe states need to make more investments both financial and otherwise into the DRR programme (the exception being Borno State which seems committed and continues to invest significantly in the DRR programme).

Overcoming Obstacles to DRR

The agencies in charge of Operation Safe Corridor have made attempts at tackling some of the identified challenges. The aim, objectives, purpose and expectations of Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) has being explained to select stakeholders (traditional rulers, activists, community leaders, religious organizations, etc) especially the DRR programme at Mallam Sidi, Gombe camp.

Definitively, an ideal and efficient DRR programme in North East Nigeria must guarantee four important achievements:

1. it must help deprive the insurgency of foot soldiers by offering repentant insurgents the opportunity of disengagement;

2. it must aid in the total transformation (politically, economically and socially) of the rehabilitated violent extremist so that he or /she no longer constitutes a threat to society;

3. it must assist in the process of transnational justice especially in terms of societal restoration and reconciliation;

4. it should aid in ending the insurgency, achieve harmonious co-existence therein, and help prevent the re-emergence of violence.

Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) as presently constituted cannot guarantee the above, unless it undergoes reforms.

In the light of the above, and considering the crucial importance of national security, all threats both within and without must be treated with caution. A failed de-radicalisation project poses a grave risk to national security in number of ways:

- there insurgency will continue, so also the asymmetric warfare, and its collateral damage (civilian casualties and humanitarian emergencies);

[70]Interview Session with Mr.Chantu 20th of August 2019

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- unsuccessfully de-radicalised and reintegrated insurgents may return to the violent extremist fold and become more hardened to prove their loyalty to the group;
- moreover, these unsuccessfully de-radicalised and reintegrated insurgents could encourage radicalisation among those they have come in contact with and thus bolstering Boko Haram recruitment;
- in addition, a failed DRR proramme will encourage continued radicalisation and recruitment of young people, as well as the expansion of *Jihadi* violence;
- furthermore, these subjects of recidivism could return to Boko Haram with information about government agencies and security personnel they have encountered;
- similarly, long term militarisation of society will be inevitable along with its related consequences;
- local and International donors and partners involved in the DRR would be left with little choice but to significantly scale down their involvement or just pull out all together from all collaborative efforts;
- also, a failed DRR programme diminishes the trust of the citizen and combatants' in non-military peace processes; and
- a combination of the above not all constitute a clear and present danger to the North East and by extension the rest of the country, but also significantly wither down diplomatic and political instruments of national power of the Nigerian State.

Strategies for Action in Instituting an Efficient De-radicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DRR) Programme

Strategies to countering some of the challenges hindering Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) include:

- an amendment to the OPSC mandate to include a more robust federal government participation in the final stage of reintegrating repentant insurgents into communities;
- the introduction of aftercare services that will include very strict monitoring and tracking returnee programme that is both short and long term conditioned;
- the unveiling of a more stakeholder inclusive (but victim sensitive) host communities involvement in the DRR programme Operation Safe Corridor;
- the establishment of a victim focused community intervention programmethat precedes the return of repentant Boko Haram insurgents
- the introduction of a de-radicalisationprogramme for families of repentant insurgents;
- the willingness to reintegrate repentant Boko Haram insurgents into communities other than their own; and

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- the use of repentant Boko Haram insurgents to convince others to surrender through well-coordinated strategic information outreach programmes.

Amending the OPSC mandate to include direct participation of Federal authorities in the reintegration of repentant insurgents into communities is step that should be considered. The lack of coordination from most state governments when receiving repentant insurgents, the risky practice of letting repentant insurgents overstay their mandated time in halfway houses, and the unprofessional conduct of returning insurgents to communities without stakeholder involvement necessitates a change in approach.

Moreover, the proposed adjustment to the OPSC mandate should include the introduction of aftercare services and very strict short- and long-term returnee monitoring and tracking programme. Through this aftercare psych evaluations psychologists will be in a unique position to pick up signs of possible backtracking or attempts at recidivism. Security agents, NGOs and traditional institutions monitoring returnees must also be on the lookout for undocumented Boko Haram insurgents who return outside of OPSC programme (not de-radicalised nor rehabilitated) because of the significant security threat they pose. Appropriate authorities should be informed in the event of undocumented returnees.

In reintegrating repentant BH government should be sensitive to the feelings of victims and their families by making the return solemn with sensitization programmes preaching reconciliation and forgiveness taking precedence by appropriate mandated institutions.

A victim-focused community intervention programme should precede the return of repentant Boko Haram insurgents. A major source of existing acrimony is the feeling of neglect from the Nigerian authorities by many host communities. The North East Development Commission in collaboration with the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) should step up its efforts and prioritize social and economic intervention schemes in host communities about to receive returnees.

The introduction of a de-radicalisation programme for families of repentant insurgents in the North East is crucial. For a number of repentant insurgents radicalisation actually began at home since those closest to them actually pulled them into the fold of violent extremism.

The authorities must consider the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram insurgents into communities other than their own. One of the findings of the research was the fact that the healing process in communities required time and the willingness to move on from the damage of the insurgency, this feeling differed from community to community.

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The use of repentant Boko Haram insurgents to convince others to surrender through well-coordinated strategic information outreach programmes should be considered. This tactic when utilised as integrated strategic information outreach could eventually help end the insurgency. This strategic information outreach should also include other counter extremist efforts such as counter violent extremist narrative through inter-religious exchanges as well as inter-religious dialogue.

Conclusion

The Boko Haram insurgency, like the so many other security challenges presently bewildering the Nigerian state is a symptom of a much larger and deeper problem. This problem is the incomplete project of nation-building, citizenship and statehood. This truncated attempt at citizenship and nation building has led to a retreat from the Nigerian project into primordial identities. The repeated abuse, misuse and weaponisation of religion and ethnicity by politicians and national rulers before and after independence have made a bad case much worse. Radicalisation and violent extremism were the products of many years of poor governance, poverty and underdevelopment, issues of youth bulge, youth exclusion and youth vulnerability. In order to curtail these problems and make Nigeria work, there is the need for a paradigm shift from the old ways of operation. The new course to be charted must include political and organic citizenship, open dialogue on national matters, a national reorientation towards the promotion of competence and merit, and leadership by example and integrity.

In this vein, the absence of governance and lack of political will, which helped create the initial problem must not be allowed to manifest in the Disarmament, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DRR) programme because of the dire potential consequences. Such potential consequences include increased loss of faith in the authorities and their agents thus leading to further alienation between the people and the government, the release of potentially dangerous criminals into the society and rise in insecurity, increased tension and possibility of violent confrontation between returning "reformed" insurgents and their host communities and a pervasive perception that the government eventually rewards violence thus making violence an important bargaining tool by other intending agitators.

In addition, defence and security spending are badly hurting the national economy and if this continues the already hemorrhaging economy may be run aground with continuous humongous expenditure on defence budget without appreciable results. This then locks the state into an infinite cycle of regression Thus if suggested adjustments are made to the ongoing de-radicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration programme of OPSC, positive changes will be noticed and the possible threats to Nigeria's national security emanating from the DRR programme will be effectively nullified. It can be concluded that the de-radicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration programme as presently constituted does not do much to enhance Nigeria's national security. If left in its present form, it will degenerate further and constitute a substantial threat to national security.

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Interviews

SN	TITLE AND NAME	PLACE OF INTERVIEW	DATE OF INTERVIEW	STATUS
1	Personnel of the DIA	Via Telephone	5thNovember 2021	Official of Nigerian Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), Maiduguri
2	General Beyidi Martins	Via telephone	7thSeptember2021	Senior Official of Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC)
3	Mr. Mustapha M. Kukawa	Hajji Camp, Airport Road, Maiduguri	3rd September 2021	Senior Special Assistant to the Borno State Governor
4	General Beyidi Martins	Via telephone	2nd September 2021	Senior Official of Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC)
5	DCP Haruna	Police Headquarters, Maiduguri	2nd September 2021	Deputy Police Commissioner Operations Borno State
6	CP Umar	Police Headquarters, Maiduguri	2nd September 2021	Borno State Police Commissioner
7	Personnel of the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA)	Maimalari Barracks, Baga Road, Maiduguri	1st September 2021	Official of the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) Maiduguri Office
8	GeneralAbubakar Ndalolo	Via Zoom	26thAugust, 2021	The Chief of Staff to the National Security Adviser (NSA)
9	Mr. Jasper Ukuwachukwu	Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Jabi, Abuja	25thAugust, 2021	Programme Coordinator at Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Abuja
10	Miss NnenaAb	Centre for Democracy	25th August,	Programme Coordinator at Centre for Democracy

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	ah	and Development (CDD), Jabi, Abuja	2021	and Development (CDD), Abuja
11	General G. A. Wahab (Rtd)	The Nigerian Army Resource Centre (NARC), Asokoro,Abuja	18thAugust, 2021	Director General of The Nigerian Army Resource Centre (NARC), Abuja
12	General Beyidi Martins	Via telephone	11thAugust 2021	Senior Official of Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC)
13	General Emmanuel Aladeniyi	Via Telephone	4thOctober 2020	Senior Official at Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) Headquarters, Abuja
14	Mr. Yusuf Samsudeen	Centre For Democracy and Development (CDD), Office, Jabi, Abuja	26thAugust 2019	Programme Coordinator at Centre For Democracy and Development (CDD), Office Abuja
15	Dr. Aderemi Oyewumi	Office of the Office of National Security Adviser, (ONSA)Abuja	22nd August 2019	Economic Adviser at the Office of the National Security adviser (ONSA)
16	Mr. Musa Chantu	NOA Office, Old Secretariat, Area 1, Abuja	20thAugust 2019	Director Behavioural Modification at the National Orientation Agency (NOA) Abuja
17	Mr. Musa Chantu	NOA Office, Old Secretariat, Area 1, Abuja	16thAugust 2018	Director Behavioural Modification at the National Orientation Agency (NOA) Abuja
18	Barrister Mijiyanwa	Office of the National Security Adviser ONSA, Abuja	15thAugust 2018	Special Adviser on Extremism and Behavioral Matters at the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA)
19	General Emmanuel Aladeniyi	DIA Headquarters, Abuja	9thAugust 2018	Senior Official at Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) Headquarters, Abuja
20	Aminat Murtala Halilu	DIA Headquarters, Abuja	9th August 2018	Official at Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) Headquarters,

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