

Deradicalisation and national security

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Abstract

There is no gainsaying that the Northeast of Nigeria is extensively riddled by extreme views and violence, oiled by poverty, literacy disconnect, unregulated radical clerics, ungoverned spaces, widening literacy gap, and unemployment confronting the population and these further aggravate the vulnerability of Nigeria's national security. It was against this background that this study adopted the reintegrative shaming theory to investigate the nexus between deradicalisation and national security. This study decomposed national security into terrorism and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, using the lens of deradicalisation process under Operation Safe Corridor and Sulhu. This study employed exploratory research design with reliance on publicly available archive documents. The study relies solely on secondary data. The research is conducted by examining literature concerning deradicalisation, terrorism and small and light weapon proliferation. The literature was obtained through searches in publicly available material. Literature from non-serial publications, official reports, and conferences has been included particularly if they have been cited by other references in connection with national security. Findings from the study showed that deradicalisation positively influence counterterrorism campaign by the military, intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Result from study also showed that deradicalisation influence on proliferation of small arms and light weapon remained largely unsettled. The study recommends that government should create holistic buy-ins into the operation safe corridor, which should be broadened and not siloed as presently seen in Nigeria by the military, which has a low buy in point, for local community involvement. The study also recommends the Nigeria Security architecture should encourage decentralization of commands and control closer to the people by unbundling security from exclusive list into the concurrent list, so as to properly situate security closer to the people and not the elite alone.

Keywords: Arms Proliferations; Deradicalisation; Reintegrative Shaming Theory; Terrorism

1. Introduction

The increasing threats of terrorism and extremism worldwide has seen governments, civil society organizations, and international agencies pushing back through developed range of deradicalisation programs and initiatives aimed at preventing individuals and groups from becoming radicalized and promoting their disengagement from violent extremism. This thus situated deradicalisation, as a global phenomenon excluding no continent (Popp et al., 2020). Deradicalisation is particularly important in States that have experienced high levels of terrorism and extremism. While many countries evolved national strategies for countering violent extremism that include deradicalisation as a key component, some States like Nigeria have specialized deradicalisation centers warehouse under the Operation Safe Corridor (OSC).

The nexus between deradicalisation and national security could be the ability of the formal to slow down terrorism, by reducing the number of individuals who are radicalized and motivated to engage in terrorist activities, reduction in extremism and violence occurrence, reduction in the patronage of small arms and light weapons (SALW), and reduction

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in jail break amongst others. Deradicalisation could be seen slowing down narrative toxicity of hardline clerics which predicate violence and extremism. When individuals become radicalized, such could also seek to recruit others to their cause, creating networks of radicalized individuals that pose a threat to national security.

Threats to national security come in many facets religion extremism, proliferations of arms regional agitations, banditry, kidnapping, violence extremism, drug trafficking, corruption and all these and several others coalesce under ill governance. The concept of National Security has been known to connote the preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as internal stability. However, it is the purpose of national security to find security solutions to terrorism and arms proliferation of which deradicalisation could be seen offering the potential possibility.

Deradicalization can have an indirect impact on arms proliferation by addressing drivers of individuals and groups to acquire and use weapons. Deradicalization programs could be leveraged upon to reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies and reduce the likelihood that individuals and groups will turn to arms proliferation as a means of achieving their goals. The more the deradicalisation programme is deepened, the more refrains from violence and arm running is seen and this signposts stability. Such stability achieved through deradicalisation programs can help to limit the spread of weapons and promote peace and security.

OSC as a soft counterinsurgency approach, is saddled with deradicalisation programmes in Nigeria's counterinsurgency campaign against terror cells of Boko Haram (BH) and the Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP), it targets deradicalizing the behaviour of those undergoing deradicalisation programmes. Observations have shown that majority of those undergoing the programmes are majorly those taken up during military raids. The narrowness of the OSC could be seen in the gap that exist between the military and the communities to host the deradicalised "client", such narrowness also transmits the inability of OSC, to entice combatants to voluntarily defect. The success ratio of the OSC could be hampered by its lack of inclusion of other security agencies particularly paramilitary engagement, flawed implementation, and vague reintegration strategies amongst other challenges.

Furthermore another albatross of the OSC, is the controversy, as to its imprecise measures on military classification of individuals as "low-risk" versus "high-risk," a determining factor for rehabilitation, who is kept in detention, or who is informally released. As a result, Boko Haram members have no way of knowing whether they will be considered eligible after surrendering, and as such, many are turned off by the uncertainty. These uncertainties kept many combatants to remain within terror cells grip than face the uncertainty of shrouded classification. Human rights groups claim security forces often arbitrarily arrested villagers in areas suspected of harboring Boko Haram fighters and this further widens the gap between the communities and the military (Brechenmacher, 2018; Azadeh, 2019). Seven years down the line, OSC could be seen grappling with "low risk" deradicalised-and-rehabilitated-individual with less hope of being integrated back into an un-rehabilitated-community.

Comparatively, Malaysia's preventative deradicalisation strategy requires strategic collaboration between the Government, civil societies and the private sector to contain extremist activities at home or abroad by individuals or group of individuals. A systemic Continuous engagement and counselling helps deradicalizing potential terrorists even as Malaysia set up Counter Messaging Centre (CMC), which monitors terrorist narratives through social media and all other channels closely, to deny extremist proponents from the means and opportunities to pursue terrorist activities and promote their misconstrued ideologies (Hamid, 2016).

Those easily magnetized into radicalism could be seen with common indicators of; trusting a person already involved with a radical group; being "spiritually hungry and vulnerable" but limited knowledge of their religion; and being desperate, naïve, or simply in need of money. Those seeking to recruit such people try to cater to their needs and interests. The to-be-radicalized "target's" characteristics are identified to determine their suitability for terrorism. Therefore, deradicalisation must actively zero down on learning from how individuals become radicalized: indeed, both radicalization and deradicalisation lean heavily on family or other social ties. While the Internet is increasingly playing a large role in developed clime (Smith, 2019; IPI, 2010), such could not be situated in Nigeria as majority magnetized into terror cell group are majorly those outside the literacy net.

Public perception against deradicalisation could be skewed when there is element of suspicion that those assumed deradicalised are resettling back into violence extremism, accorded undue economic and social benefits (Toromade, 2020) so also the perceptions that Military, Intelligence and Law Enforcements are using deradicalisation programmes for intelligence gathering can also reduce the extent to which beneficiaries are willing to participate in these interventions (Khalil et al., 2023). The nuances of strong Islamist public narrative buoyed by external funding from Al Qaeda/ISIS for terror cell groups of BH/ISWAP also magnetize the youth into radicalisation. Many that saw the

totalitarian disposition of terror groups' leadership and their wives became discourage and lacks the will to defect due to the unreliability of military classification of defectors.

This study decomposed national security into terrorism and proliferation of small arms and light weapons

To achieve the objective of this study, the following research questions were answered:

- How does deradicalisation programmes affect terrorism in Nigeria?
- To what extent does deradicalisation programmes influence Small Arms and Light Weapon?

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Deradicalisation

Deradicalization refers to the process of divorcing a person, voluntarily or otherwise, from their extreme views, while “disengagement” refers to the process of moving a person away from their extreme group's activities, without necessarily deradicalizing that person or changing their views (International Peace Institute, 2010). It refers to the process of countering radicalization and extremist ideology in individuals, groups, or communities. It is a critical element of national security as it helps prevent acts of terrorism and promotes social cohesion. The Nigeria Operation Safe Corridor which handles the country's deradicalisation programme is seen as a counterinsurgency approach to further deplete and defeat the BH/ISWAP terror campaign (International Crisis Group, 2021).

The ability of deradicalisation programmes to provide extremists with alternative and reinforced routes to significance could greatly reduce radicalised attitudes among participants. It is of utmost importance to address factors causing radicalisation and (re) engagement in violent extremism. While perverted interpretation of the Quran could be seen the larger picture emerging reflect failure in governance as largely seen in education and economic insecurity magnetizing locals into violent extremism. The ability of deradicalisation to enable subjects to be able to engage in education and vocational training; either while in prison or camps, as such enhances income generation and ability to support families even while under deradicalisation process (Kaplan & Nussio 2019, Yehoshua, 2014).

While the impact of deradicalisation programs is notoriously hard to quantify, participants pointed to the declines in terrorism incidents, drop in local level violence, recruitment drought by religion-based extremist groups and drop in arms proliferation. Success story of deradicalisation in Indonesia, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia pointed to a strong state presence, state backed religious discourse to counter radical interpretations of Islam and strong community committal in deradicalisation programme. This sharply contrasted with Nigeria's military siloed Operation Safe Corridor, whose nexus with the terrorised and ravaged communities are all but weak. Furthermore, the need to get OSC legislated upon with constitutional backing cannot be over emphasised and such will translate to scaling up the programmes to showcase accountability and transparency in its management in order to attract development partners, expertise and donor funds to guarantee continuity

2.2. Operation Safe Corridor

Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) coined as a multi-agency humanitarian effort, was launched in 2016 by Defence Headquarters, to encourage low risk Boko Haram terrorists to surrender. OSC objectives as stated by the Office of the National Security Adviser, is driven towards changing the views, beliefs, attitudes, values of the extremist rather than changing their behaviour (Salihu & Yakubu, 2021). The programme is based on De-radicalisation, Rehabilitation and Re-Integration (DRR) of former members of the Islamic sect that has terrorised the northeast region for over 14 years. Once detained, or after turning themselves in, repentant fighters undergo a profiling process and appear before a judicial panel to provide testimonies. The process helps the military determine their level of radicalization. Those captured in combat are processed for prosecution, but the ones that have not been ideologically indoctrinated, because they were conscripted, or they were abducted, are the ones being rehabilitated.

These repentant members have been assisting the military by providing intelligence on Boko Haram activities. After being certified non-threats, participants (referred to as “clients”) go through therapy, religious re-education, and literacy and vocational skills training. although as many as 75 percent of those on the programme may never have held a weapon – just villagers snagged in the military's catch-all dragnets, with years spent in detention without trial. The gross inability of the Operation Safe Corridor to create a buy in from both the elite and the community into which they are reintegrating deradicalised individual into, is a big minus.

The disconnect, between OSC and the elites as official of the legislative arm have had cause to discounted the relevance of OSC and the deradicalisation program (Nathaniel, 2020). The elitists' expectation gap on OSC further amplified position of ravaged communities, who view the OSC deradicalisation programmes, as giving credence to the heinous crimes perpetuated by ex-combatant of BH/ISWAP against the communities. A total of 1482 'repentant' former terrorists have been released since the programme was launched seven years ago

Criticism trail OSC from politicians, communities and other stakeholders for its lack of openness, tagged as a holiday resort where "killers" are pampered (Toromade, 2020). OSC has received major backlash, on everything from its existence to its administration. Many Nigerians submit that the program diverts much-needed funds to people who do not deserve them amid a recession. Politicians from the states worst-hit by Boko Haram have voiced their displeasure, and there is heavy pressure from civil organizations to abandon bill seeking to legalized OSC as an agency, and divert funds to survivors.

2.2.1. *Sulhu*

Sulhu arabically connotes peacemaking; is a clandestine mechanism under the operatives of Department of State Service (DSS), to depopulate top ranking members of terror cells from their terror campaign into a civilian life, after due process of deradicalisation. Applauded by its protagonist as a smart warfare – a means to remove senior jihadists from the battlefield more effectively than the stuttering orthodox military campaign, which is seen as depleting the enemy's fighting force. *Sulhu* grew out of the behind-the-scenes attempts to free the more than 270 Chibok schoolgirls seized by Boko Haram in 2014. Painstaking years of contact-making, through network of mediators, reveal to the negotiators, that not only did they have an opening to secure the release of some of the schoolgirls, but there were also mujahedeensignaling they might be open to dialogue – a potential breakthrough in a deadlocked conflict (Anyadike, 2021).

Sulhu offers a way out for those looking to quit. It's a peace deal made with the individual combatants, and protects them from either being possibly killed by the military, if they are caught defecting independently, or indefinite detention in Giwa barracks. Under *sulhu*, defectors are enrolled in a six-month "deradicalisation" course in the military's demobilisation and reintegration centre also in MallamSidi, in northeastern Gombe State. After promising to renounce violence and be good citizens, they are issued with a graduation certificate, signed by a high court judge – and some have then gone on to set up businesses, from cap-making to chicken-rearing. *Sulhu*, as run by the DSS and the military, is separate from the army's Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) and

Advocates of *Sulhu* argue that carnage wrecked by ex-combatant at Bama – deplorable as they are – should not obscure the bigger picture of using the *Sulhu* to further depopulate the terror cells membership. Antagonists of the programme opine that men on the *sulhu* programme are almost certain to have been involved in atrocities. They have not been granted a formal amnesty, but neither have they been held to account for any crimes committed in a brutal conflict, yet on a programme sponsored by Nigerian taxpayers. The lack of attempt at implementing truth-telling, reparations, or accountability mechanisms that's mentioned in the *sulhu* agreement, showed all is not well in public buy-ins for the secret shrouded scheme. As the civil society groups are highly critical of a process that favours perpetrators at the expense of their millions of victims. This is helping impunity to grow (Anyadike, 2021).

2.3. Reinforcing Factors for Deradicalisation

2.3.1. *Monitoring Religious Indoctrination*

Attention is also being paid to challenging the spread of religious indoctrination, both at mosques and in prisons. One speaker noted the current lack of supervision of mosques and the need for educated and well-trained imams who convey messages of peace rather than fatwas promoting extremist views. A step taken toward challenging such views is the state's inviting religious scholars from around the world to public debates.

2.3.2. *Inmates Separation*

In prisons, the state has sought to prevent the spread of extremist ideology by separating those they see as indoctrinators from other inmates. One participant pointed out that a prison policy such as this that seeks to isolate extremists from other inmates is not known to work

2.3.3. *Strong State presence*

State presence goes beyond the military and the prison system, it involves all arms of government, the absence of legislative backing for the establishment of Operation Safe Corridor further highlighted absence of security sector

governance in Nigeria. A deradicalisation programme deserve the full backing of State might to address all possible targets, or beneficiaries of the program; madrassa students, those individuals the authorities deem vulnerable to militancy or radicalism. The program leans heavily on events—seminars, workshops, symposia, etc.—which are billed as being about innocuous topics such as “Islam and peace” or “Islam and pluralism,” but actually focus on terrorism.

2.3.4. Community Involvement

The involvement of communities is an important nexus in deradicalization. If the community does not consider deradicalised individuals to be threat free, deradicalised programs will not ultimately be successful and will lack credibility. When deradicalisation remove a radicalized individual's sense of companionship and belonging, it must replace it with a supportive community companionship. Similarly, successfully deradicalised individuals can be utilized in programs to great effect since repentant terrorists can act as a virus within groups, sowing doubt about violent extremism, and demonstrating the success of their deradicalization experience to those skeptical of the programs.

2.3.5. Rehabilitation of the Community

Acceptance and buy-ins into deradicalisation programmes should be precipitated by government seen committal efforts at rehabilitating members of terror ravaged communities, restore livelihoods with semblance of good governance, and then start discussing with communities if they want some traditional form of justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation mechanism facilitated by government. Ravaged communities should also be psychologically treated and patronised rather than, all efforts and attentions on ex-combatants.

2.3.6. Cautiously Incentivised Deradicalisation Programmes

In developing States with poor governance, deradicalisation programmes should be cautiously incentivised so as not to anger recipient communities to which such incentives are lacking and could see ex-combatant been treated above the community. Many deradicalization programs benefit from enticing people to leave terrorism behind via incentives (financial, as well as measures such as reduced prison sentencing) that can help stabilize beneficiaries' lives. In other contexts, incentives may fail due to the lack of buy-in from societies who view them as ways of “rewarding” criminals. However, some societies, such as Singapore, do not need financial incentives and their programs function well without them. Again, one size does not fit all

2.3.7. Assurance against Fear of reprisals

There is no gainsaying that the fear of reprisal attack also act as a drawback to deradicalisation and this participants' feelings of fear should be addressed by deradicalisation as such will create a safeway into proper disengagement reintegration back into the community. Many terror members that suddenly discovered that they have been disillusioned into joining terror groups are caught between fear of reprisal at the denouncement of members or refusal to rejoin membership (Altier et al., 2017). This high degree of fear of reprisals has been situated by studies among ex combatants of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Boko Haram as fear of being killed and feeling unsafe is high. This could also explain occurrence of recidivism or involvement in gun running and other allied services to terrorism, if such fear is not addressed (Riley, 2017).

2.3.8. Low Education and Vocational Training Level

Another obstacles to deradicalisation is the low level of education and vocational trainings, of extremists which quickens radicalisation. For youths, time spent with the extremist group often equals missed education and former extremists may have very low levels of education. As one example, in a study of Boko Haram members, the majority of the respondents did not finish secondary school, while 10 per cent did not receive any form of education at all (Botha & Abdile, 2017). Those abducted by terrorists also fall into the precarious bracket of low education and vocational training as seen in conflict impacted States, as times spent with terror cell groups' equal education missed (Annan et al., 2009, Grip and Kotajoki, 2019). This translates to mean that deradicalisation must be well nested with education and vocational training that could dignified life after deradicalisation else recidivism into terror acts becomes very likely.

2.3.9. Empirical Review

Khan (2015) engaged a seemingly comparative study of Deradicalization Programming in Pakistan, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia on the rising militancy and terrorist attacks, despite the absence of a comprehensive deradicalisation strategy for Pakistan. The study was an exploratory study with reliance on government reports, observations, newspaper and related materials. Findings from the study showed that Pakistan's deradicalisation efforts have essentially concentrated on low-risk militants of foot soldiers or low-level facilitators, with very little effort at high-risk or high-ranking militants. Study concluded that steps must be taken to rehabilitate high-risk militants because top-tier leadership will have a

greater impact on members than Pakistani authorities. The study engaged Pakistanis data hence the need for this work to engaged Nigeria data on deradicalisation and national security.

Osungboye (2021) investigated the extent to which the soft counterapproach insurgency policy of Operation Safe Corridor is capable of deradicalizing repentant Boko Haram extremists back into Nigerian society. The study engaged analysis of Operation Safe Corridor programmes and the content analysis of the various events relating to the deradicalization exercise. Study submitted that despite the military soft campaign, the extremists' activities and violent crimes in form of abductions, deadly suicide bombings, ambushes continue. The study concluded that the deradicalisation lacks a clear reintegration strategy, and its implementation, if care is not taken, will only compound extremists' activities in the country.

Salihu and Yakubu (2021) analysed challenges and prospects of Operation Safe Corridor deradicalization program, as part of broader efforts to counter the influence of terrorism. The study leverage on qualitative research design of extant literature, reports and online materials. Result from the study situated that OSC unlike has limited scope and coverage, whose framework classified associated BH/ISWAP women and children as secondary, despite constituting a major source for suicide bombers. While also grossly neglecting communities where repentant combatants are to be reintegrated out of the process.

2.4. Theoretical Review

2.4.1. Crime, Shame, and Reintegration Theory

The reintegrative shaming theory emphasizes the importance of shame in criminal punishment. The theory holds that punishments should focus on the offender's behavior rather than characteristics of the offender. Postulated in the late 80s, Braithwaite (1989) claims that people engage in the act of terrorism because of some underlying social disintegration caused primarily by the failure of the society to reintegrate the 'individuals' into 'society', a lack of channel for reintegrating the errant individuals to their moral state. According to Braithwaite (1989), the overwhelming number of destructive crimes is committed by males and factors like unemployment, low education, belief system, weak attachment to family, and community. Thus, the stronger one's relationship with the people in the community, the lower the likelihood of getting involved in criminal activities.

Shaming includes all forms social processes that in different ways have the aim of remorse in the offender. The theory highlights that the shaming is most efficient when coming from people close to the offender, such as friends and family, and not by authorities or officials. The idea is that the shaming is not stigmatized when aimed at the offense itself rather than the characteristics of the offender (Carrabine et al., 2020). Protagonists of this theory situated that reintegrative shaming will reduce crime, unlike stigmatization, which, according to labeling theory, essentially increases it by encouraging future deviance

Braithwaite further states that effective control of violence and terrorism involves the moral deployment of various technologies of shame. The concept of shame means the whole series of behaviours channelled at offenders. Braithwaite goes further to explain the difference between 'integrative shaming' and 'stigmatization'. To him, integrative shaming is about bringing back the offender into society and giving him the necessary help, while 'stigmatization' has to do with punishing the offenders either by imprisoning or putting him or her to death. Thus, this theory provides a framework for testing the credibility of the argument that the deradicalization and rehabilitation of terrorists encourage a decrease in the Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria. Also, it provides a basis for testing the extent to which the society is willing to reintegrate the repentant extremists into moral and social consensus.

3. Methodology

This study adopts exploratory research design; it examines the nexus between deradicalisation and national security in Nigeria. The study relies solely on secondary data. The research is conducted by examining literature concerning the deradicalisation efforts to circumspect the activities and extensiveness of terror cell groups of Boko Haram and Islamic State of West African Province. The literature was obtained through searches in publicly available material. Literature from non-serial publications, official reports, and conferences has been included particularly if they have been cited by other references.

4. Discussion of Findings

The review of literature showed that Findings from the study showed that deradicalisation positively influence counterterrorism campaign by the military, intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

The result gotten from empirical literature submitted that Result from study also showed that deradicalisation influence on proliferation of small arms and light weapon remained largely unsettled.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made;

- The study recommends that government should create holistic buy-ins into the deradicalisation programme for local communities, the academia, professional, NGOs should be multiagency driven and not siloed as presently seen in Nigeria by sections of the security agencies and a low buy in point, for local communities to be jointly involved.
 - That the Nigeria Security architecture should encourage decentralization of commands and control closer to the people by unbundling security from exclusive list into the concurrent list, so as to properly situate security closer to the people and not the elite alone. While all efforts should fastrack the evolvement of official agency for arms control, tracking and tracing driven by resilient national crime and arms data base.
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Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to disclosed.

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