

A critical analysis of Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse: constructions of threats, response, and identity

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Philosophy

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Abstract

This PhD thesis offers a critical analysis of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy through engagement with 56 primary texts produced by the Nigerian federal executive between 2009 and 2019. While much has been written about counter-terrorism efforts in Nigeria, very little have been done to closely examine how the Nigerian federal government describes and justifies its counter-terrorism approach and the implications of this for policy, identity, and security in Nigeria. As such the leading research questions at the heart of this thesis are: how do specific constructions of threats make counter-terrorism responses in Nigeria possible? And, how does the state's counter-terrorism policy contribute to constructing Nigeria's identity against the threats posed by specific terrorist other?

Drawing upon a critical constructivist framework, this thesis approaches Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy as a fundamentally *political* activity of threats and identity construction. Accordingly, this thesis put forward the following arguments: *first*, the designation of particular security threats as a *new* form of terrorism in Nigeria (and beyond) contributes to enabling state counter-terrorism interventions. *Second*, official articulations of counter-terrorism approaches in Nigeria contribute to producing representations of a unique Nigerian self – hinged upon democratic and progressive ideas – positioned against the threats posed by specific terrorist other. This identity, however, is flexible and entails a range of competing, and indeed contestable, ideas about Nigerian society, state(hood), citizens, and regions. It also poses significant ramifications for policy choices, social and political identity, and security in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin.

This thesis makes three notable contributions to knowledge. First, *empirically*, it examines a range of relevant primary data, including academically-neglected texts, most of which emerged from fieldwork in Abuja, Nigeria. Second, *analytically*, it provides a sustained focus on a non-western case study of emerging counter-terrorism policies, through exploring

official discourse and its various implications in the Nigerian context, contributing toward decolonising terrorism studies. Third, *conceptually*, it presents a constructivist alternative to the dominant rationalist tenor of works on counter-terrorism in Nigeria.

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Introduction

While much has been written about counter-terrorism efforts in Nigeria, very little have been done to closely examine how the Nigerian federal government frames its approach and what this means for policy, identity, and security in Nigeria (and beyond). Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach is typically described in policy and academic debates as ways through which issues of terrorism and insecurity more broadly, are addressed given a set of factors deemed applicable to Nigeria as a developing African country characterised by problems of poverty, growing levels of sectarian or religious intolerance, inter-ethnic conflicts, among other related issues. This perspective, however, reinforce dominant ways of thinking about Nigeria (and Africa more widely), while failing to reflect critically on the specificities of this country and its conflicts.

Thus, this PhD thesis seeks to offer an alternative perspective to the dominant stream of rationalist analyses by exploring how exactly the Nigerian federal government describes and justifies its counter-terrorism strategy, in relation to certain perceived threats. This is relevant not least because designating threats involve an important interpretive work through which causes of harm are defined, and responded to, given certain contextual justifications. In addition, constructing threats usually entails juxtaposing a particular (Nigerian) identity against a threatening counterpart, or the perceived cause of harm. These concerns are ever more so crucial in the Nigerian context due to the complexities that constitute, invigorate, and transform it, including as a postcolonial African society, as well as its ethnic, religious, linguistic, and regional diversity. With this in mind, I outline the background to this thesis along with its aims, and contribution to knowledge, in this introductory chapter.

Background

The empirical case I examine in this thesis is Nigeria's counter-terrorism policy. For context, Nigeria has a population of 200 million and a diverse society which cuts across different ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural groups. Geographically, it is located in West Africa and shares territorial borders with surrounding countries such as Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin Republic. Nigeria became a republic in 1963 after gaining independence from Britain in 1960. As a federal state, political power is shared between the federal government and 36 states, including the Federal Capital Territory. Nigeria's growing economy and huge natural reserves, such as crude oil, as well as its various leadership roles in regional and global diplomacy are also noteworthy. Seven years post-independence, it experienced a disruptive civil war which endured for over 30 months (1967-70) with huge material and human casualties, and also contributes to exacerbating existing cultural and ethnic differences.¹ This was, of course, preceded by various military coups and regimes which continued intermittently until the return to democratic governance in 1999.² The foregoing is illustrative of Nigeria's complex trajectory which offers a useful background for understanding ongoing counter-terrorism policies (and practices).

The recent, and continuing, conflict between the Nigerian state and terrorist groups (including Boko Haram and other 'splinter groups' such as An-saru and the Islamic State of West African Province) primarily in north-east Nigeria are often discussed in relation to the confrontations between the Nigerian police force and members of the Yusifiyya sect.³ This conflict came to a head in 2009 following the killing of 800 members of the Yusifiyya group including its leader, Mohammed Yusuf.⁴ According to the Nigerian Police Force, the origin of

¹ See, T. Falola and M.M. Heaton. *A history of Nigeria* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

² Ibid

³ Andrea Brigaglia, "Ja'far Mahmoud Adam, Mohammed Yusuf and Al-Muntada Islamic Trust: Reflections on the genesis of the Boko Haram phenomenon in Nigeria." *Annual Review of Islam in Africa*. 11, 35 (2012), 35-44

⁴ Ibid

Boko Haram can be traced back to 1995 at the University of Maiduguri, Borno state,⁵ which initially took the form of non-violent preaching by Muslim clerics, then developed into a full-blown insurgency in 2009.⁶ So far, north-east Nigeria, and Borno state in particular, has been the epicentre of this evolving conflict. The sharing of geographical borders with countries along the Lake Chad Basin (including Niger, Chad, and Cameroon) and the Sahel region contributes, at least in part, to the evolution and complexity of (counter-)terrorism in Nigeria.⁷ This is not least due to increasing transborder migration and insecurity, as well as the existing social, cultural, and ethnic relationships which transcends national frontiers.

Nigeria's federal government is primarily responsible for state counter-terrorism policy and issues of national security more generally due to its prevailing federal structure. The federal government has used various counter-terrorism tools in response – and as responses – to the threats posed by terrorist groups. Notable among these is the Terrorism Prevention Act, promulgated in 2011 (revised in 2013). This replaced existing penal codes and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Act which previously served as the main legal frameworks for dealing with terrorism and other related crimes, as explained by a state official during my fieldwork in Abuja.⁸ Alongside criminal justice procedures, the Nigerian federal government employs the state security agencies for carrying out joint military operations against terrorist groups, or for other related purposes such as maintaining state-imposed curfews in selected states in the north-east.⁹ Such military operations extend beyond Nigeria's borders into the

⁵ Virginia Comolli, *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency*. (London: Hurst and Company, 2015), p.46

⁶ Simon Gray and Ibikunle Adeakin, "The evolution of Boko Haram: from missionary activism to transnational jihad and the failure of the Nigerian security intelligence agencies." *African Security*. 8, 3 (2015), 185-211

⁷ Daniel Agbiboa, "Borders that continue to bother us: the politics of cross-border security cooperation in Africa's Lake Chad Basin." *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*. 55, 4 (2017), 403-425; P.M. Frowd and A.J Sandor, "Militarism and its limits: Sociological insights on security assemblages in the Sahel." *Security Dialogue*. 49, 1-2 (2018), 70-82

⁸ Fieldnote 13/03/2020

⁹ On 12 June 2011, a Joint Task Force known as 'Operation Restore Order' consisting of the Nigerian Armed forces, the Nigerian Police, Department of State Services (DSS), the Nigerian Immigration Service, and the Defence Intelligence Agencies, was instituted. Though the creation of such Joint operation is not atypical,

Lake Chad Basin (hereafter LCB), owing much to the resuscitation of the Multinational Joint Task Force originally set up in 1988 by Niger, Chad, and Nigeria (and subsequently Cameroon) for border patrol purposes.¹⁰

In 2014, the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST), described as ‘the first major attempt by the government to address terrorism,’ was rolled out to provide a ‘holistic strategy’ to address the root causes of terrorism and provide for disrupting terrorist violence through other means, including through military force.¹¹ The NACTEST is split into five focal streams, encompassing Prevent, Secure, Identify, Prepare, and Implement. This reflects a preventive approach combining different counter-terrorism instruments with short- and long-term goals. Such an approach, of course, is not new to Nigeria and parallels may be drawn with the United Kingdom’s Prevent Strategy, or Kenya’s National Strategy to Counter-Violent Extremism, notwithstanding local particularities across these.¹²

In light of the above, academic debate on Nigeria’s counter-terrorism approach is commonly considered within two – contrasting – frameworks. A first framework of ‘hard’ approaches describes Nigeria’s counter-terrorism strategy as a set of rigid, narrow, and coercive measures such as military force and anti-terrorism legislation, targeting particular terrorist groups and other individuals who support terrorist activities in Nigeria.¹³ The second framework of ‘soft’ approaches, contra hard approaches, sees counter-terrorism as involving a

however according to Comolli, the intensity of Boko Haram’s insurgency required more attention as over 30,000 security personnel were deployed, with two states of emergencies declared on 30th December 2011 [in 16 Local Government Areas across four states] and in May 2013. Omeni provides a breakdown of the JTF as follows: the Army performs 50% of the security duties, police 20%, Airforce 10%, DSS 7%, DIA 5%, Customs 3%, Nigerian Immigration Service 3%, Prison service 1%, and Defense Corps 1%. As this indicates, the military retains a major share of the responsibility and by August 2013, the JTF was replaced by the Army 7th Infantry Division composed specifically for the purpose of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism.

¹⁰ Daniel Agbibo, “Borders that continue to bother us: the politics of cross-border security cooperation in Africa’s Lake Chad Basin.”

¹¹ National Counter-terrorism Strategy 2016, p.6

¹² See, The Prevent Strategy 2011. Available online from:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf [Accessed 12 June 2019]; and National Strategy to Counter-Violent Extremism 2016. Online from: <https://www.mfa.go.ke/?p=744> [Accessed 20 March 2020].

¹³ See, for example, Hakeem Onapajo, “Has Nigeria defeated Boko Haram? An appraisal of the counter-terrorism approach under the Buhari administration.” *Strategic Analysis*. 41, 1 (2017)

broader set of (non-military) tools targeting wider longstanding problems of poverty and marginalization in north-east Nigeria and beyond.¹⁴

Differences between the above perspectives notwithstanding, this debate, importantly, focuses on the different counter-terrorism tools used – or not used – by the Nigerian state and their adequacy for providing solution to the problem of terrorism. These frameworks or perspectives share, and often take for granted, particular knowledge claims about (counter-)terrorism in Nigeria, and about scholarship on counter-terrorism more generally. In particular, they emphasise claims regarding the distinctive and destructive nature of terrorism, seemingly requiring combative military force or a strict legal framework, as well as about other root causes of terrorism in Nigeria such as poverty which requires development-oriented measures. The aim of scholarship as largely implied within this literature is specifically to provide policy relevant remedies to the problem of terrorism by identifying appropriate forms of counter-terrorism in the Nigerian context.

Research Puzzle and questions

The focus on the tools and expected outcomes of counter-terrorism identified above, means that other relevant questions particularly those related to the framing of Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach, including in relation to identity construction and the implications it entails, are often overlooked. Moreover, these perspectives of Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach, broadly speaking, are hinged upon at least two broader claims or meta-narratives: first, is the over-stretched assumption about the interests and needs of developing countries and societies

¹⁴ See, Joan Mbagwu and Ayuba Gimba Mavalla, "Nonviolent approach: alternative to military strategy for curbing terrorism in Nigeria." *American Scientific Research Journal for Engineering, Technology, and Sciences*. 26, 3 (2016), 124-139

in Africa, and the global South in general.¹⁵ This involves creating political stability and promoting development; often described as essential or vital for the well-being of these societies.¹⁶ The second narrative is about the causes of insecurity or conflicts in African societies which, in one way or another, refers back to the above essential requirements or lack thereof.¹⁷

This set of claims prominent in mainstream security analyses on Africa has consistently been questioned, whether through highlighting the lack of empirical evidence to validate such claims, or through emphasising certain biases about the societies and countries in Africa reinforced through such claims.¹⁸ In one sense, analyses of Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach drawing upon these common-sense postulations inevitably rationalise, obscure, and restrict the actions of the Nigerian state (regarding its counter-terrorism approach) to particular goals deemed appropriate for so-called developing African countries.¹⁹ This, on the one hand, raise questions about the usefulness of mainstream approaches, and the assumptions underpinning them, for understanding Nigeria's counter-terrorism policy. And on the other, presents a puzzle as to how the Nigerian federal government defines and justifies its counter-terrorism approach especially considering the historical and contextual specificities of Nigeria. This thesis moves away from familiar mainstream priorities and, instead, asks a different set of (how) questions:²⁰ *first*, how do specific constructions of threats make state counter-terrorism responses possible? *Second*, how does Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy

¹⁵ See, in particular, R. Abrahamsen, "African Studies and the Postcolonial challenge." *African Affairs*. 102 (2003), 189-210; S. Parashar and M. Schulz, "Colonial legacies, postcolonial 'selfhood' and the (un)doing of Africa." *Third World Quarterly*. 42, 5 (2021), 867-881; M. Duffield, *Global governance and New Wars: the merging of development and security*. (London: Zed Books, 2001)

¹⁶ S. Parashar and M. Schulz, "Colonial legacies, postcolonial 'selfhood' and the (un)doing of Africa."

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ M. Duffield, *Global governance and New Wars: the merging of development and security*.

¹⁹ See, Hakeem Onapajo, "has Nigeria defeated Boko Haram? An appraisal of the counter-terrorism approach under the Buhari administration."

²⁰ See, Roxanne Lynn Doty, "Foreign policy as social construction: a post-positivist analysis of US counterinsurgency policy in the Philippines." *International Studies Quarterly*. 37, 3 (1993), 297-320

contribute to producing representations of a specific Nigerian self, positioned against the threats posed by certain terrorist other?

Thesis Statement

The research questions posed above suggest an alternative conceptual approach to security vis-à-vis counter-terrorism, beyond those widely deployed in conventional accounts. Drawing upon a critical constructivist framework (detailed below), this thesis approaches Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy as a political activity of threats and identity construction.²¹ Accordingly, this thesis develops two key arguments: *first*, constructing particular security threats as a *new* form of terrorism in Nigeria (and beyond) provides justification for state counter-terrorism responses. *Second*, Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy contributes to the production of a uniquely distinct Nigerian identity, juxtaposed against the threats posed by specific terrorist counterparts. What I mean by this, more specifically, is that the policies and other official pronouncements framing Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach produce representations of a political image of *what* Nigeria is or seeks to become – as well as what it is not – which is grounded upon democratic and progressive ideas. This identity is nonetheless malleable and entails a set of competing ideas about Nigerian society, state(hood), citizens, and regions. Also, it poses important ramifications for policy directions and choices, as well as for social identity, and security in Nigeria (and beyond).

Relevance of the study

At least three caveats can be identified from the preceding discussion to situate the relevance of this thesis. First, existing work on Nigerian counter-terrorism approach is policy-oriented.

²¹ See, J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, 'introduction: constructing insecurity' in J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, and R. Duvall, *Cultures of insecurity: states, communities, and the production of danger*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) pp.1-11.

Second, this excludes reflection on particular questions and concerns, including around identity and representation. Third, it reproduces dominant ways of thinking about Nigeria and counter-terrorism more widely, especially those premises that emerged from post-9/11 discourses which are uniquely western- and state- centred, while failing to reflect on the complexity of Nigeria and its conflicts.²² Moreover, it is often assumed that post-material critique offers little, if any, benefit to African societies due to its lack of sensitivity to the material needs of developing countries, and does not contribute to national or collective solidarity, or hold any direct relevance for policy.²³ Contra these claims, I show through this thesis that Nigeria's peculiarity including as a postcolonial African society, its multi-ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, and experiences of civil war and military rule, offers great insights to questions around identity and subjectivity, as well as the relationship between knowledge and power in counter-terrorism discourse, in at least two ways.

First, exploring the relationship between counter-terrorism discourse and identity in the Nigerian context broadens our knowledge of discourses on counter-terrorism – especially beyond those associated with post-9/11 – through offering an important curve for understanding earlier, recent, and continuing discourses and their work in specific contexts. Second, it highlights the various competing identities and subjectivities embedded in – and reproduced through – Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse, illustrating knowledge and political practices at work in the Nigerian context. Questions about constructions and representations of threats and identity through, and within, counter-terrorism discourse has vital significance for policy direction, social and political identity, and security in Nigeria. For one, such a discursive activity contributing to the production of national identity often

²² See, J. Holland, *Selling the War on Terror: foreign policy discourses after 9/11*. (London: Routledge, 2012); R.M. Khan, "Race, coloniality and the post 9/11 counter-discourse: Critical Terrorism Studies and the reproduction of the Islam-Terrorism discourse." *Critical Studies on Terrorism* (2021); A. Abu-Bakare, "Counter-terrorism and Race." *International Politics Reviews*. 8, 1 (2020), 79-99

²³ R. Abrahamsen, "African Studies and the Postcolonial challenge."

constructs certain identities – or ideas – as conflictual, inappropriately threatening, or simply inconsequential.²⁴ This inevitably contributes to informing the type of state policies or measures introduced, whether for responding to terrorism or other threats, and contributes to othering and suppressing various ideas, beliefs, communities, and groups seen as opposed to this (constructed) image of Nigeria.

Analytical approach

More and more, shifts within the discipline of International Relations, as well as Security Studies and other affiliated sub-fields have provided considerable space for critical scholarship attentive to issues frequently ignored in mainstream analyses, including questions related to identity and security. It is within this broad, and burgeoning, critical tradition that the conceptual approach used in this thesis is situated. Specifically, I draw upon a critical constructivist perspective to security as described in the work of Jutta Weldes²⁵ along with insights from other critical literature including postcolonial work, to explore constructions of threats and identity in Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. Weldes' anti-foundationalist standpoint entails three useful conceptual and analytical commitments outlined in turn.

The first vital premise describes security as constructed through discourse, rather than an objective reality beyond any form of interpretation. In other words, social actors, including states, and their insecurities must always be constructed and represented, and responses to the (constructed) cause of harm or potential threats must be communicated to relevant audiences. Constructions of (in)security, as Weldes explains, ultimately encompass the 'politics of identity and danger' through which a particular Self is produced in opposition to a threatening Other,

²⁴ See, for example, David Campbell. *Writing Security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity*. (Minnesota: Minnesota Press, 1998).

²⁵ J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, 'Introduction: constructing insecurity' in J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, and R. Duvall, *Cultures of insecurity: states, communities, and the production of danger*.

within a dramatically flexible composition.²⁶ This permits my exploring and problematising of constructions of threats, the Nigerian self, and the terrorist other within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse to make visible the ambiguity and problems associated with these constructions.

The second premise relates to questions surrounding social agency and context. On this point, Weldes notes that different discourses, including statist discourses, constitute different subjects and endow them with qualities such as agency, in different contexts. This is important for exploring the relationship between identity and subjectivity within counter-terrorism discourse, although Weldes' ideas need to be adapted to postcolonial contexts as discussed below. The third commitment is the role of representation in constructing security, as Weldes explains: "identities and insecurities emerge out of processes of representation through which individuals whether state officials, or researchers, describe to themselves and others the world in which they live."²⁷ Bringing these points together, this thesis will show how specific threats are represented to make state counter-terrorism intervention possible, as well as how Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy produce representations of a specific Nigerian identity positioned against the threats posed by certain terrorist other. Methodologically, this conceptual approach permits my focusing primarily on official interpretations in the empirical chapters, without considering other constituting institutional practices or performance which contributes knowledge about Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach.

Following on from the above, I also take cues from a growing body of constructivist and post-structural literature on counter-terrorism to problematise discursive claims about (counter-)terrorism embedded in Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse.²⁸ Prominent among

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ See, R. Jackson, M. Breen-Symth, and J. Gunning. *Critical Terrorism Studies: a new research agenda*. (London: Routledge, 2009)

scholars working within this research agenda is Jackson, who notably describe (counter-)terrorism as ‘social fact rather than a brute fact.’²⁹ Jackson further describes counter-terrorism as a set of institutional practices and an accompanying discursive project with its own assumptions, symbolic system, rhetorical modes and tropes.³⁰ However, it is important to emphasise here that this collection of critical work on terrorism is frequently presented as a ‘broad church’ in terms of its methodological and epistemological plurality involving approaches committed to human security and emancipation, feminist approaches, postcolonial critique, among many other concerns or priorities.

Though situated within a critical constructivist approach to (in)security, my focus on Nigeria means that my thesis also draws inspiration from postcolonialism, understood broadly as ‘a set of ideas and problematisations about social and political issues of relevant to Africa and the global South more generally’ than a single theory in a conventional sense.³¹ Postcolonial approaches extend my conceptual framework in two significant ways: first, it attends to Nigeria’s complexity and history which are relevant for understanding the relationship between identity and subjectivity, and how knowledge and power operate in Nigeria. Second, and a related point, it permits a broader investigation of Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse without being restricted to common discourses of counter-terrorism, including those prominent in (critical) terrorism studies, and how they work in different contexts.

Having identified the contribution of postcolonialism for my conceptual approach, I take cues specifically from postcolonial work on security and terrorism. As Honke and Muller suggest, any analysis on security which takes ‘postcoloniality’ seriously ‘must pay attention to

²⁹ R. Jackson, “The core commitments of Critical terrorism studies.” *Symposium*. 6 (2007), 244-251

³⁰ Richard Jackson, “Security, Democracy, and the rhetoric of counter-terrorism.” *Democracy and Security*. 1, 2 (2005), 147-171

³¹ R. Abrahamsen, “African Studies and the Postcolonial challenge.”

the experiences, history, power relations, and agency in postcolonial societies.’³² Doing so, they argue, is important for avoiding Euro-centrism and other ‘blind spots’ often reproduced in security scholarship, including within so-called critical accounts.³³ A similar view was expressed by Barnard-Wills and Moore in terrorism studies, calling for a ‘form of critical studies on terrorism which takes seriously the histories, social and cultural meanings reproduced in postcolonial societies.’³⁴ Motivated thus, I focus keenly on the intricacies surrounding representations of identity and subjectivity within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse against the backdrop of Nigeria’s history and peculiarity.

In view of these conceptual and analytical commitments, this thesis will do the following:

Descriptive: demonstrate and analyse constructions of threats, responses, and identity within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse.

Critical: Problematise constructions of threats, the Nigerian self, and the terrorist other to reveal their contestability and flexibility.

Contextual: demonstrate the implications of this evolving discourse for policy, identity, and security within the Nigerian context.

Contribution to knowledge

This thesis makes three important contributions to knowledge. First, *empirically*, it drew on 56 sources of primary data, including texts that have so far received little – or no – academic

³² J. Honke and Markus-Michael Muller, “Governing (in)security in a postcolonial world: transnational entanglements and the worldliness of ‘local’ practice.” *Security Dialogue*. 43, 5 (2012), 383-401

³³ See, P. Bilgin, “The Western-centrism or security studies: ‘blind spot’ or constitutive practice?” *Security Dialogue*. 41, 6 (2010), 615-622

³⁴ Barnard-Wills David and C. Moore, “The terrorism of the other: towards a contrapuntal reading of terrorism in India.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 3:3 (2010), pp.383-402

engagement (such as: the Policy Framework and National Action plan for Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism, the Buhari Plan for the North-East, the Counter-terrorism Centre Report, and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Country Report), to closely describe and interrogate official discourse on counter-terrorism in Nigeria. The range of sources used in this thesis offers a strong basis for developing key arguments about Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse, illustrating the productivity of this discourse – including in constructing particular threats as new terrorism, as well as contributing to producing a unique Nigerian self, opposed to the terrorist other – and its implications in the Nigerian context.

Second, *analytically*, this thesis offers a sustained focus on a non-western case of counter-terrorism discourse, thereby progressing the decolonisation of terrorism studies. This is important not least because, for anyone familiar with analyses of counter-terrorism strategies, common examples of counter-terrorism strategies are often taken from western case studies particularly the Prevent Strategy in Britain and the U.S. Patriot Act. These western examples, in turn, serve as models and provide frameworks for understanding and explaining emerging discourses –and practices – in other (non-western) contexts. Such a generalisation takes for granted crucial nuances and complexity of discourses around counter-terrorism in specific contexts and reinforce particular epistemic biases in the study of (counter-)terrorism which prioritises Euro-centric or western-centred perspectives. Importantly, this study of Nigeria provides a vital avenue for developing and broadening insights on counter-terrorism discourses by identifying relevant similarities, nuances, and distinction. In doing this, moreover, my focus specifically on the Nigerian federal executive also contributes to the burgeoning body of work on counter-terrorism approach in Nigeria. While there is a substantial number of studies exploring counter-terrorism policies and practices in Nigeria, none has explored the discourse emanating from the federal executive methodically.

Third, *conceptually*, this thesis provides a critical constructivist alternative to the dominant rationalist stream of work on counter-terrorism efforts in Nigeria. Through this conceptual approach, this thesis attempts to demonstrate how state counter-terrorism policy is made possible, what work it *does* especially regarding threats and identity construction and the various implications it poses for security in Nigeria and beyond. In addition, the theoretical approach used in this thesis drew inspiration from compatible ideas from post-structural and postcolonial literature on security and counter-terrorism to identify the complexity of this Nigerian case study. The evidence and findings presented in this thesis regarding the democratic and progressive underpinnings of the Nigerian self (in opposition to the terrorist other), suggests the imbrication of political identity through the overlapping of various discourses including Euro-centric, state-focused, colonial, and imperialistic discourses. These findings as such highlight the difficulty of categorising Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse, especially according to well-known state-centric or Euro-centric perspectives.

Thesis outline

Chapter 1 explores two sets of literature on counter-terrorism. The first provides a survey of dominant debate around counter-terrorism as discussed in terrorism studies. The second literature illustrates how the debate about counter-terrorism unfolds in the Nigerian context by exploring debate about ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ approaches. Taken together, I identify – and problematise – a set of unresolved postulations and concerns grounding much of these, which focuses primarily on the tools and ends of counter-terrorism. Furthermore, I identify a growing body of critical scholarship in terrorism studies offering an alternative to mainstream approaches and claims, from which this thesis draws insights. Finally, the chapter concludes by emphasising the necessity for a critical assessment of Nigeria’s counter-terrorism policy on the grounds of three important justifications: social construction, historicity, and context.

Chapter 2 develops the conceptual framework guiding the empirical analysis in this thesis. The chapter begins by examining certain questions at the heart of constructivist scholarship in International Relations, particularly around the relationship between material and ideas, interest and identity, and agency and structure, to distinguish ideas about ‘critical constructivism’ as formulated by Weldes from other ‘mainstream’ constructivist approaches. Furthermore, I outline a set of theoretical and analytical commitments for a critical approach to security as described by Weldes, before embedding other critical literature particularly those from post-structural and postcolonial on security and counter-terrorism. Overall, the chapter theorises counter-terrorism policy as a political activity of threats and identity construction which is socially (re)produced through discourse, within specific contexts.

Chapter 3 outlines the research method used in this thesis including the criteria framing this single case study, data collection, and the challenges or limitations encountered. As discussed in the chapter, this thesis uses discourse analysis for exploring constructions of threats, the Nigerian self, and the terrorist other, within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. Chapter 3 distinguishes various approaches to discourse analysis – including Critical Discourse Analysis, Discursive psychology, Post-structural, and Postcolonial approaches – before identifying the usefulness of poststructural and postcolonial ideas about discourse (analysis) for my empirical research. I approach discourse in this chapter and thesis more generally, as incomplete structures of meaning and as an integral part of particular political practices or social experiences. Furthermore, Chapter 3 details two important ways through which primary data for this thesis were collected: first, is a two-month fieldwork in Abuja, Nigeria at different governmental and non-governmental sites, in which archival documents related to counter-terrorism strategies were collected. Second, include online repositories of specific government organisations, departments and agencies which take part in the formulation of state policies on counter-terrorism. The chapter concludes with reflection on the challenges encountered in

conducting this research especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, and discussion of questions of data saturation and validity.

Chapter 4 opens the empirical discussion by exploring how specific constructions of threats enable state counter-terrorism responses in Nigeria. An important theme at the heart of this discussion is the notion of ‘new terrorism’ providing specific ideas about terrorism, its causes, and the threats it poses to Nigeria (and beyond). This idea of new terrorism is hinged upon a range of accepted knowledge about terrorism, including as currently existing in distinctively new form driven by religious extremism and poverty. Such constructions of threats, the chapter argues, contribute to enabling state-led counter-terrorism intervention in Nigeria.

Chapters 5 and 6 build upon the argument developed in the preceding chapter concerning constructions of threats, by showing how Nigeria’s counter-terrorism policy contributes to the production of representations of oppositional identities. More specifically, Chapter 5 explores constructions of the Nigerian self, hinged upon democratic and progressive ideas. This identity is reproduced in three important ways, discussed in three sub-sections of Chapter 5: society, geography, and time. This construction of the Nigerian self, the chapter illustrates, presents a set of problems or implications for policy, identity, and security in Nigeria, including the targeting of specific groups, organisations or spaces deemed (potentially) dangerous, as well as the othering of different communities in Nigeria and along the Lake Chad Basin. Chapter 6, then builds on this work, by examining constructions of the terrorist other within this counter-terrorism discourse. This entails constructions of certain terrorist groups as religious fundamentalists, foreigners, and as opportunists. The chapter explores these characterisations, showing how they contribute to upholding the above-identified idea of the Nigerian self, as well as problems associated with such constructions of terrorist other.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed background to this thesis, as well as the research puzzle and set of questions grounding this project. It also identified the relevance of this study specifically in relation to questions around threats and identity construction embedded in Nigeria's counter-terrorism discourse, which has been overlooked in much of existing scholarship. From this I outlined the conceptual and analytical commitments framing my empirical analysis, and the contribution of this thesis to knowledge. In Chapter One below, I build on the above by presenting a literature review of existing work on counter-terrorism in Nigeria to identify an important gap which this PhD thesis contributes to filling.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

1.0. Introduction

Having set out the background, aims and contribution of this thesis, the following chapter explores two sets of literature on counter-terrorism. Section 1.1. examines dominant debate around counter-terrorism as presented in terrorism studies to identify a range of knowledge claims or assumptions saturating this literature. Section 1.2. explores how debate on counter-terrorism unfolds in the Nigerian context by exploring, in particular, the distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ approaches. Taken together, I highlight a range of questionable premises about counter-terrorism, as well as about scholarship on counter-terrorism underpinning these which are unhelpful for my own analysis. As such, Section 1.3. surveys a growing body of critical work which orients an alternative perspective (to traditional or mainstream views) of counter-terrorism, generally approached as discourse and practice. Finally, I conclude this review of literature in section 1.4. by arguing for a critical intervention in this doctoral thesis grounded on three important justifications: social construction, history, and context.

1.1. Literature on counter-terrorism

This section maps the dominant debate on counter-terrorism as prominently articulated in terrorism research. To clarify, the analysis that follows does not exhaust discussions surrounding counter-terrorism, neither is such a task feasible in a PhD thesis.¹ It is also worth

¹ Despite contestations surrounding definitions of terrorism, a set of approaches to preventing, deterring, countering, and responding to such threats have been rationalised in policy and academic endeavours. Beginning from the 1960s and 1970s, and dramatically after the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001, attempts to distinguish terrorism from other forms of insecurity, along with an interest in developing consensual ways of addressing it has received a reasonable attention seen, for example, in the proliferation of academic journals, books, degree courses, memoirs, think-tanks, multilateral collaborations and policies, among others. The following literature provides further insights to this evolution: Sarah V. Marsden and Alex P. Schmid, “Typologies of terrorism and political violence,” In Sarah V. Marsden and Alex P. Schmid, *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); A. Merari, “Classification of terrorist groups.” *Terrorism: an International Journal*. 1, 3-4, (1978), 331-346; B. Ganor, “Terrorist organisation typologies and the probability of a boomerang effect.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 31, 4 (2008), 269-283; R. Chakravorti, “Terrorism: past present and future.” *Economic and Political Weekly*. 29, 36 (1994), 2340-2343; David C. Rapoport, “The Four waves of rebel terror and September 11.” *Anthropoetics*. 8, 1 (2001); Richard Jackson, Lee Jarvis, Jeroen Gunning and Marie Breen-Smyth, *Terrorism: A critical introduction*. p.10

highlighting, too, that despite disciplinary boundaries, the literature on counter-terrorism is increasingly multi- and cross- disciplinary with important contributions from law, counterinsurgency, anthropology, policing, strategic studies, military studies, psychology, area studies, among others related disciplines. However, I focus especially on three prominent themes including military warfare or force, criminal justice, and human security, commonly referred to in much of this literature.

First, counter-terrorism has been described as the ways in which security interests of states are secured through combative military intervention against particular or disparate terrorist groups or threats. This frequently permits the suspension of ‘normal’ democratic processes often due to the characterisation of such threats as existential, or seriously threatening.² Against the backdrop of U.S. interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, Roberts for example, argues that ‘despite the disadvantages of the ‘war on terror’, military intervention achieved huge successes due to the ingenuity of the United States.’³ As Crelinsten puts it,

the best short-term antidote to terrorism ‘from below’ is terrorism ‘from above’; the most effective way for a state to combat terrorism, at least in the short term, is through ruthless repression which subjugates the rule of law to the needs of national security.⁴

These discussions are typically steeped in prevailing assumptions about the destructive-ness of recent terrorist violence or threats, as well as about the unwillingness of terrorist groups to compromise their ‘unrealistic’ objectives. Therefore, the importance of military force in counter-terrorism is deemed necessary.⁵ Rinehart describes this clearly:

Over time the nature of international terrorism changed and so too did counterterrorism. It appeared that terrorists were no longer taking people hostage or hijacking airplanes...they introduced more lethal tactics like suicide bombing, aiming at mass-casualty...this once again

² See, for instance, Bruce Hoffman, “‘Is Europe soft on terrorism?’; – ‘Rethinking terrorism and counterterrorism since 9/11;” J. Rineheart, “Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency.” *Perspectives on Terrorism*. 4, 5 (2010), 31-47; P. Bremer, “The West’s counter-terrorist strategy.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 4, 4 (1992), 252-262

³ Adam Roberts, “Countering terrorism: a historical perspective.” In Andrea Bianchi and Alexis Keller, *Counterterrorism: Democracy’s challenge*. (Oregon: Oxford and Portland, 2008), pp. 3-43

⁴ Rineheart continues by arguing that violence does breed violence, and it is natural for a state that feels threatened to exercise its monopoly on violence— usually called ‘force’ precisely to differentiate it from the illegitimacy of insurgents. See, J. Rineheart, “Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency.”

⁵ Ibid.

put governments in a predicament to respond forcefully to an enemy that it did not entirely understand.⁶

This enemy-centric perspective facilitating the ‘war on terror’ model is consistently linked to 9/11, as Boyle explains: ‘the development of counterterrorism as a model of warfare is new to the post-September 11 era.’⁷ Again, for Hoffman, although a war against terrorism is needed to sustain the political and popular will, however, the struggle against terrorism is never-ending as terrorists continue to adapt and re-invent their tactics. Thus, counter-measures must be as tireless, innovative, and dynamic as that of the opponent.⁸ Other studies draw upon Just War concepts such as proportionality, discriminate targeting, proper authority, and a progressive future, to rationalise the use of military force against – what are represented as – irrational violent acts driven primarily by religious beliefs or ideology.⁹ Overall, this war-centric perspective of counter-terrorism is underpinned by questionable claims including about the existential threats posed by terrorism or terrorists – to states, democracy, human progress, lives, and properties – which often presents worst cases scenarios to justify the appropriateness of militaristic measures or the militarization of counter-terrorism.¹⁰

A second dominant perspective about criminal justice procedures raises crucial questions about the use of military force, while emphasising the need to contain state counter-terrorism efforts within the remit of legality and democratic norms.¹¹ These accounts

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Michael Boyle, “The war on terror in American grand strategy.” *International Affairs*. 84, 2 (2008), 191-209

⁸ Bruce Hoffman, “Rethinking terrorism and counterterrorism since 9/11.”

⁹ See, J. McDaniel, “Figures of evil: a triad of rhetorical strategies for theo-politics”; R. Kennedy, “Is one person’s terrorist another’s freedom fighter? Western and Islamic approaches to ‘just war’ compared.”

¹⁰ See, R. Crelinsten, “Perspectives on counter-terrorism from stovepipes to a comprehensive approach.”

¹¹ Much of these studies often refer to western societies, especially Britain, as notable examples of criminal justice frameworks or softer measures. Rees and Aldrich, for example, argues that the strategic culture of Britain treats terrorism through the lenses of human rights ideals. In a study conducted by Hoffman, contrasting Europe’s ‘soft’ approach to counter-terrorism with America’s ‘hard’ or military approach, he notes that these difference account for the greater successes achieved by Europe. Similarly, McGoldrick commented that Britain has been in the forefront of promoting liberal values and this influences the development of counterterrorism approaches. However, empirical studies of British counter-terrorism practices especially in post-colonial Kenya, and more recently, in the invasion of Iraq, significantly upset these claims. See: P. Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the liberal state* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977); L. Richardson, *What terrorists want: understanding the enemy, containing the threat* (New York: Random House, 2006); Dominic McGoldrick, “Terrorism and Human rights paradigms: The United Kingdom after 11 September 2001” in A. Bianchi and A. Keller, *Counterterrorism: Democracy’s*

predominantly argue for criminalising of terrorist acts, and for depoliticising and treating them as common offences punishable within existing penal or criminal frameworks. Wilkinson, a prominent advocate of such a view, argues that ‘western democracies must make respect for civil liberties and the rule of law a staple in their counterterrorism strategies.’¹² Criminal justice, he adds, is the ‘logically correct’ way of responding to terrorist violence in a ‘liberal state’.¹³ Such an approach commonly involves the effective use of intelligence, policing, and an impartial justice system to pre-empt and respond to terrorist threats.¹⁴ It is often assumed, in such cases, that the rights of individuals charged with terrorism are somewhat preserved until proven otherwise by a court.¹⁵ The advantage of this form of counter-terrorism, as Crelisten notes, is the dual impact of checking terrorism while upholding the integrity of the state and democratic values,¹⁶ which is not often the case with military intervention.

Criminal justice processes, however, are not always as straightforwardly predictable as assumed and frequently lead to the creation of ‘suspect communities’ by security intelligence and law enforcement.¹⁷ As Pedahzur and Ranstorp observe, for example, the criminal justice approach is increasingly undermined by several coercive elements such as punitive sentencing, militarised policing, and social profiling which unsettles the so-called liberal foundations upon which it supposedly rests on.¹⁸ What is more, this perspective – and the premises underpinning it – present certain ambiguities particularly with regard to a crucially important distinction between ‘terrorist acts’ and ‘criminal offenses’ which is often not clarified.

challenge, pp. 111-231; Wyn Rees and Aldrich J. Richard, “Contending cultures of counterterrorism: transatlantic divergence or convergence?” *International Affairs*. 81, 5 (2005), 905-923; D. Fieldman, “Human rights, terrorism and risk: the role of a Supreme Court in a Democracy.” *Harvard Law Review*. 32 (2005), 3-17; R.D. Crelisten, “Terrorism, counter-terrorism and democracy: the assessment of national security threats.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 1, 2 (1989), 242-269

¹² P. Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the liberal state*.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ L. Bannerman, “Police target dangerous suspects before they can offend.” *The Times*, UK, 27 November 2006.

¹⁵ See, Dominic McGoldrick, “Terrorism and Human rights paradigms: The United Kingdom after 11 September 2001”

¹⁶ R. Crelisten, *Counterterrorism*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p.49

¹⁷ See, for example, Nisha Kapoor, “On the North West 10(12): postcoloniality, the British racial state and the war on terror.” *Identities: Global studies in Culture and Power*. 20, 1 (2013), 61-76

¹⁸ A. Pedahzur and M. Ranstorp, “A tertiary model for counter terrorism in liberal democracies: the case of Israel.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 13, 2 (2001), 1-26.

In moving beyond common problems of human rights akin to military force, this emphasis on criminality invigorates unsettled definitional questions around the concept of terrorism itself and, in a sense, shifts the terrain of counter-terrorism from military to policing or criminal prosecution. Apart from problems with intelligence, policing, and anti-terror laws highlighted above, this perspective of criminal justice is heavily policy-focused and, as such, steeped in concerns about identifying legitimate counter-terrorism tools to meet certain expected outcomes. As Crelisten summarily describes, ‘the criminal justice and war models are both coercive approaches, and largely ignore other ways of dealing with terrorism.’¹⁹ A range of frameworks such as ‘integrated approach’, and ‘inter-disciplinary’, have been suggested for understanding the combination of different counter-terrorism tools, integrating military force and criminal justice approach.²⁰

The third prevailing perspective in the literature examined here, has been described through a plethora of signifiers such as human security, non-military, soft approach, population-centric, and long-term measures. For our purposes though, I use human security to provide an aggregation of the ideas underpinning this view of counter-terrorism. It begins with a recognition of the limitations of military force and criminal justice procedures especially concerning their enemy-centric outlook, arguing for broader approaches to cater for the root causes of violence and incorporate de-radicalisation and dis-engagement strategies.²¹ Horgan, in this regard, notes that counter- and de-radicalisation have become the latest buzzwords in counter-terrorism and further argues for conceptual (and empirical) distinction between ‘disengagement’ and ‘de-radicalisation.’²² This generally suggests that violent extremism and

¹⁹ R. Crelisten, “Perspectives on counter-terrorism from stovepipes to a comprehensive approach.”

²⁰ See, Ali F., “Rethinking US counter-terrorism strategies: a Muslim perspective.” *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*. 2, 2 (2007), 30-47; J. Rineheart, “Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency;” R. Crelisten, “Terrorism, counter-terrorism and democracy: the assessment of national security threats.”

²¹ See, J. Horgan, “Deradicalization or disengagement?: a process in need of clarity and a counterterrorism initiative in need of evaluation.” *Perspectives on Terrorism*. 2, 4 (2008), 3-8; W.F.S. Miles, “Deploying development to counter terrorism: Post-9/11 transformations of U.S. foreign aid to Africa.” *African Studies Review*. 55, 3 (2012), 27-60; C. Lawrence, “Counterterrorism strategy in the Sahel.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 30 (2007), 889-99; R. Crelisten, *Counterterrorism*, pp.51-55

²² J. Horgan, “Deradicalization or disengagement?: a process in need of clarity and a counterterrorism initiative in need of evaluation.”

terrorism could be addressed through other non-violent means – such as through countering ideological narratives and de-radicalising terrorists or other vulnerable individuals – without much violation of human rights.

Further to the above is the notion of addressing root causes of political violence and terrorism such as poverty, alienation, poor governance, and illiteracy, frequently described as ‘push factors’ responsible for encouraging individuals or groups to commit violent acts, or exploited by terrorist groups in mobilising and recruiting vulnerable individuals.²³ Miles argues that given the potential of terrorism for undermining development in Africa, ‘soft counterterrorism’ should be envisioned as a strategic developmental defence activity.²⁴ This nexus between development and security is not especially new as Duffield, Stewart, Hettne, among others have shown.²⁵ However, it has gained increased relevance in policy and academic debates on counter-terrorism especially post-9/11.²⁶

Moreover, this concern about the root causes of terrorism and political violence frequently target specific societies or countries in Africa – and the global South more widely – perceived as problematically weak and/or failing which provides sanctuaries for terrorists, or encourages oppositional violence due to the lack of developmental or democratic structures.²⁷ Bachmann and Honke, for example, explore the expansion of western influence in Kenya through the introduction of new forms of counter-terrorism which integrates peace,

²³ See, W.F.S. Miles, “Deploying development to counter terrorism: Post-9/11 transformations of U.S. foreign aid to Africa,” D. John, *African and the War on Terrorism*. (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2007); Jan Bachmann and Jana Honke, “Peace and Security as Counterterrorism? The Political Effects of Liberal interventions in Kenya.” *African Affairs*. 109, 434 (2009), 97-114

²⁴ W.F.S. Miles, “Deploying development to counter terrorism: Post-9/11 transformations of U.S. foreign aid to Africa”, p.38

²⁵ For studies exploring the linkage between security and development, see, M. Duffield, *Global governance and New Wars: the merging of development and security*. (London: Zed Books, 2001); F. Stewart, “Development and Security.” *Conflict, Security and Development*. 4, 3 (2004), 261-288; B. Hettne, “Development and security: origins and future.” *Security Dialogue*. 41, 1 (2010), 31-52

²⁶ Ronlad Crelinsten, “Perspectives on counter-terrorism from stovepipes to a comprehensive approach.”

²⁷ For more on this, see: E.G Arsenault and T. Bacon, “Disaggregating and defeating terrorist safe havens.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 38, 2 (2015), 85-112; S.P Cohen. *The idea of Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 309-311; R. Korteweg, “Black holes: on terrorist sanctuaries and governmental weakness.” *Civil Wars*. 10, 1 (2008), 60-71; E. Newman, “Weak states, state failure, and terrorism.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 19, 4 (2007), 463-88

development and security.²⁸ As suggested in the introductory chapter of this thesis, though problems of poverty and marginalization (in Nigeria) may contribute to insecurity and terrorism in particular, this link has been increasingly questioned in research.²⁹ Nevertheless, such formulations are typically skewed against developing countries in Africa and the rest of the global South, while ignoring other important questions or issues such as concerning the construction of threats and identity.³⁰

In sum, this section mapped the prominent debate on counter-terrorism by exploring three prominent themes including military warfare, criminal justice, and human rights, which put forward different ideas or visions about the appropriate forms of counter-terrorism. These accounts, as demonstrated above, predominantly focus on the different policy tools used by the state, or other bodies with recognised formal authority, to prevent or respond to seemingly objective threats posed by terrorism/terrorists. Crenshaw puts this succinctly as: ‘counterterrorism policies are framed and responded to by formal authorities based on the way terrorist threats are perceived.’³¹ Academic analyses too, with a few notable exceptions discussed in Section 1.3, proceed from several unresolved claims about terrorism and counter-terrorism which are limiting for my own intervention.

1.2. Literature on counter-terrorism in Nigeria

Following on from the foregoing, this section explores debate between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ approaches in existing work on Nigeria’s counter-terrorism approach. This debate reflects much of the assumptions about the tools and ends of counter-terrorism advanced in the wider,

²⁸ Jan Bachmann and Jana Honke, “Peace and Security as Counterterrorism? The Political Effects of Liberal interventions in Kenya.”

²⁹ See, in particular, Anneli Botha and Mahdi Abdile, “Reality versus perception: Toward understanding Boko Haram in Nigeria.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*.

³⁰ For more, see J. Piazza, “Rooted in poverty? Terrorism, poor economic development, and social cleavages.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 18, 1 (2006), 159-77; A. Silke, “Holy warriors: exploring the psychological processes of Jihadi radicalisation.” *European Journal of Criminology*. 5, 1 (2008), 105-130

³¹ M. Crenshaw, “Counterterrorism policy and the political process.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 24, 5 (2001), 329-337

mainstream scholarship discussed above. Section 1.2.1 examines analyses of hard approaches, while Section 1.2.2 interrogates other studies presenting views about soft approaches.

1.2.1. 'Hard' approaches

A significant number of work describe the use of military force and other coercive measures, including strict anti-terrorism laws, as essentially vital for safeguarding national security and other referents in the face of a truly 'new' and potentially deadly terrorist threats in Nigeria.³² Oyewole, for one, explores Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy in view of the opposition posed by different terrorist groups – such as Boko Haram – against the state, and identifies certain challenges militating against Nigeria's use of military intervention. Specifically, he notes that: 'the federal government of Nigeria has committed itself to different counterterrorism measures, which are largely dominated by 'hard politics' and military mobilization.'³³ Consequently, he adds, 'Nigeria has boosted its strategic importance in the Global War on Terror.'³⁴ Oyewole indeed points to certain problems of Nigeria's military approach including the number of collateral deaths, the huge military budget, and the general lack of consensus among Nigerians about the state's approach. However, he argues that 'despite these scepticisms, to abrogate the current [military] measures that are saving millions of Nigerians' lives in the face of terrorist actions would amount to suicide.'³⁵

³² For discussion on the militarisation of counter-terrorism, see: Samuel Oyewole, "Boko Haram and the challenges of Nigeria's war on terror." *Defence and Security Analysis* 29, 3 (2013), 253-262; Hussein Solomon, 'Counter-terrorism in Nigeria.' *The Royal United States Institute for Defence and Security Studies Journal*. 157, 4 (2012), 6-1; James Adewunmi Falode, "the nature of Nigeria's Boko Haram war, 2010-2015: a strategic analysis." *Perspectives on Terrorism*. 10, 1 (2016), 41-52; Simon Gray and Ibikunle Adeakin, "The evolution of Boko Haram: from missionary activism to transnational jihad and the failure of the Nigerian security intelligence agencies.;" Onapajo H. and Uzodike UO, "Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria: Man, the state and the international system." *African Security Review*, 21, 3 (2012), 24-39; Habibu Yaya Bappah, "Nigeria's military failure against the Boko Haram insurgency." *African Security Review*. 25, 2 (2016), 146-158; Hakeem Onapajo, "Has Nigeria defeated Boko Haram? An appraisal of the counter-terrorism approach under the Buhari administration;" O. Akinola, "Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: between Islamic fundamentalism, politics, and poverty." *African Security*. 8, 1 (2015); 1-29; N.D.F Allen, "Unusual lessons from an unusual war: Boko Haram and modern insurgency." *The Washington Quarterly*. 40, 4 (2017), 115-133

³³ Samuel Oyewole, 'Boko Haram and the challenges of Nigeria's war on terror,' p.253

³⁴ Ibid, 254

³⁵ Ibid, p.260

A similar analysis was articulated by Onapajo. Building on dominant rationalist ideas expressed in ‘traditional’ approaches to counter-terrorism, he examines the strategic importance of Nigeria’s use of military approaches, alongside other non-military measures.³⁶

He puts this in the following way:

...this study favours an integrated approach within the orthodox perspective for the appraisal of the present counter-terrorism strategy in Nigeria. The orthodox terrorism studies have a short-term goal (which is to reduce violence and especially the possibility of terrorist attacks) that would ultimately create the environment for a long-term solution (a sustainable peaceful outcome) ...the counter-terrorism efforts of the Nigerian government can still be captured within the short-term scope, because the apparent aim is to significantly reduce the possibility of attacks by Boko Haram.³⁷

This reflects a debate about what the appropriate forms of counter-terrorism in Nigeria could be, and about what terrorism studies could or should look like, and do. On the one hand, Onapajo argues for short-term goals of reducing violence by narrowly targeting specific terrorist groups. On the other hand, he points to a distinction between ‘mainstream’ and ‘critical’ currents in terrorism studies considered to hold separate, and often opposing, commitments to the study of (counter-)terrorism. Yet, this ignores a crucial aim central to research on counter-terrorism approaches critical or otherwise, which is to assess the purposes, effectiveness, or consequences of counter-terrorism.³⁸ Another problematic assumption here is the temporal distinction and link between short- and long-term ends of counter-terrorism, which implicitly position hard approaches as a pre-requisite for introducing other softer measures. This linear understanding of counter-terrorism measures is girded by claims about the seriousness of terrorism and the urgency it supposedly entails, even above other possible causes of harm or course of action, including through peaceful means. This view was clearly expressed in Onapajo’s comparative study of Nigeria’s counter-terrorism efforts under the

³⁶ Hakeem Onapajo, “Has Nigeria defeated Boko Haram? An appraisal of the counter-terrorism approach under the Buhari administration,” p.65

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ For critique of this dichotomy of ‘orthodox’ and ‘critical’, see, for example, Horgan J. and Boyle M. “A case against Critical Terrorism Studies.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 1, 1 (2008), 51-64; and Jones D.M and Smith M.L.R. “We’re all terrorist now: critical- or hypocritical- studies ‘on’ Terrorism?” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 32, 4 (2009), 292-302

administrations of President Jonathan and Buhari, as follows: ‘military force is the hallmark of Nigeria’s interventions while other non-military responses are largely complementary.’³⁹

In respect to other hard forms of counter-terrorism, such as criminal justice procedures, Sampson and Onuoha argue that increasing domestic and international terrorist acts justifies the enactment of anti-terror legislation in Nigeria, making it ‘a matter of necessity rather than choice.’⁴⁰ As with Onapajo’s account, we see further emphasis on the compulsoriness of punitive actions, in the context of the rising threats from domestic and international terrorist groups. Within this discourse of hard approaches, other studies refer to several weaknesses of Nigeria’s military approach due to the lack of political will, security intelligence and state-of-the-art-weapons to effectively identify, prevent, deter, and combat terrorist threats.⁴¹ Gray and Adeakin explains this in the following way:

...counterterrorism strategy and measures to date have only radicalised Boko Haram, especially in terms of ideology, tactics, and objectives. This is [due to] a serious failure by the Nigerian security intelligence agencies to respond effectively...within the Nigerian state security apparatus there is a general lack of resources and effective equipment as well as logistical oversight, and both the intelligence services and military are fundamentally not trained to combat asymmetrical threats...any effective counterstrategy against Boko Haram must be designed to fit a particular asymmetric threat or *modus operandi* which consists of two components: first, a militarized component that includes armed response by the military and law enforcement, and second, a non-militarized component that addresses wider societal factors.⁴²

This analytically situates the failures of Nigeria’s counter-terrorism approach within the lack of intelligence and military equipment to adequately respond to evolving terrorist threats, rather

³⁹ Hakeem Onapajo, “Has Nigeria defeated Boko Haram? An appraisal of the counter-terrorism approach under the Buhari administration,” p.65

⁴⁰ Sampson, I.T. and F.C. Onuoha, “Forcing the horse to drink or making it realise its thirst”? Understanding the enactment of anti-terrorism legislation (ATL) in Nigeria.” *Perspectives on Terrorism*. 5, 3-4 (2011), 33-49

⁴¹ For more on analyses around the challenges facing Nigeria’s military approach, see: O. Akinola, “Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: between Islamic fundamentalism, politics, and poverty”; Habibu Yaya Bappah, “Nigeria’s military failure against the Boko Haram insurgency”; James Adewunmi Falode, “The nature of Nigeria’s Boko Haram war, 2010-2015: a strategic analysis”; C. Varin, “Turning the tides of war: the impact of private military and security companies on Nigeria’s counterinsurgency against Boko haram.” *African Security Review*. 27, 2 (2018), 144-157; Simon Gray and Ibikunle Adeakin, “The evolution of Boko Haram: from missionary activism to transnational jihad and the failure of the Nigerian security intelligence agencies”; S. Oyewole, “Making the sky relevant to battle strategy: counterinsurgency and the prospect of air power in Nigeria.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 40, 3 (2017), 211-231

⁴² Simon Gray and Ibikunle Adeakin, “The evolution of Boko Haram: from missionary activism to transnational jihad and the failure of the Nigerian security intelligence agencies,” pp.200-201

than, say, a critique of militarism or the militarisation of counter-terrorism itself.⁴³ At the same time, we see the re-invigoration of the distinction between hard – including military force and criminal justice – and soft approaches. Bappah develops a parallel argument to this, grounding the failures of Nigeria’s counter-terrorism strategy on three mundane factors, namely, the erosion of military professionalism under civilian administrations, ineffectiveness of top military officers, and the overall lack of decisive leadership by the executive president.⁴⁴ Similarly, Solomon argues that Nigeria’s counter-terrorism efforts are crippled by the ‘incapacity of the Nigerian security agencies to gather intelligence and undertake forensic investigations...their skillsets are inadequate to face the challenges posed by sects like Boko Haram.’⁴⁵ Adesoji commented along the same line:

The government response to Islamic fundamentalism seems neither adequate nor enduring. The prompt trial of arrested culprits, bold and firm implementation of previous commission reports, and a more devoted handling of security reports and armed gangs, as well as better handling of known flash points and hot spots, would, in addition to serving as a deterrent, portray the government as a responsible and a responsive body.⁴⁶

All of this moulds a dramatically narrow perspective of Nigeria’s counter-terrorism efforts, centred around the use of hard forms of counter-terrorism linked to a set of rationalised outcomes. This involves targeting particular terrorist groups and other individuals who support them, through military or/and stringent anti-terrorism legislation to reduce the threats they pose to Nigeria. Furthermore, these studies express claims about the aim of terrorism studies which, specifically, should offer ideas regarding appropriate models of counter-terrorism relevant to policy, or for problem-solving considering Nigeria’s peculiarities. Such a view of counter-terrorism is usually concerned with questions of definition and causation of terrorism, whether described objectively as new and destructive, or emphasising the imposing factor of religious

⁴³ P.M. Frowd and A.J. Sandor, “Militarism and its limits: Sociological insights on security assemblages in the Sahel.”

⁴⁴ Habibu Yaya Bappah, “Nigeria’s military failure against the Boko Haram insurgency.”

⁴⁵ Solomon as quoted in Habibu Yaya Bappah, “Nigeria’s military failure against the Boko Haram insurgency,” p.148

⁴⁶ Abimbola Adesoji, “The Boko Haram uprising and Islamic revivalism,” p.104

extremism.⁴⁷ Upon closer inspection, though, these accounts overlook the damaging impacts of force including for human rights violations, and for contributing to insecurity in north-east Nigeria. An example of the effects of military force, particularly the way in which it facilitates the expansion of terrorist violence beyond Nigeria's territorial borders, was explicitly described in D'Amato's work:

It has been displayed that the Nigerian government has a long history of the deployment of military assets for international security operations...as a matter of fact, experts and commentators have often stressed that the Nigerian government's strong use of army and police units turned out to be counterproductive...as table 1 suggests that transnationalism for the group significantly increased after the large-scale counterinsurgency offensive launched by the Nigerian government in 2013.⁴⁸

While this clearly demonstrates the link between the expansion of violence and the use of military force, other accounts explored subsequently argue for broader, softer tools – which mostly includes development-focused initiatives – for encouraging sustainability and lasting solution to terrorism. Moreover, as Akinola observes, 'the reliance on the use of physical force, the military's current counterinsurgency strategy sometimes ends in the complete massacres of innocent civilians.'⁴⁹

In sum, my focus in this section was to provide an overview of the notion of 'hard' approaches, constituted by assumptions about particular instruments and objectives of counter-terrorism in Nigeria. This framework of hard approaches and the assumptions it entails is

⁴⁷ For discussion on the religious drivers of terrorism in Nigeria, see, for instance: Freedom Onuoha, "Boko Haram and the evolving Salafi Jihadist threat in Nigeria." In Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos, *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, security, and the state in Nigeria*. African Studies Centre (ASC) Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique (IFRA), West African Politics and Society Series, Vol 2 (2014); Lisa Waldek and Shankara Jayasekara, "Boko Haram: the evolution of Islamist extremism in Nigeria." *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*. 6, 2 (2011), 168-178; Freedom C Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram crisis explained." *African Security Review*. 19, 2 (2010), 54-67; Abimbola Adesoji, "The Boko Haram uprising and Islamic revivalism;" Johannes Harnischfeger, "Boko Haram and its Muslim critics: Observations from Yobe state", in Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos, *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, security, and the state in Nigeria*; Olabanji Akinola, "Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: Between Islamic Fundamentalism, Politics, and poverty"; Roman Loimeier, 'Boko Haram: The development of a militant religious movement in Nigeria.' *African Spectrum*. 47, 2-3 (2012), 137-155; Last Murray, "The pattern of dissent: Boko Haram in Nigeria 2009". *Annual Review of Islam in Africa*. 10, (2009), 7-11

⁴⁸ S. D'Amato, 'Terrorists going transnational: rethinking the role of states in the case of AQIM and Boko haram.' *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 11, 1 (2018), 151-172. See also, S. Weeraratne, "Theorizing the expansion of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria." *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 29, 4 (2017), 610-634

⁴⁹ Olabanji Akinola, "Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: Between Islamic Fundamentalism, Politics, and poverty."

deeply confusing and analytically unhelpful, however. For example, Agbiboa points to the use of ‘carrot and stick’ approach which entails various attempts at dialoguing with specific terrorist groups, along with a sustained military offensive.⁵⁰ While he frames this within Nigeria’s broader military strategy seeking a quick solution to terrorism, Akinola, contra Agbiboa, describes dialogue as a form of softer measures.⁵¹ In addition to this, much of the assumptions underpinning this framework can be identified in the dominant debate about counter-terrorism in terrorism studies more widely,⁵² as discussed in Section 1.1.

1.2.2. ‘Soft’ approaches

Following on from the discussion on hard approaches, a significant number of studies which could be assembled around certain key arguments about soft forms of counter-terrorism, including identifying the drawbacks of military force, and emphasising the relevance of human security and development, have gained traction in scholarship on Nigeria’s counter-terrorism approach.⁵³ Drawing on Just War concepts and human security, Mbagwu and Mavalla argue

⁵⁰ D.E. Agbiboa, “Peace at daggers drawn? Boko Haram and the state of emergency in Nigeria.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 37, 1 (2014), 41-67

⁵¹ It is important to add, however, that the Nigerian government adopts a ‘no-negotiation-with-terrorists’ stance and Nigeria’s counter-terrorism policy only provides for de-radicalization and rehabilitation of terrorists who give up arms. Although there have been alleged attempts to dialogue with members or affiliates of Boko Haram, alongside ongoing military intervention which scuttled these efforts. Nonetheless, this reveals the ambiguity at the heart of Nigeria’s counter-terrorist policy which makes such frameworks of ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ analytically unhelpful. See, Olabanji Akinola, “Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: Between Islamic Fundamentalism, Politics, and poverty.” Moreover, Crelinsten has drawn attention to the various uses of the military in counter-terrorism, beyond combative or ‘war-fighting’ usage. See, R. Crelinsten, “Perspectives on counter-terrorism from stovepipes to a comprehensive approach.” *Perspectives on Terrorism*. 8, 1 (2014), 2-15; see also, Ronald Crelinsten, *Counterterrorism*, pp.40-48

⁵² See, Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism. Revised*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); B. Hoffman, “Is Europe soft on terrorism?” *Foreign Policy*. 115 (1999), 62-76; Richard Jackson, Lee Jarvis, Jeroen Gunning and Marie Breen-Smyth, *Terrorism: A critical introduction*, p.17-18

⁵³ For analyses related to human security or soft approaches, see: Eugene Eji, “Rethinking Nigeria’s counterterrorism strategy;” Joan Mbagwu and Ayuba Gimba Mavalla, “Nonviolent Approach: alternative to military strategy for curbing terrorism in Nigeria;” Oluwaseun Tella, “Boko Haram Terrorism and counterterrorism: The soft power context.” *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. 1, 15 (2017); Michael I. Ugwueze and Freedom C. Onuoha, “Hard versus soft measures to security: explaining the failure of counter-terrorism strategy in Nigeria.” *Journal of Applied Security Research*. (2020); Daniel E. Agbiboa, “Peace at daggers drawn? Boko Haram and the state of emergency in Nigeria;” William W. Hansen and Umma Aliyu Musa, “Fanon, the wretched and Boko Haram.” *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. 43, 3 (2013), 281-296; Iro Aghedo, “Old wine in a new bottle: ideological and operational linkages between Maitatsine and Boko Haram revolts in Nigeria.” *African Security*. 7, 4 (2014), 229-250; I. Aghedo and O. Osumah, ‘The Boko Haram uprising: how should Nigeria respond? *Third World Quarterly*. 33, 5 (2012), 853-869; – ‘Bread, not bullets: Boko Haram and insecurity management in northern Nigeria.’ *African Study Monographs*. 35 (3 and 4), 205-229

that Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy is sorely ineffective for failing to promote most of the requirements of human security:

...it can be said that Nigeria's leaders are learning that successfully confronting the threat of Boko Haram will require more than a traditional kill/capture counterterrorism strategy...the government must address the myriad socioeconomic demands such as poverty, health and educational services, unemployment, infrastructure, and so forth. Thus, the government's response will need to be integrated into a comprehensive political, economic, and security strategy.⁵⁴

The use of military force is described here as providing a narrow approach to addressing the problem of terrorism and is generally ineffective. In contrast, they argue for other forms of counter-terrorism targeting fundamental socio-economic drivers of terrorism and for embedding de-radicalization strategies and dialogue within Nigeria's approach.⁵⁵ This analysis indeed highlights some of the problems associated with coercive measures. However, while seeking to offer a nuanced perspective of Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach, it ends up reinforcing similar problematic distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' approaches, or military and non-military forms of counter-terrorism. For example, though the above text suggests an integrated approach combining different measures, Mbagwu and Mavalla subsequently notes that 'counter-terrorism program in Nigeria has been more military than non-military, and there is a need to shift paradigm [to non-military measures] because it is not effective to a larger extent.'⁵⁶ This contradiction stems, in part, from their theoretical approach which integrates Just War concepts – drawn mostly from counterinsurgency and strategic studies –⁵⁷ with

⁵⁴ Joan Mbagwu and Ayuba Gimba Mavalla, "Nonviolent Approach: alternative to military strategy for curbing terrorism in Nigeria," p.125

⁵⁵ See, for example: Daniel A. Tonwe and Surulola J. Eke, "State fragility and violent uprisings in Nigeria." *African Security Review*. 22, 4 (2013), 232-243; Oarhe Osumah, "Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria and the vicious cycle of internal insecurity;" Daniel E. Agbibo, "Peace at daggers drawn? Boko Haram and the state of emergency in Nigeria;" William W. Hansen and Umma Aliyu Musa, "Fanon, the wretched and Boko Haram;" Iro Aghedo and Oarhe Osumah, 'Insurgency in Nigeria: a comparative study of Niger Delta and Boko Haram uprisings.' Daniel Agbibo, "living in fear: religious identity, relative deprivation and the Boko Haram terrorism." *African Security*. 6, 2 (2013); Simon Alozieuwa, "contending theories on Nigeria's security challenge in the era of Boko Haram." *Peace and Conflict Review*. 7, 1 (2012).

⁵⁶ Joan Mbagwu and Ayuba Gimba Mavalla, "Nonviolent Approach: alternative to military strategy for curbing terrorism in Nigeria," p.129

⁵⁷ Just War concepts commonly point to wars as a last resort after all other non-military avenues have been explored, paying attention to proportionality, effectiveness, and legitimacy (or *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*). This is often used to construct counter-terrorism as inevitably a "good or just war" against evil terrorists. For more

human security approaches in an attempt to go beyond the narrow articulations offered by analysis on hard approaches. Yet, as with hard approaches, this notion of soft approaches is underpinned by several questionable (and in fact, disputed) claims, especially regarding the link between socio-economic and socio-political problems and (counter-)terrorism.

Eji's work provides further illustration of the above-discussed perspective of soft approaches. He argues that, even with the elaboration of a National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) in 2014 to offer a 'soft approach, military-centric approaches are still used widely.'⁵⁸ This is, he adds, due to certain 'inherent ambiguities within Nigeria's NACTEST, including the lack of a clear definition of terrorism which narrowly focuses on Islamic fundamentalism, and the absence of other political solutions especially dialogue.'⁵⁹ Eji's intervention reflects similar assumptions about hard and soft approaches, as well as the distinction between state policies and 'actual' practice which neglects their co-constitutive outcomes:

This brings to the fore the imperative of having the right balance between hard and soft power approaches in counter-terrorism...In this vein, once an acceptable level of safety is achieved through the use of the hard approach in a terrorist-affected environment, the military and other instruments of the hard approach necessarily have to give way or play a secondary role to soft power.⁶⁰

In his critique of military force, Eji's analysis of soft approaches end up reinforcing the temporal distinctions between short-term (hard) and long-term (soft) objectives of counter-terrorism. Furthermore, Tella draws on the concept of 'soft power' as developed by Joseph Nye to explore Nigeria's use of non-military measures, along with other militaristic measures and arrives at a similar formulation. In particular, he notes that 'the end of Boko Haram will

on this, see: R. Jackson, "Security, democracy, and the rhetoric of counter-terrorism." *Democracy and Security*. 1, 2 (2005), 147-171; J. McDaniel, "Figures of evil: a triad of rhetorical strategies for theo-politics." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. 6, 3 (2003), 539-550; R. Kennedy, "Is one person's terrorist another's freedom fighter? Western and Islamic approaches to 'just war' compared." *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 11, 1 (1999), 1-21

⁵⁸ Eugene Eji, "Rethinking Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy," p.206

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.210

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.209

be largely determined by how the Nigerian government is able to effectively harness its smart power (the effective combination of hard and soft power) in its counter-terrorism campaign.’⁶¹

Writing from the perspective of relative deprivation, Agbiboa argues that the ‘Nigerian government should integrate measures that addresses existing socio-economic problems, especially in north-eastern Nigeria, within its broader counter-terror strategy.’⁶² Osumah and Aghedo develop a congruent socio-economic thesis, arguing that the issue of terrorism in Nigeria is mainly encouraged by deep structural problems including poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, among others.⁶³ As such Nigeria’s counter-terrorism policies should specifically make provisions for addressing these socio-economic issues, while ensuring the safety of the population through other military-centred approaches.⁶⁴

From the discussion so far, we can identify certain key arguments and claims underlying this notion of soft approaches. Notable among these is the emphasis on poverty as a significant driver of terrorism in Nigeria, which of course permeates security scholarship on Africa,⁶⁵ suggesting a broader set of non-military tools. Indeed, socio-economic problems and other forms of inequality in Nigeria may indirectly enable violence and deserves to be addressed in their own right. However, the link between poverty and terrorism in the Nigerian context has been increasingly questioned, as Botha and Abdile show for example.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, as with hard approaches, this notion of soft approaches takes for granted other important questions including about the framing of Nigeria’s counter-terrorism strategy and what it means for policy, identity, and security.

⁶¹ Oluwaseun Tella, “Boko Haram Terrorism and counterterrorism: The soft power context,” p.12

⁶² Daniel Agbiboa, “living in fear: religious identity, relative deprivation and the Boko Haram terrorism.”

⁶³ Iro Aghedo and Oarhe Osumah, “Insurgency in Nigeria: a comparative study of Niger Delta and Boko Haram uprisings.”

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ See, for instance, M. Duffield, *Global governance and New Wars: the merging of development and security*; S. Parashar and M. Schulz, “Colonial legacies, postcolonial ‘selfhood’ and the (un)doing of Africa.”

⁶⁶ See, Anneli Botha and Mahdi Abdile, “Reality versus perception: Toward understanding Boko Haram in Nigeria.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. (2017).

1.3. Critical literature on counter-terrorism

Section 1.1. presented a thematic overview of dominant debate on counter-terrorism by exploring three prominent themes including military force, criminal justice, and human security. Section 1.2. demonstrated how this unfolds in the Nigerian context through examining the debate between hard and soft approaches. In doing so, I identified a range accepted knowledges about counter-terrorism permeating these, as well as their common emphasis on problem-solving. Contra these perspectives, the following section presents a growing body of work offering an alternative to mainstream approaches and ideas about counter-terrorism which I build from in my own analysis.

The dissatisfaction with dominant knowledge claims about terrorism, which to a very large extent influence policy preferences given the increasing academic-policy relationship since 9/11, informs this burgeoning tenor of critical work in terrorism studies.⁶⁷ It is worth stressing here that these critical scholars draw upon different methodologies to examine a wide range of issues – including gender, race, class, colonialism, sexuality, state-centrism, among others – in relation to (counter-)terrorism. Specifically, counter-terrorism within this diverse research agenda is broadly approached as a set of discourses and practices with important social, political, and ethical implications.⁶⁸ Jackson, prominent amongst these scholars, articulates these commitments poignantly:

Both past and more recent review exercises of the field reveal an embarrassing list of methodological and analytical weaknesses, including among others: a reliance on poor research methods and procedures, an over-reliance on secondary information and a general failure to undertake primary research; a failure to develop an accepted definition of terrorism and to formulate rigorous theories and concepts; the descriptive, narrative and condemnatory character

⁶⁷ See, E. Herring, “Critical terrorism studies: an activist scholar perspective.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 1, 2 (2008), 197-211; R. Jackson, “The core commitments of Critical terrorism studies”; L. Jarvis and M. Lister, “State terrorism research and critical terrorism studies: an assessment.” *Critical Studies on terrorism*. 7, 1 (2014), 43-61; J. Hagmann, “Representations of terrorism and the making of counterterrorism policy;” B.K. Smith, M. Stohl and M. al-Gharbi, “Discourses on countering violent extremism: the strategic interplay between fear and security after 9/11.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 12, 1 (2019), 151-168; K. Hunt and K. Rygiel, *(En)gendering the War on Terror: war stories and camouflaged politics*. (London: Ashgate, 2006); L. Sjoberg, “The terror of everyday counterterrorism.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 8, 3 (2015), 383-400; C. Weber, ““The terrorist”: the out-of-place and on-the-move “perverse homosexual” in international relations.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 10, 2 (2017), 240-252; R. Bahramitash, “The war on terror, feminist orientalism and orientalist feminism: case studies of two North American bestsellers.” *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*. 14, 2 (2010), 221-235; P. Gilroy, “Multiculture, double consciousness and the ‘war on terror.’” *The Cultural Politics of Multiculturalism*. 39, 4 (2005), 431-443

⁶⁸ R. Jackson, “The core commitments of Critical terrorism studies,” p.245

of much terrorism research output; the dominance of orthodox international relations approaches and the lack of interdisciplinarity; the tendency to treat contemporary terrorism as a 'new' phenomenon that started on September 11th, 2001 and a persistent lack of historicity; the issue of state terrorism; and [an overly policy] perspective focus.⁶⁹

Stump and Dixit similarly explain that conventional terrorism scholarship's emphasis on problem-solving, take for granted the object of study (counter- terrorism), is un-reflexive about the knowledge claims it (re)produces, mostly ignore the role of the state as a producer of violence, and is uncommitted to social emancipation.⁷⁰ To be sure, these premises have also been challenged by scholars within the so-called 'traditional' approaches in terrorism studies.⁷¹ Crenshaw, for example, demonstrates the complexity of policy-making and practices surrounding counter-terrorism.⁷² Crelinsten describes counter-terrorism as essentially a discursive exercise: 'how we conceive of terrorism determines to a great extent how we go about countering it.'⁷³ What is relevant here, *inter alia*, is that the challenge to claims about objectivity, as well as the recognition of other social and political processes through which specific threats are constructed, framed, and responded to, permeate mainstream and critical approaches alike. Thus, counter-terrorism, as Jackson observes, involves a 'special political discourse [and practices] with its own assumptions, rhetorical tropes, narratives, and meanings.'⁷⁴

While rejecting claims about objectivity, these critical studies prioritise a constructivist, historical, and contextual approach to analysing counter-terrorism policies and practices, and pay attention to the consequences they brings into being.⁷⁵ Counter-terrorism as a discursive

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ J.L. Stump and P. Dixit, "Toward a completely constructivist critical terrorism studies." *International Relations*. 26, 2 (2011), 199-217

⁷¹ See, for example, M. Crenshaw, "Counterterrorism policy and the political process;" Jones D.M and Smith M.L.R. "We're all terrorist now: critical- or hypocritical- studies 'on' Terrorism?;" Horgan J and Boyle M., "A case against Critical Terrorism Studies;" Noam Chomsky, *Power and Terror: post-9/11 talks and interviews*. Ed. J. Junkerman and T. Masakazu. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003); R. Crelinsten, "Perspectives on counter-terrorism from stovepipes to a comprehensive approach."

⁷² M. Crenshaw, "Counterterrorism policy and the political process."

⁷³ R. Crelinsten, "Perspectives on counter-terrorism from stovepipes to a comprehensive approach."

⁷⁴ R. Jackson, "Security, democracy, and the rhetoric of counter-terrorism."

⁷⁵ See, R. Jackson, L. Jarvis, J. Gunning and M. Breen-Smyth, *Terrorism: a critical introduction*, p. 243

(political) activity contributes to threats and identity construction, highlighting the link between knowledge and power in specific contexts.⁷⁶ A reasonably significant number of studies within this critical orientation drawing specifically on postcolonial approaches, has argued for more attention to historical and contextual details in analysing counter-terrorism discourses – and practices – in postcolonial societies.⁷⁷ An important reason underlying this call is the need to appropriately understand (and problematise) the ways in which particular discourses – including neo-orientalist and state-centric discourses as well as other broader, colonial discourses often ignored in (critical) terrorism studies – are reinforced through counter-terrorism knowledge and practice.⁷⁸ Barnard-Wills and Moore argues for ‘a *form* of critical studies on terrorism which takes seriously the contextual and historical elements in postcolonial societies.’⁷⁹ For instance, Parashar, in a study on counter-terrorism practices in India, demonstrates how nation-state identity is (re)produced in postcolonial societies and the social and political implications of this (beyond the terrorist threats that such measures were ostensibly introduced to address).⁸⁰

Having identified this commitment to reflexivity, which interrogates taken for granted knowledges about counter-terrorism, and the importance of historicity and context, I move to summarise three important points emphasised in this literature framing my own analysis.

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Barnard-Wills David and C. Moore, “The terrorism of the other: towards a contrapuntal reading of terrorism in India.”

⁷⁸ See, for example, Grzegorz B., “A trojan horse of a different colour: counterterrorism and Islamophobia in Alan Gibbons’ an act of love and Anna Perera’s Guantanamo Boy.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 11, 1 (2018), 26-44; Barnard-Wills David and C. Moore, “The terrorism of the other: towards a contrapuntal reading of terrorism in India;” Managhan T., “We all dreamed it: the politics of knowing and un-knowing the “war on terror””. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 10, 1 (2016), 22-43; Wyszomierski L.E., “Boko Haram and the discourse of mimicry: a critical discourse analysis of media explanations for Boko Haram’s improved video propaganda quality.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 8, 3 (2015), 503-515; S. Parashar, “Terrorism and the postcolonial state.” In *Routledge Handbook of Postcolonial Politics*. Edited by Olivia U. Rutazibwa and Robbie Shilliam. (London: Routledge, 2018), pp.110-126

⁷⁹ Barnard-Wills David and C. Moore, “The terrorism of the other: towards a contrapuntal reading of terrorism in India.”

⁸⁰ S. Parashar, “Terrorism and the postcolonial state.”

1.4. Summary: Justification for moving towards a critical approach

In view of my discussion in Sections 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3, this final section outlines a set of justification for further critical analysis of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy, organised around three key points: first, is regarding the relevance of a social constructivist approach, second and third, relates to the importance of history and context, respectively.⁸¹

The first justification involves approaching Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy as the way in which specific threats and responses are framed and represented. In other words, constructing terrorism is neither self-evident, exceptional, nor inevitable. Neither does such threats necessarily require extra-ordinary counter-measures which often involve the suspension of normal processes. Terrorism itself, as Jarvis argues, 'is ontologically unstable, and relies upon specific set of limiting assumptions in order to fix meaning(s) in specific ways.'⁸² Jackson summarises this as follows:

knowledge [and inter-subjective practices] is always intimately connected to power and is always for someone and for some purpose...hence critical scholarships begin with an acceptance of the basic insecurity of all knowledge and the impossibility of neutral or objective knowledge.⁸³

As such my analysis in this thesis moves away from concerns about objectivity, rather I adopt a constructivist view which approaches counter-terrorism as contingent constructions (as detailed further in Chapter 2). Instead of exploring the different forms of counter-terrorism and outcomes, this research is interested in how particular threats are constructed (through discourse) to make state counter-terrorism in Nigeria possible.⁸⁴ At the same time, it looks at how this counter-terrorism discourse contributes to producing representations of a unique Nigerian identity (positioned against specific terrorist other) and the implications of this for policy, identity and security in Nigeria. To achieve this, I draw inspiration from contemporary

⁸¹ See, R. Jackson, L. Jarvis, J. Gunning and M. Breen-Smyth, *Terrorism: a critical introduction*, pp. 241-45

⁸² L. Jarvis, 'terrorism, counter-terrorism, and critique: opportunities, examples, and implications.' *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 12, 2 (2019), 339-358

⁸³ R. Jackson, 'The core commitments of Critical terrorism studies.'

⁸⁴ R. Hulsse and A. Spencer, "The metaphor of terror: terrorism studies and the constructivist turn." *Security Dialogue*. 39, 6 (2008), 571-592

work in critical terrorism studies and from a small growing number of critical sources on Nigeria⁸⁵ in questioning the dominant assumptions about counter-terrorism, including in the Nigerian context as discussed in Sections 1.1 and 1.2.

Second, this thesis recognises the significance of context in exploring Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. Jackson, Jarvis, Gunning, and Breen-Smyth write that ‘analyses of earlier responses to terrorism reveal important lessons about the limited effectiveness of military force-based strategies, for example.’⁸⁶ Meyer, too, observes that prevailing functionalist notions of a single or uniform ‘optimal response’ to an alleged new and potentially deadly threat with global resonances, produces a problematic ‘homogenisation thesis.’⁸⁷ However, he adds, perceptions and responses to terrorist threats are typically contextual, varied, and complex.⁸⁸ As noted above, CTS emerged in response – and as a response – to dominant knowledge claims about terrorism and counter-terrorism in the post-9/11 era and has been criticised for the narrow-ness of its research agenda. As Stump and Dixit points out, (critical) terrorism studies still draw heavily upon assumptions and methodologies developed in security studies, military studies, counterinsurgency, and strategic studies, which are predominantly Euro-centric.⁸⁹

The third point is regarding the importance of history. Postcolonial approaches are being introduced into terrorism studies – this is far more developed in critical security studies⁹⁰ – to provide a broader historical framework for understanding counter-terrorism discourses and practices beyond those invoked in post-9/11 (counter-)discourse. Drawing upon Salman

⁸⁵ See, for example, Wyszomierski L.E., “Boko Haram and the discourse of mimicry: a critical discourse analysis of media explanations for Boko Haram’s improved video propaganda quality.”

⁸⁶ R. Jackson, L. Jarvis, J. Gunning and M. Breen-Smyth, *Terrorism: a critical introduction*, p.243

⁸⁷ C.O., Meyer, “International terrorism as a force of homogenization? A constructivist approach to understanding cross-national threat perceptions and responses.” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. 22, 4 (2009), 647-666

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ J.L. Stump and P. Dixit, “Toward a completely constructivist critical terrorism studies.”

⁹⁰ See, for example, T. Barkawi and M. Laffey, “The postcolonial moment in security studies.” *Review of International Studies* 32 (2006), 329-352; J. Honke and Markus-Michael Muller, “Governing (in)security in a postcolonial world: transnational entanglements and the worldliness of ‘local’ practice;” Pinar Bilgin, “The Western-centrism or security studies: ‘blind spot’ or constitutive practice?”

Rushdie's work, *Shalimar the Clown* novel, Stadtler, for example, illustrates the challenges to legacies of empire, nationhood, and emergent new empires, in postcolonial contexts.⁹¹ My own examination of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy takes cue from this emerging collection of postcolonial work for exploring the complexities within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse especially in relation to its textured historical trajectory.

Conclusion

This literature review chapter explored the dominant debate surrounding counter-terrorism about tools and ends of counter-terrorism (which includes military force, criminal justice, and human security), as discussed in terrorism studies. At the same time, it examined the literature on Nigeria's counter-terrorism approaches which reproduces dominant assumptions about counter-terrorism, though, framed within hard and soft approaches. Also, this review chapter distinguished an emerging collection of critical scholarship on (counter-)terrorism, including work drawing on postcolonial approaches, which rejects claims about objectivity, stressing the importance of social construction, history, and context. Building on this discussion and the justifications outlined in this chapter, I move to develop the conceptual framework in Chapter 2 around which I conduct my empirical analysis in chapters 4, 5, and 6

⁹¹ F. Stadtler, "Terror, globalization and the individual in Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the clown*." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. 45, 2 (2009), 191-199

Chapter 2

A critical constructivist approach to counter-terrorism

2.0 Introduction

Chapter 1 examined two sets of literature on counter-terrorism. The first entailed a thematic overview of dominant debate on counter-terrorism, while the second literature concerned the debate between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ approaches in respect to Nigeria’s counter-terrorism efforts. In addition to these, I identified a growing collection of critical scholarship in terrorism studies, including those drawing on postcolonial lenses, which I draw insights from. I concluded the review chapter by arguing for a critical examination of Nigeria’s counter-terrorism strategy, moving away from dominant rationalist axioms about counter-terrorism. Such a focus, I argued, permits an alternative understanding of Nigeria’s counter-terrorism approach anchored on three important justifications: social construction, historical, and contextual analysis.

This current chapter presents the theoretical framework around which I conduct my own analysis of Nigeria’s counter-terrorism strategy. My theoretical approach is broadly situated within International Relations and critical security studies, drawing specifically on ideas about critical constructivism vis-à-vis (in)security as developed by Jutta Weldes which offers a considerable alternative to mainstream constructivist approaches.¹ In particular, Weldes conceptualises (in)security as contingent constructions, which also entail the (re)production of – often antagonistic – identities.² Building from this constructivist approach to (in)security, I integrate my understanding of Weldes’ idea with other relevant critical scholarship on security and (counter-)terrorism for demonstrating – and problematising – representations of threats and identity in Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse.

¹ Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: the United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999)

² Ibid.

To this end, this chapter is organised into two sections. I begin in Section 2.1 by briefly examining, thematically, an important debate at the heart of constructivist scholarship in International Relations to distinguish Weldes' ideas of critical constructivism which offers alternative to mainstream constructivist approaches. Also, in this section, I outline three core analytical commitments underpinning Weldes' constructivist perspective of (in)security and identify significant theoretical and methodological developments within critical security more broadly, before integrating ideas specifically from postcolonial scholarship. Section 2.2 embeds relevant critical work on counter-terrorism, including those drawing on post-structural and postcolonial ideas, into my conceptual framework. Finally, I present a summary of all this and outline the methodological and analytical value of a critical constructivist framework for my empirical chapters.

2.1. Constructivism in International Relations: constructing social reality

As detailed above, the following section explores debate about the nature of the social world including its constituent parts, and what (and how) we know of this world, as discussed within constructivist scholarship in IR. These ontological and epistemological questions are treated in significantly diverse ways by 'mainstream' and 'critical' constructivist approaches. Thus, clarifying these differences is useful for grounding my own theoretical approach which build from Weldes's work. As such in Section 2.1.1 below, I briefly examine three related themes typically discussed in constructivism: ideational and material, identity and interest, and lastly, agency and structure. Following on from this, Section 2.1.2 presents my own understanding of Weldes' idea of critical constructivism vis-à-vis (in)security theory and outline certain relevant theoretical developments in critical security which also contributes to my own conceptual framework.

2.1.1. Constructivism in IR: ideas/material, identity/interest, agency/structure

Against the backdrop of the limitations of neo-realism, and indeed other mainstream theories in IR,³ the emergence of constructivist thoughts – often linked to the work of Nicholas Onuf, followed by Alexander Wendt⁴ – provides a sociological approach to explaining change and contingency in international relations. A first prominent theme in constructivist literature is the relationship between ideas and material reality. This is an ontological debate about the nature of the world and its constituent parts. Similar questions and debates widely saturate philosophical discussions in social sciences. Constructivists depart from assumptions about the constitutive relationship between the physical world and ideation, as Wendt's famous statement suggests that 'people act towards objects, and other subjects, based on the meanings that they have for them.'⁵

This assumption regarding meaning-making or constitution, however, is approached in various ways.⁶ According to Alder, constructivism represents an attempt to 'seize the middle ground' between positivist and reflectivist approaches.⁷ For him, this relationship between material and ideas naturally lead to the stability of intersubjective or shared meanings – including norms, identity, culture, and other meaningful practices – across time and space. A similar conceptualisation, borrowing from Giddens's structuration approach, was put forward by Wendt:

³ See, K. Waltz, *Man, The state, and War*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); — *Theory of International Politics*. (Boston: Addison-Wesley Press, 1979); J. Mearsheimer. "The False Promise of International Institutions." *International Security* 19, 3 (1994), 5-49. See also Ruggie's response: Ruggie, J. G. "Promises, Promises: Can Institutions Deliver? The False Premise of Realism." *International Security* 20, 1 (1995), 62-70. Although the English School subscribe to a methodologically pluralistic approach which draws on positivism, constructivism, and Critical theory, it nonetheless concedes to rationalism in explaining certain assumptions underpinning international society. See, for example, H. Bull, "Martin Wight and the theory of international relations: the second Martin Wight memorial lecture." *British Journal of International Studies*. 2 (1976), 101-116

⁴ See, A. Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics." *International Organisation*. 46, 2 (1992), 391-425; N. G. Onuf. *Making sense, making worlds: constructivism in social theory and international relations*. new edition (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁵ A. Wendt, 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics,' p.392

⁶ For discussion on the currents and approaches to constructivism, see: P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann. *The social construction of reality*. (London: Allen Lane; The Penguin Press, 1996); J. Checkel, 'International norms and domestic politics: bridging the rationalist-constructivist divide.' *European Journal of International Relations*. 3 (1997), 473-495; D. Dessler, "Constructivism within a positivist social science." *Review of International Studies*. 25 (1999)

⁷ Emanuel Alder, "Seizing the middle ground: constructivism in world politics." *European Journal of International Relations*. 3, 3 (1997), 319-363

Natural kinds are entirely self-organising, in the sense that they are what they are in virtue solely of their internal structure. Human descriptions and/or social relationships to other natural kinds have nothing to do with what makes 'dogs dogs.' The fact that natural kinds are self-organising regulates our theories about them, as hypothesised by the causal theory of reference.⁸

Wendt's proposed duality – as opposed to dualism – implies an unhelpful articulation of the relationship between the physical world and ideation, putting one above the other. Archer's morphogenetic sequence approach demonstrates this view further, by noting that 'the material world pre-dates ideation and serves to transform or reproduce it.'⁹ Though this perspective recognises the co-constitutive relationship between the physical world and ideas, it however place emphasis on the significance of material reality in shaping social reality.

A second theme central to constructivist approaches in IR relates to the conceptualisation and link between identity and interest. Beginning with Wendt's 'rump materialist' formulation: 'all ideas are not interests, nor does it mean that interests no longer have an independent explanatory power.'¹⁰ This suggests that interests are especially constituted by material needs which are beyond ideational forces. Specifically, Wendt argues that social actors – including states – possess certain pre-social qualities acting as factors in defining their identity and interests through interaction with other actors.¹¹ Similarly, Kratochwil refers to the 'logic of appropriateness' to explain why states possessing of a defined identity would follow certain socially prescribed behaviours.¹² Other mainstream constructivists have emphasized flexibility to offer a nuanced approach to conceptualising identity. For example, Jessop's idea of 'strategic-relationality' seeks to demonstrate the flexibility of identity and interest of social actors within different contexts, which he describes

⁸ A. Wendt, *Social theory of International Politics*. p.73

⁹ Archer M., *Realist social theory: the morphogenetic approach*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

¹⁰ A. Wendt, 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics,' p.403

¹¹ Wendt further identifies 4 types of identities—corporate, role, type, collective—of which 'corporate' and 'collective' are the most important. Corporate identities are constituted by the self-organising, homeostatic structures that make actors distinct entities. See, A. Wendt, *Social theory of International Politics*.

¹² F. V. Kratochwil, *International order and foreign policy*.

as a ‘strategic move.’¹³ However as Hay argues, ‘social actors are by no means blessed with perfect information to always act strategically [in their own interest].’¹⁴

The third, and final, theme concerns the relationship between social agency and structure which brings together previous discussions on material/ideas, and identity/interest. There are at least two stories to tell about the agency-structure problematic, according to Hollis and Smith.¹⁵ Firstly, concessions are made to agents whose actions produce, and sometimes transform, social structures. Secondly, social structures constrain and make (im)possible the actions of these agents. This structure/agency dynamic, for Hay, is not a problem to which there is, or can be, a definitive solution.¹⁶ He further distinguishes between ‘structuralist’ and ‘intentionalist’ approaches. On the one hand, structuralist accounts – such as Wendt’s – explores this agency-structure relationship through micro and macro levels of interaction. This primarily suggests that micro social practices or interactions produce macro structures which, in turn, confront social actors as ‘objective social facts.’¹⁷ And on the other, Onuf’s intentionalist approach posits that ‘whether by ‘accident’ or ‘design’, rules and related practices frequently form a stable pattern suiting agent’s intentions.’¹⁸ As such, analysis focus primarily on norms (regulative and constitutive) to determine when specific cultural forms determine agency or causes action.¹⁹ There is a wide range of constructivist literature on norms, normativity, norm diffusion and contestation in IR,²⁰ however they are not relevant to my focus in this section.

¹³ Jessop as quoted in Colin Hay, *Political analysis: a critical introduction*. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p.43

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ M. Hollis and S. Smith, “Beware of gurus: structure and action in International relations.” *Review of International Studies*. 17, 4 (1991), 393-410

¹⁶ C. Hay, *Political analysis: a critical introduction*

¹⁷ Regarding Wendt’s idea of ‘rump materialism’, it is important to highlight an important distinction between ‘materialism’ often associated with rationalist approaches, and ‘materiality’ which acknowledges the limits of material reality. Wendt was more concerned with the later. See, A. Wendt, *Social theory of International Politics*, p.154

¹⁸ N. G. Onuf. *Making sense, making worlds: constructivism in social theory and international relations*, p.5

¹⁹ F. V. Kratochwil, *International order and foreign policy*.

²⁰ For constructivist work on norm, normativity and norm diffusion, see: Finnemore, M. Sikkink, K., “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” *International Organization* 54, 4 (1998), 887–917; Checkel, J. T. “Why

Thus far, I have discussed three themes typically referred to, in one way or another, in constructivist work in IR. What can be said, in all, is that the above premises underpinning mainstream constructivist scholarship are unhelpful for my own analysis for three reasons. The first reason relates to its ontological inconsistency and ambiguity especially regarding the relationship between ideas/material reality, identity/interest, and agency/structure. Second is regarding assumptions about the stability of social meanings, including attributing anthropomorphic features to social actors, which undermines the premise of change and contingency upon which constructivism rests.²¹ Third, is an epistemological implication concerning what or how we can study the world; whether we can know or study it objectively (positivism), or if the world is always shaped or mediated by our ideas (reflectivism). With these observations in mind, I turn to Weldes' compelling anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist view of social construction vis-à-vis (in)security.

2.1.2. A critical constructivist approach: constructing (in)security

In view of the discussion above, I continue in this section by outlining Weldes' approach of critical constructivism as well as (in)security, to identify a set of ontological and analytical commitments which will frame my analysis. Weldes moves beyond assumptions about social reality expressed in conventional constructivist scholarship discussed above. Rather, social reality, and security more specifically, is described by Weldes as contingent constructions. A core ontological claim here is

Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change." *International Organization*. 55, 3 (2001), 553–588; Amitav Acharya, "The R2P and norm diffusion: towards a framework of norm circulation." *Global Responsibility to Protect*. 5 (2013), 466-479; —"How ideas spread: whose norms matters? Norm localisation and institutional change in Asian regionalism." *International Organisation*. 58, 2 (2004), 239-275; C. Epstein, "Stop telling us how to behave: socialisation or infantilization?" *International Studies Perspectives*. 13 (2012), 135-145; C. Epstein, A. Zarakol, J. Callaghan, R. Shilliam and V. Jabri. "Forum: interrogating the use of norms in international relations: postcolonial perspectives." *International Theory*. 6, 2 (2014), 293-293

²¹ For a significant critique of this assumption, see Karin M. Fierke, "Critical methodology and constructivism" in K. M. Fierke and K. E Jorgensen, *Constructing international relations: the next generation*. (London: Routledge, 2001); T. Flockhart, "The problem of change in constructivist theory: ontological seeking and agent motivation." *Review of international studies*. 42, 5 (2016), 799-820; T. Hopf, "The promise of constructivism in international relations theory." *International Security*. 23 (1998), 171-200

the inseparability of material worlds and our ideas about them. As Weldes notes, in *Cultures of insecurity*, ‘we cannot go behind our representations of the world to discover “truth” about it.’²²

Weldes elaborates this as follows:

Our constructivism would not deny that nuclear weapons exists, that their use could main and kill millions of people, and that a number of states possess a nuclear capability...However, our constructivism is interested in how one gets from here to such widely shared propositions as: that the United States is threatened by Russian, but not British?...Although conventional approaches in security studies might produce claims of a clear answer to such questions, a critical constructivist analysis works more deconstructively, producing not simple answers but forms of analysis that show how such answers can become, in Roland Barthes’s phrase, “falsely obvious.”²³

Such a constructivist approach is particularly interested in, and interrogates, knowledge claims about social reality vis-à-vis security which is always mediated, constructed, and represented in specific ways. This perspective can be clarified even further by referring to a useful Heideggerian distinction between ontological and ontic levels of analysis.²⁴ The ontological level, on the one hand, refers to assumptions about a particular social phenomenon (security, for example), while on the other hand, the ontic level refers to the physical or ‘factual’ existence of such phenomenon. As Weldes persuasively argues, (epistemological) claims about objectivity – including concerning the givenness of a social phenomenon and its organising features – cannot be justified through whatever means or reference we employ including god, capitalism, science, history, among others.

Driven largely by this post-foundationalist standpoint, Weldes notes that a critical constructivist approach to security must focus on how it is constructed and represented through discourse (this specifically includes texts and talks, as opposed to other co-constituting practices or

²² J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, “Introduction: constructing insecurity” in J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, and R. Duvall, *Cultures of insecurity: states, communities, and the production of danger*, p.9

²³ J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, “Introduction: constructing insecurity” in J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, and R. Duvall, *Cultures of insecurity: states, communities, and the production of danger*, p.12

²⁴ Heidegger as cited in D. Howarth, *Concepts in the social sciences: Discourse*. (Buckingham, Open University Press, 1998)

performances).²⁵ Having clarified Weldes' standpoint vis-à-vis debate in constructivist literature explored in section 2.1, Weldes outlines three important analytical commitments discussed in turn.²⁶

The first claim is about the inseparability of social actors, including states, from their insecurities. Specifically, states and their perceived causes of harm are the object of focus; examining how they are reproduced. Weldes distinguish this approach to security from other mainstream approaches, in which the state is uncritically taken as the point of departure or primary unit of analysis:

Actors and their insecurities are naturalised in the sense that they are treated as fact that, because they are given by the nature of the interstate system, can be taken for granted. Taken as natural facts, states and other organised actors become the foundational objects which serves to ground security analysis. Constructivists take a different approach by looking at discourses of insecurity, that is, representations of danger as object of analysis and examine how they work.²⁷

The relationship between states and the threats they face also encompass the 'politics of identity' (self and other) through which difference is, but need not be, transformed into antagonism. Put otherwise, constructing (in)security contributes to identity production which,²⁸ as Weldes notes, 'might be oppositional and hostile, but also peaceful and non-threatening.'²⁹ This creates the possibility for multiple and varied constructions of identity, reflecting the anti-essentialist commitment underpinning Weldes' critical constructivist approach to security. At the same time,

²⁵ J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, "Introduction: constructing insecurity."

²⁶ David Campbell's work offers a good introduction to the study of security from an anti-foundationalist position. See, in particular, David Campbell. *Writing Security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity*.

²⁷ J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, "Introduction: constructing insecurity" in J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, and R. Duvall, *Cultures of insecurity: states, communities, and the production of danger*, p.14

²⁸ The production of identity has notably been conceptualised in varied ways, including through the production of radically opposed binaries. Hansen, for instance, notes that Campbell's articulation of identity, which subscribes to rigid constructions of self and other in certain fixed contexts, runs the risk of reifying a set of problematic assumptions which is not qualitatively different from rationalist approaches to security. Campbell's exploration of the construction of America's identity, for instance, takes the state as a unitary actor against a radical 'other', Iraq. A similar conceptualisation of identity was offered by William Connolly, who argues that difference is a requirement built into the logic of identity, and the construction of otherness is a temptation that readily insinuates itself into that logic. In making sense of self, the other often tend to be defined as inferior, unequal or simply different. Therefore, to make a particular identity meaningful requires the exclusion and marginalisation of certain other. See, William E. Connolly, *Identity and difference: democratic negotiations of political paradox*. Expanded edition. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991); L. Hansen, *Security as practice: discourse analysis and the Bosnian War*. (London: Routledge, 2006), p.16

²⁹ J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, "Introduction: constructing insecurity."

constructions of identity are characteristically contingent in that a set of ‘warranting conditions’ usually serve to legitimise them, making it contextually reasonable, justified, or appropriate, and must always be re-articulated.³⁰ Security, as such, involves emergent outcomes rather than a fixed moment of articulation.

The second analytical commitment relates to questions about social agency and context. On this, Weldes asks the following: ‘who [or how] is it that defines or constructs (in)security?’³¹ Weldes notes, in response to this, that the primary site for constructing danger is the state. The state, however, is by no means the only actor, or site for constructing (in)security as various discourses constitute different subjects within specific contexts and endow them with different qualities, including agency. In other words, agency is not an inherently possessed attribute, rather it is embedded in, and reproduced through, discourse:

Drawing on and constrained by the array of cultural and linguistic and non-linguistic resources already available, state officials create representations that serve to: populate the world with a variety of objects, including the state, and others such as the society, other states, actors, social movements, etc. Each of these objects are simultaneously given an identity although vague and unsettled.³²

As the above indicates, social actors, including states or those officials acting on its behalf, employ discursive resources to reproduce different subjects, endowing them with a range of characteristics, including agency. Such representational practices take place – and are meaningful – within specific (discursive) contexts. For example, state officials often justify counter-terrorism strategies – as well

³⁰ Contingency has been approached variously, and often goes by many short-hands, including indeterminacy, problematization, structural incompleteness, and radical undecidability. Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory for instance, explains contingency using two related terms, namely, “impossibility” and “necessity”. This suggests that contingency does not merely describe a set of external and aleatory relations between identities but the impossibility of fixing with any precision the identities. Thus, the antagonism fulfils a dual function of blocking the full constitution of, and simultaneously affirming the existence of, that identity. Although Laclau and Mouffe’s theory does not explain sufficiently whether the excluded meanings (what they call the field of discursivity) are oppositional, complementary, or simply, non-essential. Though, Jorgensen and Phillips drawing on Fairclough’s notion of order of discourse, elaborate a broader interpretation of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, and more importantly, the idea around the field of discursivity which entails oppositional and non-oppositional meanings. See, M. Jorgensen and L. J. Phillips, *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. (London, Sage Publications, 2002).

³¹ Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, “Introduction: constructing insecurity.”

³² J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, “Introduction: constructing insecurity” in J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, and R. Duvall, *Cultures of insecurity: states, communities, and the production of danger*, , p.170

as state actions – on the grounds of certain conditions, contexts, or prevailing structures. The importance of such justifications, however, does not necessarily lie in their accuracy but in the extent to which they serve as warranting conditions to make a particular discourse meaningful.

The third analytic proposition involves the role of power and representation in constructing security. As Weldes suggests, to avoid common problems of essentialism, analysis of (in)security should focus on power and representation.³³ Foucault's articulation of "power as productive" provides further sophistication to this conceptualisation of representational power:

what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.³⁴

Drawing on this Foucauldian notion of power and representation, Weldes explicitly states that:

identities and insecurities emerge out of processes of representation through which individuals—whether state officials, journalists, researchers—describe to themselves and others the world in which they live which has various implications, including foreclosing other possible representations.³⁵

It is worthy to note, in light of these commitments, that several advancements have been made within critical security which seeks to de-naturalise – and de-essentialise – the object of security through different theoretical lenses including human security perspectives, feminist approaches, post-structuralism, postcolonial theory, and various securitization theories.³⁶ These often build

³³ Also see, R. L. Doty, "Aporia: a critical exploration of the agent-structure problematique in International relations theory."

³⁴ Foucault, M. "Truth and power," in C. Gordon (ed.) *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972–1977*. (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980)

³⁵ J. Weldes, "Bureaucratic politics: a critical constructivist assessment." *Merishon International Studies Review*. 42, 2 (1998), 216-225

³⁶ See, for example, T. Barkawi and M. Laffey, 'The postcolonial moment in security studies.' *Review of International Studies* 32 (2006), pp.329-352; J. Parpart, 'Rethinking silence, gender, and power in insecure sites: implications for feminist security studies in a postcolonial world.' *Review of International Studies* 46, 3 (2020), pp.315-324; McDonald, M (2008) Securitization and the construction of security. *European Journal of International Relations* 14(4): 563–587.

from, and extend, (critical) constructivist assumptions regarding meaning-making and representation by identifying the complexity of security discourses and practices, including concerning the referent of security, identity, gender and sexuality, race and racism, (post)coloniality, among other related issues.³⁷ In addition to these theoretical insights, there are several significant methodological developments oscillating from the focus on discourses to iterative practices, as well as vernacular security, ontological security, visual turn, and embodiment.³⁸

Although my theoretical framework is situated within a critical constructivist approach to security, my focus on Nigeria means that I also take cues from developments in postcolonial work in critical security. Doing so is useful for my analysis for two crucial reasons. The first reason is to avoid common ‘blind-spots’ in analyses of security especially on Africa and the global South which often privileges Euro-centric ideas and perspectives of security.³⁹ The second reason is to effectively examine the complex relationship between identity and subjectivity in this Nigerian case not least due to its textured trajectory including as a postcolonial African society, as well as its multi-ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity. Thus, I draw insights from developments in postcolonial approaches to security to meet these and other related concerns (including questions around state agency in Africa).

Differences in the conceptualisation of postcolonialism notwithstanding,⁴⁰ I approach postcolonialism in this thesis as a set of ideas, concepts, and problematisations relevant to social and political situations in the global South, as well as the global North. It is ‘multiple, diverse, and

³⁷ See, for example, McDonald, M (2008) Securitization and the construction of security. *European Journal of International Relations* 14(4): 563–587.

³⁸ See, Aradau, C, Huysmans, J (2014) Critical methods in international relations: The politics of techniques, devices and acts. *European Journal of International Relations* 20(3): 596–619; De Goede, M, Wesseling, M (2017) European secrecy and post-9/11 security practice. *Journal of European Integration* 39(3): 253–262; Kodili H. Chukwuma (2022), “Archiving as embodied research and security practice.” *Security Dialogue*. DOI: [10.1177/09670106221075954](https://doi.org/10.1177/09670106221075954)

³⁹ See, P. Bilgin, “The Western-centrism or security studies: ‘blind spot’ or constitutive practice?”

⁴⁰ See, for example, Williams A. “The postcolonial flaneur and other fellow travellers: conceits for a narrative of redemption.” *Third World Quarterly*. 18, 5 (1997): 821-841; Ahmad A. “The politics of literary postcoloniality.” *Race and Class*. 36, 3 (1995), 1-20; Dirlik A. “The postcolonial aura: third world criticism in the age of global capitalism.” *Critical Inquiry*. 20, 2 (1994), 328-342.

rejects easy generalisations or dichotomies,’ though, share a common aim of rethinking and exploring the role of power in the formation of identity and subjectivity.⁴¹ As described above, ideas and concepts from postcolonial approaches has contributed immensely to demonstrating the complexity and nuances of knowledge – and practice – in IR and security studies. Prior to the call by Barkawi and Laffey for a ‘postcolonial moment in security studies,’⁴² moving beyond dominant Euro-centric categories in security studies, other pioneering work such as Ayoob’s third world or subaltern realism for example, have attempted to provide useful concepts for understanding security under ‘postcolonial conditions.’⁴³

Honke and Muller’s more recent intervention provide useful insights to what such a theoretical and methodological approach which takes ‘postcoloniality’ seriously should look like.⁴⁴ Among the three approaches outlined in their work, including the ‘worldling’ of experiences of (in)security in postcolonial societies, and engaging with interpretive political anthropology and use of ethnographic method,⁴⁵ I draw insights from their (second) suggestion regarding the use of discourse-focused approaches and engaging with the experiences, history, power relations, and local

⁴¹ See, R. Abrahamsen, “African Studies and the Postcolonial challenge.” Postcolonialism is often criticised for its textualism or logocentrism, questioning its usefulness to responding to real problems facing postcolonial societies in Africa (and beyond). This methodological criticism often overlaps with questions around its epistemological grounding in western philosophical tradition. However, as described above, postcolonialism cannot be regarded as a single theory, neither are these criticisms entirely correct. There are a significant number of postcolonial analyses which draws attention to the work of discourse and representation in postcolonial societies. See, for example, Vaughan M. *Curing their ills: colonial power and African illness*. (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1991).

⁴² T. Barkawi and M. Laffey, “The postcolonial moment in security studies.”

⁴³ See, M. Ayoob. *The third world security predicaments: state making, regional conflict, and the international system*. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995)

⁴⁴ See, J. Honke and Markus-Michael Muller, “Governing (in)security in a postcolonial world: transnational entanglements and the worldliness of ‘local’ practice.”

⁴⁵ Moving beyond critique of Euro-centrism in security studies, Honke and Muller propose three useful theoretical and methodological approaches for a postcolonial study of security. A first approach entails the ‘worldling’ of experiences in postcolonial societies, to permit a pluri-directional acknowledgement of the circulation and effects of security knowledge and practices. The second strategy involves combining discourse approaches in the empirical research traditions of a Foucauldian analytics of governing with a methodological ‘practice turn’ that engages with bottom-up research approaches on everyday forms of security to illustrate local agency. Lastly, a third approach suggests an engagement with interpretive political anthropology and use of ethnographic method. I draw insights from the second suggestion, although my research focuses specifically on discourse (texts and talks) rather than quotidian or everyday practices.

agency in postcolonial contexts.⁴⁶ While Weldes' idea of critical constructivism permits my exploring of constructions of (in)security and identity through discourse, I integrate Honke and Muller's suggestion to permit my focusing closely on how identity and (in)security are shaped by Nigeria's experiences, history, and existing power relations. As argued in Chapter 5 for instance, Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse constructs Nigeria's identity according to democratic and progressive ideas, suggesting a seemingly Euro-centric or neo-orientalist discourse which typically position western democracy against Islamic beliefs or practices. This, however, overlaps with other discourses including state-centred, colonial, and imperialistic ones, illustrating the complexity of identity (and subjectivity) in the Nigerian context.

The foregoing theoretical and analytical insights especially those from critical constructivist and postcolonial work, I suggest, offer a useful framework for my empirical analysis of representations of threats, the Nigerian self, and the terrorist other within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. In Chapter 4, I show how specific constructions of threats as "new terrorism" make state counter-terrorism possible. Then, in Chapter 5, I demonstrate how official articulations of counter-terrorism approaches contribute to the production of a specific Nigerian self, hinged upon democratic and progressive ideas. Chapter 6, on the other hand, show constructions of the terrorist other as religious extremists, foreign terrorists, and opportunists. These chapters will demonstrate the problems associated with these representations and the work they do, including for policy, social and political identity, and security in the Nigerian context.⁴⁷

2.2. Counter-terrorism as social construction

Having outlined the theoretical and analytical commitments grounding the conceptual framework being applied to this study of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy, the following section integrates

⁴⁶ J. Honke and Markus-Michael Muller, "Governing (in)security in a postcolonial world: transnational entanglements and the worldliness of 'local' practice."

⁴⁷ National Counter-terrorism Strategy 2016, p.38

existing literature on counter-terrorism into this framework. In Section 2.2.1., I identify three important commitments – social construction, history, and context – typically expressed in critical work on counter-terrorism, particularly those drawing on constructivist and postcolonial approaches. While recognising the diversity and priorities within this literature, I find the above-mentioned commitments useful for meeting my main research goals.

2.2.1. Counter-terrorism as social fact?

As discussed in the literature review chapter (see Chapter 1), there is a burgeoning collection of critical work in terrorism studies which seeks to challenge dominant assumptions about (counter-)terrorism especially those emanating from the events of 9/11. According to Jackson, ‘both past and more recent review exercises of the field [of terrorism studies] reveal an embarrassing list of methodological and analytical weaknesses.’⁴⁸ This also includes, he adds, the tendency to treat contemporary terrorism as a ‘new’ phenomenon that started on September 11th, 2001, a persistent lack of historicity, the issue of state terrorism, and an overly policy perspective focus.⁴⁹ Given this call for reflexivity in terrorism research, I outline three useful propositions expressed in this scholarship relevant for my empirical analysis.

The first commitment involves an understanding of counter-terrorism policies as outcomes of social and political relationship. It entails a ‘powerful political discourse with its own set of assumptions, rhetorical tropes, and symbolic systems,’⁵⁰ providing justification for certain course of action. Jackson, Jarvis, Gunning, and Breen-Smyth explain further:

⁴⁸ R. Jackson, “The core commitments of critical terrorism studies.”

⁴⁹ R. Jackson, “The core commitments of critical terrorism studies.” Many of these problems, as we saw in Sections 2.1, permeate the fields of Security Studies and International Relations. Weldes, for example, observes that Security Studies frequently ‘take the nature of certain entities, including states, for granted, at least for all practical purposes, and security is understood to mean securing these fixed entities against objective and externalised threats.’ See, J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, “Introduction: constructing insecurity,” p.9

⁵⁰ Despite much agreement around certain core ontological claims, there are indeed significant methodological differences on how language, discourse and practice are approached within this scholarship. This, however, is

...critical scholars argue that an empirical analysis clearly demonstrates that state violence poses a much more serious threat than non-state terrorist violence...[by] questioning the fundamental necessity of counter-terrorism measures, especially the argument to maintain a state of exception which justifies extraordinary measures, is an initial, crucial, first step in the critical evaluation of contemporary counter-terrorism.⁵¹

Counter-terrorism, as Jackson puts it, ultimately involves a *political* activity of constructing, labelling, and representing specific threats, in opposition to an identity that is being threatened.⁵² This is indeed similar to Weldes' notion of security as contingent constructions, involving the politics of identity construction.⁵³ Drawing on this idea of counter-terrorism policy as a discursive product, I am able to fully explore the assumptions, presuppositions, and representations embedded within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse.⁵⁴

The second commitment is the rejection of generalisations and universalisation of counter-terrorism knowledges and practices. By refusing to treat counter-terrorism as a particular set of rationalised responses to terrorism which is universally experienced uniformly, critical approaches share a commitment to studying the historical, social, and cultural meanings and their implications in specific contexts. However, Critical Terrorism Studies, which emerged as a response to dominant discourses of (counter-)terrorism related to 9/11, has been criticised for ignoring earlier, broader, and deeper discourses, including colonial discourse, related to (counter-)terrorism.⁵⁵ As such the third commitment is articulated more forcefully by studies drawing on postcolonial approaches, stressing the importance of history and peculiarities of postcolonial societies. As Barnard-Wills and Moore argue:

...non-Western experiences of terrorism, vulnerability and resilience are evoked in Western security discourse to construct a picture of threat and vulnerability, whereas little academic attention is

not a major concern as my goal here is only to identify a set of compatible ontological ideas useful for my own analysis. See, R. Jackson, "Security, democracy, and the rhetoric of counter-terrorism," p.147

⁵¹ R. Jackson, J. Gunning, and M.B. Smyth, *Terrorism: Critical terrorism Studies: A new research agenda*. p.242

⁵² R. Jackson, "Security, democracy, and the rhetoric of counter-terrorism,"

⁵³ J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, "Introduction: constructing insecurity."

⁵⁴ See, R. Jackson, "Security, democracy, and the rhetoric of counter-terrorism."

⁵⁵ See, for example, Rabea M. Khan, "Race, coloniality and the post-9/11 counter-discourse: critical terrorism studies and the reproduction of the Islamic-terrorism discourse"; and Abu-Bakare, A. "Counter-terrorism and race." *International Politics Reviews*. 8, 1 (2020), 79-99.

actually paid to the contextual details of these experiences. This constructed threat is mobilised in Western security policy, whilst at the same time, these constructions feedback to subaltern countries, with unintended effects upon perceptions of security and responses to perceived threats. The discursive package of threat and response in terms of terrorism, for the ends of Western security actors, trivialises the lived experiences of non-Western actors.⁵⁶

I draw insights from this suggestion for a '*form* of critical studies on counter-terrorism that engages with the histories, social, and cultural meanings (re)produced in postcolonial societies.'⁵⁷ This is also compatible with other postcolonial work on security integrated into my conceptual framework in Section 2.1. This way, I am to fully explore the complexity and nuances surrounding constructions and representations of identity and subjectivity within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse.

Conclusion

To sum up, the discussion in Section 2.1 distinguished Weldes' 'critical' constructivist ideas from 'mainstream' constructivism. Weldes' ideas primarily orient an anti-foundationalist standpoint, approaching (in)security as contingent constructions of threats and identity. As discussed above, constructing (in)security commonly involve the production of oppositional identities through discourse. This constructivist approach to security developed by Weldes avoids the epistemic grounding of foundational disciplinary assumptions – in International Relations and Security Studies – built primarily upon Western or European views and experiences. However, I draw upon vital theoretical insights from studies applying postcolonial lenses to security to account for the complexity of security – vis-à-vis counter-terrorism – discourses in the Nigerian context.⁵⁸ Postcolonial security studies, specifically, contributes to my conceptual and analytical approach by

⁵⁶ D. Barnard-Wills and C. Moore, "The terrorism of the other: towards a contrapuntal reading of terrorism in India."

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ See, J. Honke and Markus-Michael Muller, "Governing (in)security in a postcolonial world: transnational entanglements and the worldliness of 'local' practice."

emphasising the histories, trajectories, contexts, and agency of postcolonial societies which permit a broader understanding of the relationship between identity and subjectivity in representations of (in)security.

Section 2.2. situated this constructivist framework within critical scholarship on counter-terrorism, to enable my critiquing of assumptions and discursive claims about counter-terrorism embedded within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. Overall, I identified two important ontological commitments within this diverse literature which includes the commitment to interpretivism, and attention to context and historicity. As stated in Section 2.2., I find these commitments to be compatible with my own engagement with Weldes' theoretical work and my broad research motivations outlined in the introductory section of this chapter. Having established the extent –and limitations– of my own interpretation of Weldes's ideas, I conclude this section with a summary of the analytical and methodological value of this constructivist approach for my empirical analysis.

The empirical part of my thesis explores constructions of threat, response and identity within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. I focus primarily on how these are reproduced through discourse, without considering other equally important practices such as the work of security professionals, vernacular repertoires, among others. Methodologically, this theoretical approach permits my drawing on policy documents, speeches, press releases, and interviews to explore this discourse's productivity. Also, it allows me to draw on texts from a range of governmental departments and offices in Nigeria –including the Ministry of Justice, Office of the National Security Advisor, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, and the British Council in Nigeria– which are yet to receive adequate scholarly attention. Approaching security vis-à-vis counter-terrorism as contingently constructed and represented allows my problematising of this evolving discourse of counter-terrorism to reveal important implications it entails.

Chapter 3

Research Method

3.0. Introduction

This chapter builds on Chapter 2 in which I presented a set of ontological and analytical commitments, following my engagement with the work of Jutta Weldes.¹ To restate briefly, my conceptual framework conceptualises (in)security vis-à-vis counter-terrorism, as a contingent construction which entails the production of identity. I concluded Chapter 2 by outlining the methodological and analytical value of Weldes' work which allows for my focusing on discursive productivity without incorporating other important modes of articulation, including institutional practices or performances, that co-constitute knowledge about counter-terrorism in Nigeria.

The following chapter unfolds in three sections, outlining the research method used in this thesis which is effectively assembled around a discourse analysis approach for exploring constructions of threats, responses, and identity within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. Section 3.1 discuss a range of approaches and ideas about discourse analysis to situate the approach used in my empirical analysis. Broadly speaking, discourse analysis is concerned with the reflexivity of language-use and their implications in specific contexts.² Furthermore, I identify the textual technique of *predicate*, *presupposition*, and *subject-position*³ used in my empirical research for reading and analysing official texts.

¹ Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, 'Introduction: constructing insecurity' in Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, and Raymond Duvall, *Cultures of insecurity: states, communities, and the production of danger*.

² James Paul Gee, *An introduction to discourse analysis: theory and method* 3rd edition (London: Routledge, 2011)

³ Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); —"Foreign policy as social construction: a post-positivist analysis of US counterinsurgency policy in the Philippines." *International Studies Quarterly*. 37, 3 (1993): 297-320

Section 3.2 outlines an important set of criteria – and justifications – defining the focus of my research to offer a ‘thick description’ of the discourse around counter-terrorism in Nigeria. Accordingly, I adopt two useful case-binding criteria which are, first, texts produced between 2009-2019, and second, the Nigerian federal executive; this involves focusing on a specific site of production. Section 3.3 discusses the means through which knowledge is ‘got at’ through interpreting selected primary data, including a range of policy documents, speeches, communiqués, reports, interviews, and press releases offering explicit articulations of threats, responses, and identity. Specifically, the data for this thesis were collected from government sites in Abuja, Nigeria during a two-month archival field research, as well as from online repositories of both public and private organisations. As detailed in this section too, I adopted three important criteria in selecting this primary data: (i) texts must, directly or otherwise, emanate from a formal governmental organisation or department thereof, (ii) articulate a clear identity in relation to specific terrorist threat, and (iii) must be publicly available or widely responded to.⁴

Finally, in the last sub-section, I discuss questions concerning validity and reliability of the methodological approach adopted in this thesis, concerning the degree to which the arguments made in the empirical chapters are consistent, empirically grounded, and contributes to knowledge on counter-terrorism in Nigeria. I also detail the challenges faced in conducting my empirical research and what effects this had on my findings.

3.1. Discourse Analysis

The following section explores different approaches and ideas about discourse analysis to situate the approach used in this thesis. Section 3.1.1 explore certain core premises about

⁴ Lene Hansen, *Security as practice: discourse analysis and the Bosnian War*, p.73

discourse and how it works, as discussed in different linguistic traditions including critical discourse analysis, discursive psychology, structural linguistic, poststructural, and postcolonial approaches. In Section 3.1.2, my focus turns to the components of discourse analysis where I outline the building-blocks of a discursive formation which includes signification, articulation, and representation. Finally, Section 3.1.3 outline the textual mechanism used in reading texts in the empirical part of this thesis.

3.1.1. Language and discourse:

Discourse analysis largely entails the analytical study of language-use and meaning, within specific contexts.⁵ Yet there are several conceptualisations of language and discourse, putting forward different premises of what discourse is and how it is employed as an analytic strategy. Howarth and Torfing, for example, distinguish ‘discourse theory’ from ‘discourse analysis’ on the basis that, on the one hand, discourse theory consists of a set of conceptual claims about what ‘discourse’ is and how it works.⁶ And on the other, discourse analysis is a set of tools used to analyse texts and talks that have already been partially constituted as meaningful objects. While this offers some useful distinctions, it nonetheless reproduces a limiting dichotomy between theory, methodology, and methods, which sees research methods as tools ‘out there’ employed to explore a particular set of research questions.⁷ Contra this view, my

⁵ James Paul Gee, *An introduction to discourse analysis: theory and method*; Marianne Jorgensen and Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse analysis as theory and method*; Stephen Baffour Adjei, “Discourse analysis: examining language use in context.” *The Qualitative Report*. 18, 25 (2013), 1-10; Teun A. Van Dijk, *Society and Discourse: how social contexts influence text and talk*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Ruth Wodak and Michal Krzyzanowski, *Qualitative discourse analysis in the social science*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Jennifer Milliken, “The study of discourse in International Relations: A critique of research and methods.” *European Journal of International Relations*. 5, 2 (1999), 225-254

⁶ David Howarth and Jacob Torfing, *Discourse theory in European politics: identity, policy and governance*.

⁷ For a critique of this approach to research method, see: C. Aradau, J. Huysmans, A. Neal, and N. Voelkner. *Critical Security Methods: new frameworks for analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2015); C. Aradau and J. Huysmans, Critical methods in International Relations: the politics of techniques, devices and acts.’ *European Journal of International Relations*. 20, 3 (2014), 596-619

engagement with discourse analysis here intricately links to, and is informed by, my broader research motivation and theoretical commitments discussed in Chapter 2.

The ‘linguistic turn’ in the 20th century was in part inspired by structural linguists such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Roman Jakobson, Loius Hjelmsles, Claude Lévi-Strauss, among others.⁸ Structural linguists generally posit that ‘we create representations of reality with language.’⁹ The understanding of language as a system of signs, which is not directly determined by the reality to which it refers, broadly inform this linguistic tradition. Saussure, for example, argues that linguistic signs consist of two components, namely, *langue* (the fixed structure of language) and *parole* (language in use) linked together arbitrarily.¹⁰ In other words, the connection between these linguistic components is relational and differential, rather than pre-given. For example, the sign ‘mother(hood)’ is relational to, and different from, that of ‘father(hood).’ Drawing on this Saussurian formulation, Levi-Strauss argued that “any culture may be looked upon as an ensemble of symbolic systems, in the front rank of which are to be found in language.”¹¹ There are, however, two important limitations of this approach which makes it unsuitable for my empirical analysis.

First, is that this introduces new forms of essentialism – language – due to assumptions of a static and complete structure of language. Such a premise, according to Howarth, makes it extremely difficult to provide an adequate account of the historicity of social systems as well as the role of social agents.¹² As Derrida also points out, the binary opposition encouraged in the works of structural linguists consists of a privileged essence and an excluded or secondary term.¹³ Unlike structuralist thoughts, Derrida argues that linguistic signs can always be grafted

⁸ See, Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in general linguistics*. (London: Peter Owen, 1960); Roman Jakobson, *On Linguistic aspects of translation*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959); Richard T. De George, *The structuralists: from Marx to Lévi-Strauss*. (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972)

⁹ David Howarth and Jacob Torfing, *Discourse theory in European politics: identity, policy and governance*, p.6

¹⁰ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in general linguistics*.

¹¹ Levi-Strauss as quoted in David Howarth, *Discourse*. (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001)

¹² Ibid

¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Of grammatology*. (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1998)

onto a new chain of signifiers or used in a new context (in which writing enables the production of difference through differed meanings).¹⁴ For instance, mother or motherhood can take its meaning in relation to mother in same-sex families, nature, and so on. Second, this approach often privileges speech over other forms of language, including writing. Such a priority attributed to speech over writing – or talk over text – as Derrida observes, reflects the (problematic) relevance given to voice and reason within Western philosophical tradition(s).¹⁵

A second contrasting approach to language and discourse explored in this section is critical discourse analysis (CDA).¹⁶ This approach generally underlies the importance of patterns of dominance, whereby one social group is subordinated to another. For Fairclough, CDA employs the concept of discourse to include texts, talks and other semiological systems and distinguishes this from other dimensions of social practices – referred to as extra-discursive.¹⁷ This implies a dialectical relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic elements and as such requiring a combination of different methodological tools. However, I reject this notion of an underlying material essence, or an extra-discursive realm as described within CDA,¹⁸ which often combine social theories associated with Marxism and Foucauldian ideas. Rather, I understand the relationship between ‘discursive’ and ‘extra-discursive’, or linguistic and non-linguistic realms as co-constitutive modes of production than distinct realms.

Discursive psychology presents another linguistic approach to discourse analysis. It stresses the importance of individuals as products, and producers, of discourse in specific instances of social interaction.¹⁹ Discursive psychology, however, does not seek to analyse the

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of philosophy* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982).

¹⁶ See, Norman Fairclough, *Critical discourse analysis*. (London: Longman, 1995); — *Discourse and social change*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992)

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ For more on CDA, see, for example, Ruth Wodak and Michal Krzyzanowski, *Qualitative discourse analysis in the social science*; Tein A. Van Dijk, *Society and Discourse: how social context influence text and talk*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Marianne Jorgensen and Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse analysis as theory and method*.

¹⁹ Marianne Jorgensen and Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse analysis as theory and method*

changes in society's 'large-scale discourses' but rather investigates how individuals use available discourses flexibly in creating and negotiating representations of the world and identities, in talk-in-interaction to reveal the social consequences that this entails.²⁰ Discursive psychology is typically associated with the works of Potter and Wetherell, and was introduced as a challenge to cognitive social psychology through paying attention to how discourse construct lived experiences.²¹ Despite the common division of this work into poststructural, interactionist, and synthetic perspectives, discursive psychologists share a commitment to studying instances and everyday use of discourses rather than overarching patterns which aims at a boarder mapping of discourses operating within specific social domains.

In contrast to the above-discussed approaches to discourse analysis, poststructural approaches especially associated with the work of Michel Foucault, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe²² are generally concerned with the reflexive character of language-use in specific contexts. This should, however, not be equated to specific instances of linguistic expressions neither does it seek to uncover the underlying meanings of social practices that are 'concealed', as assumed by structuralists and critical discourse analysts. Poststructural approaches broadly share the Saussurian understanding of language as 'system of signs,' however most poststructuralists insist on language as 'form' –instead of 'substance'– and

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Wetherell, M. and Potter, J. *Mapping the Language of Racism: Discourse and the Legitimation of Exploitation*. (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992)

²² Poststructural discourse theory is commonly discussed in relation to the limitations of structural linguistics. However, there are important distinctions within this discourse tradition, including between different authors and different works of particular authors. For instance, Derrida's critique of structuralism pays attention to writing than speech, while Foucault's archeological writings allude to similar systemic assumptions typically encountered in structural linguistics. Yet, Laclau and Foucault (particularly his genealogical interventions) share a similar understanding of discourse. See, Michel Foucault, *The order of things: an archaeology of the human science*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1973); —*Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977); —*The use of pleasure*. (New York: Pantheon, 1985); —*The history of sexuality*. Vol 1. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979); Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and socialist strategy: towards a radical democratic politics*; Ernesto Laclau, *New reflections on the revolution of our time*. (London: Verso, 1990); — "The death and resurrection of the theory of ideology." *Journal of Political Ideologies*. 1, 3 (1996b), 201-220; — *The making of political identities*. (London: Verso, 1994); —*On populist reason*. (London: Verso, 2005)

emphasise reflexivity and instability of discursive structures.²³ Furthermore, postcolonial work draw on this idea of discourse as producing (flexible) representations of reality through processes of signification.²⁴ Apart from exploring discursive formations, postcolonial approaches strongly emphasise their implications in postcolonial contexts.²⁵

From the foregoing, I draw insights from poststructural and postcolonial work on discourse analysis for three important reasons: first, is the recognition of the inseparability of language forms in constituting particular meanings. This, put otherwise, suggests that ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’ are always co-constituted in meaning-making processes or representations, within certain contexts. This is consistent with the constructivist framework detailed in Chapter 2, and as such, permits my exploring of constructions of threats, responses, and identity through signification and representation. Second, is that emergent meanings are essentially contingent, flexible, and occasionally, contested. This permits my problematising of Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse to reveal its unstable meanings. Third, is the attentiveness to the implications of discursive claims and representations within specific (postcolonial) contexts.

3.1.2. Components of Discourse

By describing discourse as flexible system of meanings, the approach taken in this thesis suggests that there are several components that link together to delineate a particular discursive formation. That is, discourses emerge through a complex process of signification and representation.²⁶ These related processes are primarily concerned with ‘articulation’,²⁷ which

²³ Marianne Jorgensen and Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse analysis as theory and method*.

²⁴ See, for example, Vaughan M. *Curing their ills: colonial power and African illness*; Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters*.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Jennifer Milliken, “The study of discourse in International Relations: A critique of research and methods”; David Howarth and Jacob Torfing, *Discourse theory in European politics: identity, policy and governance*; Anthony Burke, “Post-structural security studies,” in Laura J. Shepherd, *Critical approaches to security: an introduction to theories and methods* (London, Routledge, 2013), pp.77-88

²⁷ See, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and socialist strategy: towards a radical democratic politics*

implies the ways in which different signifiers link to offer representations about certain phenomenon. As Shepherd notes, discourses do not merely describe objects or simply transmit statements,²⁸ instead discourses do something: discourses produce ‘things’ by fixing meaning, however temporarily, that enable us to make sense of the world.²⁹ Described thus, I examine these components of discourse in turn.

The first component defines discourse as structures of signification that produce social reality. Underlying this assumption, as shown by Milliken, is a constructivist understanding which suggests that ‘things do not mean or speak for themselves, rather people construct meanings using signifiers to differentiate and identify things by giving them qualities and attributes and relating them to other objects.’³⁰ As stated above, this view of discourse as a system of signification draws largely from structural linguistics, however poststructuralist and postcolonial approaches fuse the two levels of language –langue and parole– into a single meaning-making process. As such I use terms such as ‘signify’ or ‘signifying’ in my empirical chapters to describe how official texts constructs particular threats, or identity, using specific signifier, connecting a chain of signifiers, or inter-textualising to produce meaning.

The second and third components relates to articulation and representation, which are often described as the ‘play of practice.’³¹ Milliken, for example, defines the ‘play of practice’ as the efforts made to represent or fix the meaning of something, through articulation and re-articulation.³² This entails constructing ‘nodal points’ –or warranting conditions– by linking

²⁸ Laura J. Shepherd, “Visualising violence: legitimacy and authority in the “war on terror”.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 1, 2 (2008), 213-226. Huysmans notes that in the social constructivist understanding of language, objects and subjects only appear within a discursive formation; that is, discourse constitutes and creates ‘things’. See, Jef Huysmans, “Defining social constructivism in security studies: the normative dilemma of writing security.”

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Jennifer Milliken, “The study of discourse in International Relations: A critique of research and methods”; Charlotte Epstein, “Who speaks? Discourse, the subject and the study of identity in international politics.” *European Journal of International Relations*. 17, 2 (2010), 327-350; –*The power of words in International Relations: Birth of an Anti-Whaling Discourse*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008)

³¹ Jennifer Milliken, “The study of discourse in International Relations: A critique of research and methods.”

³² Ibid.

different signifiers, as Laclau and Mouffe commented: ‘the practice of articulation is the construction of nodal points using floating signifiers, to establish reality which partially fixes meaning in a particular way.’³³ Once signifiers and connections between them are partially linked together, a specific representation is produced. This constructed meaning, or representation renders logical and proper certain knowledge(s) which are often taken for granted.

In my empirical analysis I demonstrate how particular threats, the Nigerian self, and the terrorist other, are reproduced through processes of signification, articulation, and representation. Specifically, Chapter 4 demonstrates specific constructions of threats through references to certain signifiers that portray them as distinctively ‘new’. Chapter 5 demonstrates constructions of the Nigerian self, hinged upon democratic and progressive ideas, through references to ethno-religious diversity and marginalization, as well as spatial and temporal resources of ‘ungoverned spaces’ and ‘post/pre-2015’ respectively. Chapter 6, on the other hand, illustrates constructions of the terrorist other represented as religious fundamentalists, foreign terrorists, and opportunists (through references to ideological beliefs, geography or nationality, and socio-economic marginalization). In all, I understand these related processes of signification, articulation, and representation as producing flexible meanings open to interrogation.

3.1.3. Analysing Text: *predication, presupposition, and subject-positioning*

The following sub-section explains the textual technique of *predication, presupposition, and subject-positioning* used in the empirical chapter for examining discursive constructions and subject-positioning.³⁴ First, *predication* focuses on language practices in which adverbs and

³³ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and socialist strategy: towards a radical democratic politics*.

³⁴ Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters*; —“Foreign policy as social construction: a post-positivist analysis of US counterinsurgency policy in the Philippines.”

adjectives are attached to nouns to construct, or produce meaning about a phenomenon.³⁵ Milliken observed that research based on predicate analysis would certainly entail the analysis of a text's object space, as well as the attributes attached to subjects which constructs the identities of those subjects.³⁶ It tells us what each subject can and cannot do. Having identified this process of predication within texts, the next strategy involves how these (constructed) subject identities are reproduced and naturalised.³⁷

The second is *presupposition*. This creates common sense knowledge(s) about a specific phenomenon through reproduction. Discourses are often taken for granted due to the relationship between knowledge and power and the re-articulation of particular ideas to partially fix their meaning.³⁸ Presupposition seeks to stop the signifying chain, at least temporarily, through creating "warranting conditions" to permit the naturalising of certain knowledges. Foucault used the notion of 'normalisation' to illustrate how common senses are produced and fixed.³⁹ Third, *subject positioning* entails the positioning of different subjects within precarious formations.⁴⁰ This produces certain kinds of relationships such as oppositional, similarity, and complementary.

In sum, my understanding of this textual strategy is analogous to the components of discourse – signification, articulation, and representation – identified in Section 3.1.2. Predication illustrates how texts ascribe qualities to subjects or objects and, in the process, create presuppositions or meanings about them. Furthermore, the background knowledge(s) articulated through predication structures relationship by positioning subjects (and objects)

³⁵ See also, Jennifer Milliken, "The study of discourse in International Relations: A critique of research and methods;" Linda Ahall and Stefan Borg, "Predication, presupposition and subject-positioning." In Laura J. Shepherd, *critical approaches to security; an introduction to theories and methods*.

³⁶ Jennifer Milliken, "The study of discourse in International Relations: A critique of research and methods."

³⁷ Subjects within texts are different from individuals. To be sure, multiple individuals, such as state officials within the federal executive arm of government, serve to (re)produce a subject, that is, Nigeria or parts of it

³⁸ Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters*.p.2

³⁹ Foucault as cited in David Howarth, *Discourse*.

⁴⁰ Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters*. p.11

within unstable compositions. In the empirical chapters, I analyse 56 official texts using this analytic technique to offer a ‘thick description’ of Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse.

3.1.4. Thick description and interpretation

Thick description as carried out in the empirical chapters of this thesis, reflects a descriptive and interpretive account of Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. Thick description has been used variously in social science research.⁴¹ It evolved from a philosophical concept to a methodological term in anthropology, and later, became widely used in the humanities. Ryle distinguishes ‘thick’ description from ‘thin’ description on the basis that the former seeks to interpret behaviour or action within the context that it occurs and ascribes ‘intentionality’ to the observed behaviour.⁴² On the other hand, ‘thin’ description suggests a ‘surface’ level description without references to its relevant context and intentionality.⁴³ Ryle’s distinction between ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ descriptions was introduced specifically to ethnography by Geertz.⁴⁴ Geertz notes that ‘data of anthropological writing was really the researcher’s construction of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to.’⁴⁵ Given this, research should provide adequate description of the context to help readers gauge the credibility of the author’s interpretations. Furthermore, Geertz’s adaptation of thick description

⁴¹ See, Joseph G. Ponterotto, “Brief note on the origins, evolution, and meaning of the qualitative research concept “thick description”” *The Qualitative Report*. 11, 3 (2006), 538-549; Holloway I., *Basic concepts for qualitative research*. (London, Blackwell Science, 1997); Schwandt T.A., *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry*. 2nd edition. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001).

⁴² See, Ryle G., *Concept of the mind*. (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1949); — *Collected paper. Volume II collected essays, 1929-1968*. (London: Hutchinson, 1971).

⁴³ Thin description gloss over events through giving superficial and sparse accounts, using few words to describe complex, meaningful events. In such descriptions produce broad generalisations.

⁴⁴ Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of cultures: selected essays*. (New York: Basic Books, 1973); — *Local Knowledges: further essays in interpretive anthropology*. (New York: Basic Books, 1983); — *Works and lives: the anthropologist as author*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988)

⁴⁵ Clifford Geertz, “Thick description: towards an interpretative theory of culture.” In Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of cultures: selected essays*. p.311

was expanded upon and introduced to qualitative research more broadly, by Norman Denzin.⁴⁶ According to Denzin, thick description presents detail, context, emotion, web of social relationships, and inserts history into experience.⁴⁷ In digesting the works of Ryle, Geertz, and Denzin, research focus should be explained within the context that it develops and acquires meaning.⁴⁸

However, this binary of ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ descriptions, or ‘thick description’ and ‘thick interpretation,’⁴⁹ as well as references to ‘intentionality’ and ‘emotion’ have been questioned.⁵⁰ Thick description –and interpretation– in discourse analysis, as Lynch suggested, requires sensitivity to language-use in different social and cultural contexts by providing sufficient description and interpretation of emergent meanings.⁵¹ I now turn to discuss the case and identify three case-binding criteria framing my empirical study.

3.2. Case study

A straightforward definition of case study, or what a ‘case’ entails is difficult and often disputed. This is partly because case study is frequently approached as ‘research method’ rather than as ‘research focus.’⁵² Stake, for example, argues that case study is not a methodological

⁴⁶ See, Norman K. Denzin. *Interpretive interactionism*. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989); Norman K. Denzin and Lincoln Y.S., *Handbook of qualitative research*. 3rd edition. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005).

⁴⁷ Norman K. Denzin. *Interpretive interactionism*. p. 99

⁴⁸ In his own definition of thick description, Schwandt states that many qualitative inquirers emphasize the importance of ‘thick’ as opposed to ‘thin’ description. It is not entirely clear just what thick description is, however. Most conceptualisations emphasize that thick description is not simply a matter of amassing relevant detail, rather to thickly describe social action is actually to begin to interpret it through recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, and motivations that characterize a particular episode. It is this interpretive characteristic of description rather than detail per se that makes it thick.

⁴⁹ Denzin notes that thick description creates the condition for thick interpretation. In other words, thick interpretations produced by the researcher contributes to the descriptions and interpretations offered in the events that have been recorded. For Denzin, then, description is also interpretive. It captures the interpretations that researchers bring to the events that have been (partially) recorded. It also provides ground for the researcher’s (and reader’s) interpretations of the events. This blurs the two levels, that is, surface and deep levels of analysis.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Michael Lynch, *Research methods: discourse analysis*. (New York: Sage, 2007)

⁵¹ Michael Lynch, *Research methods: discourse analysis*.

⁵² Baxter and Jack define case study as research approach, facilitating the exploration of a specified phenomenon within its context using variety of data sources. Similarly, Bryman described case study research as an ‘approach’ in social science research traditions—qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method. See, Alan Bryman, *Social*

choice but an object to be studied, and the researcher can draw upon a variety of research tools (discourse analysis, for example) to study that object.⁵³ A case has been described as a phenomenon such as a policy, a social action, a person, a process, and a social group, occurring within a (partially) bounded context.⁵⁴ According to Yin, a case is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident.⁵⁵ Gerring also defines a case as ‘a spatially delimited phenomenon observed at a single point in time or over some period of time.’⁵⁶ For Merriam, a case could be defined in two ways: first as particularistic, especially by focusing on a particular situation, phenomenon, or event. Second, it could be descriptive and heuristic which suggests that such analysis permits a thick description and provides a broader understanding of the phenomenon under study.⁵⁷ This is concerned with the complexity and nature of the phenomenon in question to provide a holistic and in-depth analysis.⁵⁸

Recognising these inexhaustive definitions of case study, I approach it here as the research focus, instead of as research method. The principle of boundedness, however, is always central to case study research regardless of how it is approached in research. This essentially involves how the research focus is delimited by making specific choices about what the focus is, as much as what it is not. What shapes the boundary of a case is indeed not fixed, rather the researcher identifies and determines those limits. Baxter argues for instance, that it

research methods. 5th edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.60; Baxter P. and Rideout L., “Decision making of 2nd year baccalaureate nursing students.” *Journal of Nursing Education*. 45, 4 (2006), 121-128; Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack, ‘Qualitative case study methodology: study design and implementation for novice researchers.’ *The Qualitative Report*. 13, 4 (2008), 544-559; Juanita Heigham and Robert A. Croker, *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: a practical introduction*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁵³ Stake R.E., *The art of case study research*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1988).

⁵⁴ See, David Silverman, *Doing qualitative research*. 4 edition. (London: Sage, 2013); John W. Creswell, *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 4th edition. (London: Sage, 2014)

⁵⁵ Yin, R.K., *Case study research: design and methods*. 4th edition. (London: Sage Publishing, 2009), p.74

⁵⁶ Gerring J., *Case study research: principles and practices*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

⁵⁷ Merriam S., *Case study research in education: a qualitative approach*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1988)

⁵⁸ Stake R.E., *The art of case study research*.

would be impossible for the researcher (and readers) to have a better picture of the case without some consideration of the contexts within which it occurs.⁵⁹ Moreover, the constructivist approach used in this thesis, implicates both the research and the researcher (myself) in knowledge production.

Accordingly, I employed two important case-binding criteria to delimit the focus of my empirical research on Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy: First is the federal executive, including the Presidency and relevant ministries and departments involved in policy formulation and discussion, as the primary site of focus. Second, is the period between 2009 – when confrontations between the Nigerian federal state and various terrorist groups, especially Boko Haram, increasingly gained attention in research and policy sector– to 2019 which provides a practical timeframe for my PhD project. I discuss each of these criteria at length, in the following section.

3.2.1. The level of focus and object of analysis

Level of focus: The Federal Executive

This thesis strategically takes the Nigerian federal executive as the level of focus, or site of interest. As such, this research is interested in government ministries and departments especially those involved in formulating and discussing Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies.⁶⁰ Such governmental sites includes the presidency, Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of

⁵⁹ See, Baxter P. and Rideout L., "Decision making of 2nd year baccalaureate nursing students."

⁶⁰ Section (2) of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2013, outlines the "National Coordinating Bodies" of Nigeria's counter-terrorism effort. This includes the office of the national security adviser (ONSA), the attorney general (within the Ministry of Justice), and law enforcement agencies (which includes the military, the police and other para-military forces).

Justice.⁶¹ Indeed, common conceptualisations of the state as a homogenous actor has been critically examined and questioned in much security scholarship – as well as terrorism studies – in which the state is often described as a source of violence, neither is it the only relevant actor.⁶² Weldes’ constructivist rendering of the state, describes it as an ensemble of discourses through which it is reproduced.⁶³ Furthermore, the state in Africa has been theorised in postcolonial scholarship as a ‘replica of the colonial state’, in which state power and state apparatus are imagined and practiced in ways that reflect – and often transform – colonial practices.⁶⁴

Seen in this way, I approach the Nigerian state as an analytically selective terrain and as outcomes of social and historical processes.⁶⁵ The Nigerian state as a federal state suggests that political authority is shared between the federal government and various component units. These component units include: 36 states and a federal capital territory (which has its own FCT Ministry), 774 local government areas, and traditional authorities. This thesis is especially interested in selected government agencies, ministries, and departments at the federal executive level of government. I ultimately judge these bodies as relevant for answering my research questions given that these are the primary actors responsible for issues related to counter-

⁶¹ For more on the distribution of power with regard to counter-terrorism in Nigeria, see: Temitope Faluyi et al, *Boko Haram’s terrorism and the Nigeria state: federalism, politics and policies*. (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2019); Eugene Eji, “Rethinking Nigeria’s counter-terrorism strategy.”

⁶² See, Lee Jarvis and Michael Lister, “State terrorism research and critical terrorism studies: an assessment.”

⁶³ See, J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, ‘Introduction: constructing insecurity’ in J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, and R. Duvall, *Cultures of insecurity: states, communities, and the production of danger*. Jessop also offers another useful constructivist view of the state: The state is an ensemble of power centres and capacities that offer unequal chances to different forces within and outside the state and that cannot, qua institutional ensemble, exercise power. This implies that it is not the state, as such, that exercises power instead its powers are activated by changing sets of politicians and state officials located in specific parts of the state in specific conjectures. See, Jessop, B. “Redesigning the State, Reorienting State Power, and Rethinking the State.” *In Handbook of Politics: State and Society in Global Perspective*, edited by K. Leicht and J. Jenkins, 41–62. (New York: Springer, 2010)

⁶⁴ Swati Parashar and M. Schulz. “Colonial legacies, postcolonial ‘selfhood’ and the (un)doing of Africa.”

⁶⁵ Lee Jarvis and Michael Lister, “State terrorism research and critical terrorism studies: an assessment;” Andrew W. Neal, “Events dear boy, events’: terrorism and security from the perspective of politics.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 5, 1 (2012), 107-120; A. Finlayson and J. Martin, “Poststructuralism” In C. Hay et al. *The state theories and issues*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.155

terrorism and national security more broadly.⁶⁶ Their interpretations of the Nigerian context, its particularities, and specific threats is indeed significant for a closer examination of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy. This also presents a strong justification for my research given that a few existing studies, if any, has explored the discourse of counter-terrorism in Nigeria as produced by the federal executive.⁶⁷

Official discourses, though offering important account about counter-terrorism in Nigeria, may provide a partial understanding of the social and political landscape and also reproduce existing power relations.⁶⁸ It may ignore other relevant interpretations produced through everyday practices and at other sites within and outside the state. This includes the lived experiences of individuals and communities, interpretations at state and local levels, and those offered by International Organisations, governments, and other bodies. Nevertheless, official accounts are frequently produced by a chain of statements, or inter-textualities, either by referring to another text/talk, or with social resources (norm, culture, and inter-subjective practices) that constructs meanings. Kristeva, for instance, explains that intertextual linkages traces how texts are situated within a web of meaning where a text remains incomplete insofar as it refers to other texts as supporting influences or as texts in need of repudiation.⁶⁹ Through this way, the discourse produced at sites (especially academic or scholarly accounts) other than

⁶⁶ For context, the ONSA is an agency within the Presidency responsible for discussing and addressing all national security issues. The ONSA is composed of a Counter-terrorism Centre (CTC), which is directly responsible for co-ordinating Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy. What's more, the Ministry of Justice is presided over by the Attorney-General of the federation who also acts as the Minister of justice. Also, the Ministry of Defence serves as the co-ordinating body for Nigeria's military, and consist of the army, airforce, the navy, and the defence headquarters. Lastly, the Ministry of Interior handles internal security and consist of the Nigerian police force, Nigerian Immigration Service, Nigerian Security Commission and Defence Corps (NSCDC), and Nigerian Custom Service. See also, section (2) of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2013.

⁶⁷ See: Temitope Faluyi et al, *Boko Haram's terrorism and the Nigeria state: federalism, politics and policies.*; Eugene Eji, "Rethinking Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy."

⁶⁸ Lee Jarvis and Michael Lister, "State terrorism research and critical terrorism studies: an assessment."

⁶⁹ Kristeva J., *Desire in language: a semiotic approach to literature and art.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980)

the federal executive but has been challenged, or referred to in official accounts will also be examined.

Object of analysis with temporal consideration: 2009-2019

The second, and final, yardstick framing my research focus is the object of analysis, that is, official texts produced between 2009 to 2019. As set out in the Introductory Chapter, the complexity around Nigeria's counter-terrorism efforts against the threats posed by particular terrorist groups (especially Boko Haram), have increasingly been discussed by researchers, journalists, and think-tanks since 2009. The killing of Muhammed Yusuf, the leader of Boko Haram, by the Nigerian police along with confrontations between the state security agencies and Boko Haram during this period gained significant attention in public and official discourse.⁷⁰ For example, the Terrorism Prevention Act was enacted in 2011 (revised in 2013), as well as other policies such as the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (first introduced in 2014, and revised in 2016), and the Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (developed in 2017), were introduced following from these events.

It should also be stated that several attempts had been made previously to elaborate an anti-terrorism legislation distinct from existing penal codes, and a national counter-terrorism policy to address issues of terrorism in Nigeria.⁷¹ However, this became more relevant following the evolution of the conflict between the Nigerian state and insurgent groups, after 2009.⁷² Thus, 2009 serves as a useful temporal marker to delineate my research focus due to

⁷⁰ Daniel E. Agbiboa, "Peace at daggers drawn? Boko Haram and the state of emergency in Nigeria."

⁷¹ Isaac Terwase Sampson and Feedom C. Onuoha, "Forcing the horse to drink or making it realise its thirst? Understanding the enactment of anti-terrorism legislation (ATL) in Nigeria."

⁷² During a conversation with the head of the public prosecution team of the Complex Case Work Group (CCG), Ministry of Justice, he explained that the penal and criminal codes were the primary legislative instrument related to cases of terrorism before 2004. However, the inadequacies of these legal frameworks informed the promulgation of Section 15 of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Act (2004), which provide a broader framework for considering other forms of violence (and responses) not included in penal and criminal codes. He also affirmed that between 2009-2010, with the rise in terroristic violence, the Federal government of

the events taking place during this period. This does not suggest, however, that events before or after this period are unimportant, or completely ignored, as official discourse frequently make connections to other discourses produced at different times and places. On the other hand, I restrict my focus to 2019 given the specified period of 3 years of research period for this dissertation, and a final writing-up year. In all, I find this timeframe (2009-2019) suitable and within a feasible limit of what a PhD project can accommodate. Also, this provides a sufficient period for examining official texts closely in view of the research questions raised in the introduction of this thesis.

3.3. Selecting and collecting data

Selecting texts to analyse is very much a subjective process, as the researcher makes certain choices regarding what text to collect – and how it is accessed – to answer the research questions. Bryman notes, in this regard, that sampling does not only suggest the sampling of context, time, or the level of focus, but also includes text selection.⁷³ In general, I adopted three criteria in selecting texts for my empirical analysis.⁷⁴ These criteria include: first, selected texts must provide clear articulation of threats, policy responses, and identity. Second, they must be publicly read and attended to. Third, they must have formal authority to define the political position of the Nigerian state.⁷⁵ Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used in

Nigeria sought assistance from other countries on how to curb the issue of terrorism in Nigeria, and that conditions for foreign assistance included a clear anti-terrorism legislation. This effectively led to the enactment of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act (TPA) in 2011. Furthermore, between 2011-2012, “new developments in acts of terrorism” not covered by the TPA such as the inadequacies of punishment for example, a proposal for the amendment of the TPA (2011) was introduced in 2012. The Terrorism (Prevention) Act (TPA) was revised in 2013, but according to Magaaji, it was “rushed and not coherent with the Principal Act (2011). As such there are on-going discussions for the harmonization of the Principal Act (2011) and the Revised Act (2013), which is yet to be passed into law as at the time of my fieldwork. (Field note, 20/02/2020). For more on the development of anti-terrorism legislation in Nigeria, see: Isaac Terwase Sampson and Feedom C. Onuoha, “Forcing the horse to drink or making it realise its thirst? Understanding the enactment of anti-terrorism legislation (ATL) in Nigeria;” Eugene Eji, “Rethinking Nigeria’s counterterrorism strategy.”

⁷³ Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*

⁷⁴ Lene Hansen, *Security as practice: discourse analysis and the Bosnian War*, p.73

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.74

accessing and collecting these texts. On the one hand, purposive sampling was used for assessing governmental sites and texts that are relevant to my research questions. On the other, snowball sampling was used to identify texts that were frequently referred to, and data from other (non-) governmental organisations, including the British Council, visited during my fieldwork in Abuja, Nigeria.⁷⁶

The selected texts include a total of 56 written and spoken words, including those frequently referred to and function as nodes within an intertextual web of debates around Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach, as well as other important official texts yet to receive adequate engagement in academic research. Among the key texts include the National Counter-Terrorism strategy (2014 and 2016), National Security Strategy (2019 and 2015); Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE 2017); Counter-terrorism Centre Strategic Report (2018); the Buhari Plan for the North-East (2016); and the Presidential Initiative for the North-East (2015-2020, PINE). In addition to these, presidential statements, interviews, press releases, reports, and security information booklets are included in this corpus. Table 1 below provides a detailed description of this corpus, outlining the word length of each text, date, and how they were collection.

Collecting texts for my empirical research involved two significant ways and phases. The first phase was carried out between May 2018 and February 2020 prior to my fieldwork in Abuja, Nigeria. This involved collecting policy documents, Presidential speeches and statements from government websites such as the Counter-terrorism Centre, Defence Headquarters, and the Office of the Presidency which holds important official texts related to counter-terrorism in their online archives.⁷⁷ This process continued during and after fieldwork

⁷⁶ During my fieldwork in Nigeria, I was constantly referred to – by archivists at the ministry of justice – specific texts, such as the National Security Strategy 2019 which was subsequently collected from the CTC (ONSA) online archive.

⁷⁷ See, in particular, ctc.gov.ng; statehouse.gov.ng; <https://defenceinfo.mil.ng>

in Nigeria. The second phase is field research in Abuja, Nigeria which entailed visits to government ministries, departments, and agencies for documents stored in their respective archives. This fieldwork was carried out between 17 February and 27 April 2020 and was significantly affected by the coronavirus pandemic (see Section 4.3.3 for more).

It is important to highlight that the term ‘archive’ was mostly used by state officials and other individuals at these government sites to describe physical buildings, or spaces designated for storing past official records. This was often referred to as the national archive, located in specific parts – or regions – of the country.⁷⁸ Instead, ‘registry’ and ‘record management section’ were common terms used to describe the process and practice of storing, retrieving, accessing, and using official records within governmental sites. Thus, I employ this concept of archives – or archiving as practice – to briefly illustrate the productive effects of record-management and to fully describe how access was negotiated and what type of documents were collected from which sites.⁷⁹

3.3.1. Archival sources

The importance of archival sources (including texts, images, audio records, among others) in political science research, and by extension security studies, was aptly described by Frisch et al,⁸⁰ noting that such pool of information provides a significant primary source notwithstanding the challenges of bias and archival sanitization. However, this concept of archives often seen

⁷⁸ Field note 18/02/2020

⁷⁹ Archiving is widely used in postmodern and postcolonial works to demonstrate the contingent nature of records, the diverse and changing contexts in which they are created, managed and used, and the role of knowledge and power in constituting archives. This is opposed to the view of archives as fixed, impartial, and neutral repositories for the extraction of past information. For more on this, see, Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial archives and the arts of governance.” *Archival Science*. 2, (2002), 87-109; Tom Nesmith, “Seeing Archives: postmodernism and the changing intellectual place of archives.” *The American Archivist*, 65, 1 (2002), 24-41; Brien Brothman, “The past that archives keep: memory, history, and the preservation of archival records.” *Archivaria*. 51(2001), 48-80

⁸⁰ Scott A. Frisch, Douglas B. Harris, Sean Q Kelly, and David C.W. Parker, *Doing archival research in political science*. (New York: Cambria Press, 2012)

as a ‘collection of material and electronic records’⁸¹ leans towards positivism, as archives are assumed to be something ‘out-there and fixed’, waiting for the researcher who understands its logics and management systems.⁸² For instance, Daly’s archival work on the Biafra War in Nigeria highlights the paucity of physical records in postcolonial African societies due to poor management of record especially in digitized form.⁸³ Such an account, more or less, misses the point and fails to recognise the nuanced composition of archives while, at the same time, reproducing contestable assumptions about physical records, as well as around digitization of archives.⁸⁴

Contra this perspective, archival practices at government sites in Nigeria – as observed during my fieldwork – is relational and productive.⁸⁵ In particular, my ethnographic fieldwork highlights the importance of (researcher’s) identity in these processes given that how I was constructed at different governmental sites greatly determined ‘access’. As such I actively performed various identities whether through speaking particular languages, personal contacts, dressing in a certain way, referring to my published works, using my university’s business card, among others. Researcher’s identity and positionality has been extensively discussed in ethnography and other related fields, and the ever-active norm of insider/outside is typically

⁸¹ Scott A. Frisch et al, “Taking the road less travelled” in Scott A. Frisch, Douglas B. Harris, Sean Q Kelly, and David C.W. Parker, *Doing archival research in political science*, p.5

⁸² See, Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial archives and the arts of governance.”

⁸³ Samuel Fury Childs Daly, “Research note archival research in Africa.” *African Affairs*. 116, 463 (2017), 311-320

⁸⁴ For more studies on archival research in Africa, highlighting the need for centralized and digitized archives, see: Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha, Mpho Ngoepe and Jan Maluleka, “Trends, patterns, challenges and types of archival research in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*. 25, 2 (2015), 145-159; Mnjama, N., “Archival landscape in Eastern and Southern Africa.” *Library Management*. 26, 8 (2005), 457-470; Ngulube P., “Guidelines and standards for records management education and training: a model for Anglophone Africa.” *Records and Management Journal*. 11, 3 (2001), 155-173; Thurston A., “Records management in Africa: old problems, dynamic new solutions.” *Records Management Journal*. 6, 3 (1996), 187-199.

⁸⁵ See, Jacques Derrida, *Archive fever: a Freudian impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Brien Brothman, “Orders of value: probing the theoretical terms of archival practice.” *Archivaria*. 32 (1991), 78-100; Rick Brown, “The value of narrativity in the appraisal of Historical Documents: Foundation for a Theory of archival hermeneutics,” *Archivaria*. 32 (1991), 152-57; Terry Cook, “Electronic records, paper minds: the revolution of information management and Archives in the Post-Custodial and Post-Modern era.” *Archives and Manuscripts* 22. (1994): 300-28

used to describe the complexity and messiness of research processes.⁸⁶ Yet this inside/outside dichotomy is quite limiting and does not fully articulate the many layers of my identity, in a ‘field’ that was more or less contingent.

My identity was constructed in three relevant ways: first, as diaspora-Nigerian, due to my affiliation to a university in the UK and my inter-racial marriage. Second, as Nigerian-Ibo (my ethnic group).⁸⁷ Third, as an academic-researcher. As detailed further in the footnote, all three identities had significant implications regarding access to official information.⁸⁸ Upon gaining access to these sites, primary data were collected through the following ways: first, a digital camera was used to copy relevant documents such as court judgement on terrorism cases, reports on prosecuted terrorist suspects, policy briefs, and official reports. Second, a photocopier was also used to copy large documents on policy or organisational reports. Third, I received documents from the British Council and ONSA through multiple emails. This alternative was especially useful during the disruptions and restrictions caused by the coronavirus. Lastly, I made fieldnotes in which I summarised important documents that I was unable to collect through other means described above.

⁸⁶ See, Madge C., “Boundary disputes: comments Sidaway (1992) boundary disputes: comments on sidaway.” *Area*. 25, 3 (1993), 294-299; Merriam S.B., et al. “Power and positionality: negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures.” *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. 20, 5 (2001), 405-416; Merton R.K., “Insiders and Outsiders: a chapter in the sociology of knowledge.” *The American Journal of Sociology*. 78, 1 (1972), 9-47.

⁸⁷ The insider/outsider dichotomy does not explain the nuances and layers with regard to gender, ethnicity, class, and so on. During my fieldwork, I was defined as an Ibo-Nigerian which complicates my insider-ness. Elsewhere, Giwa has noted the limits of this insider/outsider binary. See, Aisha Giwa, “Insider/outsider issues for development researchers from the Global South.” *Geography Compass*. (2015), 1-11. For work on researchers conducting fieldwork in places they refer to as ‘home’, particularly those from the global south, see: Mandiyanike D., “The dilemma of conducting research back in your own country as a returning student: reflections of research fieldwork in Zimbabwe.” *Area*. 41, 1 (2009), 64-71; Mavroudi E., “Diaspora as process: (de)constructing boundaries.” *Geography Compass*. 3 (2007), 467-479; Swati Parashar, “Research brokers, researcher identities and affective performances: the insider/outsider conundrum.” *Civil Wars*. 21, 2 (2019), 249-270

⁸⁸ On one occasion I protested that I was as Nigerian as anyone else, but Umar insisted that the diaspora label was suited since I reside in the UK and was affiliated to a university in the UK. This meant that my relationship with participants were less cordial and more formal, and I was only allowed access to documents that were easily available. On the other hand, as a Nigerian-Ibo I quickly gained the trust of participants from the same ethnic group and was assisted with relevant contacts and few documents. Finally, as an academic-researcher, I was treated with suspicion and participants frequently hoard information they considered sensitive, even though they were classed as ‘public’ documents. Field note 5/04/2020

Recordkeeping at the government sites that I visited during fieldwork encompass four important ways: first, organisational registries (secret and non-secret) provide a loosely centralised system of recordkeeping. Second, records circulated within departments at various government organizations. Third, online archives are used to encourage wider accessibility. Finally, the (re)production of memory also served as a useful repository as participants often shared stories and lived experiences about counter-terrorism in Nigeria. Moreover, primary data for my thesis emerged through the second and third sources, while the fourth source, which include conversations with state officials including archivists, provide relevant footnotes.⁸⁹

The complexity involved in state archival practice in Nigeria as described above, meant that some form of contact was established with individuals at these sites before and during fieldwork. Initial contact was established with an individual at the ONSA and the ministry of defence six months before my fieldwork.⁹⁰ According to Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act, government archives are accessible to the public,⁹¹ however, having personal contacts proved especially helpful in various ways. For example, these contacts explained the importance of obtaining a letter of introduction from my university addressed to the specific organisational heads explaining the purpose of my visit. This proved useful as the first few weeks of fieldwork involved visitations to the above-mentioned government ministries and departments, where letters of introduction were submitted for approval.⁹² Additionally,

⁸⁹ As explained by a librarian at the ministry of justice, registries were mostly used for storing staff records. This meant that documents related to my research focus circulated within different departments in each ministry. For example, during my first visit to the ministry of justice, I submitted an introduction letter from my university and was directed to the library to begin data collection. However, the library only keeps a collection of law reports, law texts, and so on. Documents related to terrorism in Nigeria were managed by different departments than the library, and I was referred to these departments. Furthermore, online sources proved useful and easy to access, especially for sites such as the office of the national security advisor Field note, 20/2/2020.

⁹⁰ Precisely, a major-general in the Nigerian Army who is also an academic, provided the email addresses and telephone numbers of individuals at the aforementioned sites. This was carried out according to the University of East Anglia's ethical regulations, after obtaining clearance from the committee on research ethics.

⁹¹ The federal Ministry of Justice, *Guidelines on the implementation of the freedom of information act*, 2011 revised edition 2013. *The Ministry of Justice*, Nigeria.

⁹² The letter of introduction contains my name and affiliations, that is, my university. It describes the nature of my research as well as the purpose of my visit. A letter of introduction was submitted to each state organisation

building contacts and establishing connections was in many ways central to data collection, due to the fragmentation of records within different organisations and departments.⁹³ At the Ministry of Justice, for example, I was directed to the special advisor to the President on Research and Other Duties by the minister of justice, who facilitated the collection of texts within the Ministry of Justice and beyond.⁹⁴

Texts collected from these state organisations do not include materials considered ‘confidential’ or ‘undisclosed’ to public knowledge, given the above-discussed criteria for selecting text. It is pertinent to add here, though, that what is considered ‘public’ or ‘classified’ is less stable than is often assumed. For example, court judgements on terrorism cases and reports on prosecuted terrorists were initially described as ‘classified’ by the CCG, however upon the intervention of the special advisor to the president they were redefined as ‘public’ and were released to me.⁹⁵ In sum, the process of data collection outlined in this section adhered to

(ONSA, ministry of defence, ministry of justice, and ministry of interior). Such letters were also attached to other correspondence between individuals, acting as facilitators, and state organisations that were suggested in the course of the fieldwork. See the appendices for copies of the introduction letters.

⁹³ As Wanat argued, “gatekeeper’s approval does not guarantee full cooperation at other levels or with different participants in different contexts.” This is analogous to my fieldwork experience in that getting organizational approval did not ultimately ensure access to departments within each organisation or guarantee the cooperation of archivists. See, Carolyn L. Wanat, “Getting past the gatekeepers: differences between access and cooperation in public school research.” *Field Methods*. 20, 2 (2008), 191-208.

⁹⁴ For example, despite gaining access to carry out research at the ministry of justice, I was denied full access to records at the complex case working group (CCG). However, the SA to the president intervened on a number of occasions by speaking to individuals at the CCG as well as individuals at higher levels within the ministry of justice. field note, 13/03/2020. Similarly, I was denied access, initially, to conduct research at the ONSA as one of the security personnel at the gate of the ONSA explained: “who do you know here”? “your name is not on the list of visitors” and “to gain access, you need to have contacts of bosses within this organisation.” Field note, 19/02/2020. Again, the SA intervened by writing an official letter to the ONSA, introducing me and negotiating access on my behalf, which was subsequently approved. field note 18/03/2020

⁹⁵ During my fieldwork, these labels – including classified, secret, public, declassified, restricted, among others– were often used to ‘securitise’ public documents through constructing them as sensitive information given the context of on-going insecurity with regard to the issue of terrorism. This construction of insecurity depended on whether I was defined as a researcher and/or a Nigerian-diaspora. As an individual at the CCG puts it: “we do not know what you will do with these documents, even though they are public, when you leave the shores of Nigeria.” In this case, the referent object, that is ‘public records’, is linked to the integrity of the Nigerian state and in part the ministry of justice, and the individual in charge of recordkeeping at the CCG, to construct it as deserving protection. Field note 13/03/2020

relevant data protection laws and regulations regarding the use of such documents, and the research ethics framework of the University of East Anglia.⁹⁶

3.3.2. Validity and data saturation

Textual analysis is often acknowledged for posing significant difficulties due to different interpretations, including those offered by researchers which raises questions about neutrality.⁹⁷ These arguments are indeed important, but are, however, unavoidable given the subjective process of conducting research, including studies about security and terrorism. As Huysmans notes, this requires reflexivity in writing and researching security and recognising the integral role played by the researcher in knowledge production.⁹⁸ Also, my conceptual and methodological commitments explained in previous chapters, reject claims to objective knowledge or generalization. This does not, of course, imply that this thesis makes no claim or assumption at all, instead claims made in this thesis are open to discussion and contestation.

The interpretations offered in the empirical chapters are grounded upon the methodology and primary data which are deemed consistent for producing knowledge about

⁹⁶ Part C(9) of the UEA ethics policy states that: Researchers should take into account legislation and ‘cultural’ standards relating to the country in which the research is carried out. For research activities overseas, researchers must be able to demonstrate with documentary evidence that they are in compliance with relevant legal and ethical requirements of the host overseas country. Also, UEA-research ethics guidance notes for archival research and internet or e-research specifically outline guidance notes that were duly followed in my own research. See, for example, The University’s Research Integrity Manager, Research and Innovation Services (RIN) with the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), *Research Ethics Policy*. Version 6. (2018) available online: <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/8216919/University+Research+Ethics+Policy+-+25+09+18.pdf/a2918689-109c-447d-a2e8-5e3ff2e52d28>; University of East Anglia-research ethics guidance note, Archival research, available online: <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/19791859/24.+Archival+Research+-+FINAL+25+09+18.pdf/93ce4b93-2573-b701-6514-ad474d8809ed>; and University of East Anglia-research ethics guidance note, Internet or E-research, available online: <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/23387320/03.+Internet+or+e-Research-Final+29+11+17.pdf/282267f2-8afb-f7ec-9870-c7dd417b6edb>

⁹⁷ Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*.

⁹⁸ Huysmans Jef, “Security! What do you mean?” *European Journal of International Relations*. 4, 2 (1988), 226-255

Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse.⁹⁹ My theoretical and methodological commitments are consistent and coherent, and the extensive primary data provides a strong ground for making claims about Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy. Also, through presentations at conferences and small groups, as well as through discussions with my PhD supervisors and colleagues, the credibility of my interpretations was interrogated and established.

Yet, assessing data saturation especially for written and spoken words often proves difficult and is frequently contested. Howarth, in this regard, claims that there are no fixed criteria for assessing data saturation for textual analysis.¹⁰⁰ Recognising this difficult, I affirm that the selected texts used in my thesis offered enough information for answering the research questions regarding constructions of threats, responses, and identity within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. In all, I anticipate that this would provide a critical space for thinking about counter-terrorism knowledge and practices in the Nigerian context.

3.3.3. Limitations and Challenges

While archival sources, including from online repositories, offer important primary data for mapping official discourse on counter-terrorism, they are by no means complete and are increasingly fragmented. Also, due to the constantly evolving process of policy making, textual sources produced between 2009-2019 may exclude recent policies which automatically impinges on my own interpretations. In addition, challenges encountered during fieldwork in Nigeria especially regarding access to research sites as discussed above, also pose significant limitations to the findings of my empirical analysis. For example, the Ministry of Defence

⁹⁹ To be clear, I use discourse analysis to examine broad patterns in language-use in context than for 'content' analysis. Content analysis refers to numerical measure of specific language. This may lead to search for underlying intentions, which is not my concern in this thesis, and may also ignore the overall significance of a communication for its component parts. See, Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*

¹⁰⁰ David Howarth and Jacob Torfing, *Discourse theory in European politics: identity, policy and governance*.

which coordinates the army, navy, air force, declined access to records within the Ministry. Rather, I was referred to the Army Headquarters from the Ministry of Justice, and the Army HQ could only grant access to field observations, such as visits to the tier 2 command of the Nigerian army in Borno state.¹⁰¹ This is of course outside the scope of my research and was declined accordingly. Due to this obfuscation encountered, important data including minutes of meetings, communiques, and reports for example, that could potentially contribute to this research project may have been missed.

Another example of such fuzziness in my fieldwork was encountered at the Ministry of Justice. The complex case-working group, which is a sub-department within the Ministry of Justice, holds certain records related to terrorism especially related to the prosecution of suspected terrorists. These archival sources, however, does not include documents from the Attorney-General's office.¹⁰² This poses an important limitation, in that the AGF is a key actor responsible for the coordination of counter-terrorism policies in Nigeria with global practices and conventions. A letter of introduction from my university was directly addressed to the AGF's office, yet this was subsequently differed to a different sub-department within the organisation.¹⁰³ What is more, public records related to Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies held at other non-governmental organisations, such as the British Council for example, were re-distributed to other sites for various reasons, including due to claims about their sensitivity.¹⁰⁴

Finally, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on my fieldwork was equally significant due to the disruptions and dilemmas it posed. My fieldwork in Abuja progressed

¹⁰¹ See appendices for internal correspondence between the Ministry of Defence and the Army Headquarters.

¹⁰² The CCG was created through a joint effort between the ministry of justice and the British High Commission in Nigeria to train and equip lawyers for the purpose of prosecution of terrorist suspects. This is within the broader, and a far reaching, intervention of the British government in security processes in Nigeria. *DPPA/CCG072/14*

¹⁰³ See the introduction letters submitted at different government sites, in the appendices.

¹⁰⁴ After a series of negotiation, I was directed by the British Council to Managing conflict in Nigeria, a British Council-EU initiative, where some of the 'endangered' public records were stored and managed.

relatively well between 17 February and 23 March, before the national lockdown directives were issued which meant that government offices were shut and movement within Abuja was greatly restricted. In turn, my scheduled visit to the ONSA on 24 March was effectively cancelled, as well as other follow-up correspondence with the Ministry of Humanitarian, Disaster Management and Social Development.

That said, I judge the collected (and selected) data for my empirical analysis as sufficient for exploring evolving official discourse of counter-terrorism in Nigeria. It is also worth mentioning some of the benefits of using online repositories, notably regarding the enormous pool of readily available resources which complements and enriches the data generated from my fieldwork. This includes data from government online archives, as well as other media and news organisations (including presidential speeches, interviews, and press releases from the Defence Headquarters).

Table 1:

Text	Site of collection	Method of collection	Total Length	Date of collection
National Counter-terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) 2014	Office of the national security adviser (ONSA)	Online	60 pages	10/05/2018
National Counter-terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) 2016	ONSA	Online	57 pages	10/05/2018
National Security Strategy 2014	ONSA	Online	97 pages (7-13, 16-18 counter-terrorism)	10/05/2018
National Security Strategy 2019	ONSA	Email	80 pages (8, 23-26 on counter-terrorism)	01/04/2020
Counter-Terrorism Centre Strategic Report 2018	ONSA	Online	81 pages	01/04/2020
Preventing Violent Extremism in Nigeria: Effective narratives and messaging national workshop report 2017	ONSA	Email	43 pages	10/04/2020
Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism 2017	ONSA	Email	43 Pages	16/03/2020
Handbook on safety and security tips 2016	ONSA	Online	29 pages	10/05/2018
The Buhari plan: Rebuilding the North-East 2016	British council	Email	39 pages	10/03/2020
Presidential Initiative for the North-East (PINE) 2015-2020	British council	Email	74 pages	10/03/2020

New hope: the presidential co-ordinating committee on North-East interventions (PCNI) 2015	British council	Email	151 pages	10/03/2020
Nigeria stability and reconciliation programme (NSRP) 2012	British council	Email	6 pages	10/03/2020
Update on security in Nigeria and the campaign against Boko Haram 2015	Atlantic Council	Online	Video length: 1:35:43 Transcribed into text.	06/05/2020
Nigeria: A conversation with President Muhammadu Buhari (2015)	United States Institute of Peace	Online	Video length: 1:02:37 Transcribed into text	06/05/2020
Federal Republic of Nigeria official gazette: Terrorism (prevention) (Proscription Order) Notice, 2013	Central Bank of Nigeria	Online	5 pages	06/05/2020
Address by the president, commander-in-chief of the armed forces on the federal republic of Nigeria at the General Assembly of the 65 th regular session of the United Nations 2010	United Nations	Online	9 pages	12/06/20
Address by the president, commander-in-chief of the armed forces on the federal republic of Nigeria at the General Assembly of the 66 th regular session of the United Nations 2011	United Nations	Online	9 pages	12/06/20
Address by the president, commander-in-chief of the armed forces on the federal republic of Nigeria at the General Assembly of the 67 th regular session of the United Nations 2011	United Nations	Online	9 Pages	12/06/20

Address by the president, commander-in-chief of the armed forces on the federal republic of Nigeria at the General Assembly of the 68 th regular session of the United Nations 2013	United Nations	Online archive	18 pages	12/06/20
Address by the president, commander-in-chief of the armed forces on the federal republic of Nigeria at the General Assembly of the 69 th regular session of the United Nations 2014	United Nations	Online archive	6 pages	12/06/20
Address by the president, commander-in-chief of the armed forces on the federal republic of Nigeria at the General Assembly of the 70 th regular session of the United Nations 2015	United Nations	Online archive	6 pages	12/06/20
Address by the president, commander-in-chief of the armed forces on the federal republic of Nigeria at the General Assembly of the 71 st regular session of the United Nations 2016	United Nations	Online archive	7 pages	12/06/20
Address by the president, commander-in-chief of the armed forces on the federal republic of Nigeria at the General Assembly of the 72 nd regular session of the United Nations 2017	United Nations	Online archive	22 pages	12/06/20
Address by the president, commander-in-chief of the armed forces on the federal republic of Nigeria at the General Assembly of the 73 rd regular session of the United Nations 2018	United Nations	Online archive	13 pages	12/06/20
The journey so far, Ministry of interior report 2015-2018	Ministry of interior	Copy	12-19	02/03/2020
Report on suspected terrorists 2019	Ministry of justice	Copied with digital camera	5pages	03/03/2020

This table show a list of texts collected from governmental and non-governmental sites in Nigeria. In addition to these, the data for this thesis include 9 press releases from the Defence Headquarters, as well as 22 official statements, speeches and interviews published in various (online) news outlets (see the bibliography section of this thesis for more).

Conclusion

This chapter outlined my research method used in this dissertation which is centred around a discourse analysis approach. This method is useful for examining –and problematising– constructions of threats, response, and identity within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. Also, by specifically focusing on those state officials at the federal executive level directly involved in elaborating counter-terrorism policies, and on texts produced between 2009-2019, I am able to thickly describe the discourse around counter-terrorism in Nigeria. Furthermore, I explained that the empirical analysis uses selected texts collected from different state repositories in Abuja, Nigeria and from online archives. These texts will be read in my empirical chapters using the textual technique of *predication*, *presupposition* and *subject-positioning* to examine how specific threats, responses and identities are constructed.

This work now turns to the first empirical chapter, in which I examine specific constructions terrorist threats as ‘new terrorism’. Then Chapters 5 and 6 respectively, examines constructions of the Nigerian self, and the terrorist other within this evolving discourse. Overall, the research methods discussed in this chapter permits my fulfilling the core research motivation and answering the research questions posed in the introductory chapter of this thesis

Chapter 4

Constructing threats

4.0. Introduction

Building on the conceptual and analytical commitments identified in Chapter 2, regarding the discursive construction of (in)security vis-à-vis counter-terrorism,¹ this current chapter examines constructions and representations of particular threats – as ‘new terrorism’ – within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. My focus here is to identify (and to problematise) this recurring idea of ‘new terrorism’ consistently conjured in official discourse to designate certain threats as significantly different given a set of features including its underpinning religious motivation or ends, an increase in the severity and lethality of violence, and the global networks that supposedly sustain such threats. The chapter, however, argues that the necessity for counter-terrorism is increasingly made possible by this representation which implies a temporal and substantive distinction from ‘old’ forms of terrorism or insecurity more broadly, demanding urgent intervention by the state.

Argued thus, I demonstrate the following in this chapter: first, I will show the presence of this framing of ‘new’ terrorism through identifying the recurrence of perceived characteristics of terrorism, including its links with extremism and insurgency. Second, unpack this construction’s underlying assumptions and contradiction through my problematising of this representation. Third, identify the functions of this framing especially for counter-terrorism responses by demonstrating its utility for the legitimisation of new, and wide-ranging, policies and practices. Overall, my focus in this chapter contributes to ongoing discussion on Nigeria’s counter-terrorism approach as discussed in Chapter 1, by showing the political work involved

¹ J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, “Introduction: constructing insecurity” in J. Weldes, M. Laffey, H. Gusterson, and R. Duvall, *Cultures of insecurity: states, communities, and the production of danger*; J. Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: the United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis*; J. Weldes, “Constructing National Interests.”

in framing terrorism and how state counter-terrorism is made possible. This chapter also provides a considerable background for analysing constructions of the Nigerian self and the terrorist other in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively, which meets the second research question outlined in the introductory Chapter.

To achieve this, the chapter is laid out in three sections. Section 4.1 examines constructions of specific threats through references to a particular trajectory of political violences and terrorism in Nigeria beginning from 1952 to 2009, invoking the binary of ‘old’ and ‘new’ terrorism. This section equally examines a range of attributes of this construction, including a questionable linkage between terrorism, (violent) extremism, and insurgency, as well as its borderless and faceless features which discursively reinforces the idea of new terrorism. Section 4.2 interrogates constructions of causes of (new) terrorism in Nigeria which isolates specific ideological or theological, socio-psychological, and wider structural issues including poverty and marginalization. Lastly, Section 4.3 looks at constructions of the threats posed by terrorism, portrayed as increasingly severe, global, and enduring. Table 1 below provides a summarise and examples of this discourse.

Table 1

	Presuppositions	Examples
Constructions of terrorism	Newness	• Terrorism in its present form is a relatively new phenomenon in Nigeria (NACTEST, 2016).
	Blurriness of boundary	• The current situation faced by Nigerians is a direct result of violent extremism practices and blooming domestic insurgencies that are driven by homegrown terrorism. (PCVE Country Report, 2017)
	Borderless or faceless	• The current threat posed by Boko Haram, unlike its predecessors, has remained faceless with no defined frontiers, making it extremely

		difficult to effectively contain the threat (NACTEST)
Constructions of Causes of terrorism	Theological or ideological	• Radicalization has been the main factor behind acts of faith-based terrorism in Nigeria. (NACTEST)
	Socio-psychological	• The threat from global Islamist terrorism is real and involves a variety of groups, networks and individuals blinded by extremist beliefs (NACTEST).
	Root causes: marginalization, poverty, external relations, etc.	• The push factors are the structural conditions that make an environment more conducive to the growth of violent extremism, such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, social exclusion, health, other socio-economic factors (although not in isolation) and the role of governance (PVCE Policy Framework, 2017)
Constructions of the threats posed by terrorism	Severe and potentially lethal	• Terrorism is the most serious security threat confronting Nigeria today...the acts, which were hitherto considered as mere violent crimes, have claimed many lives and have been on the increase in the recent past (NACTEST).
	Global and far-reaching	• Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, in the United States of America by al-Qaeda, the phenomenon has assumed a global dimension. No country, including Nigeria, is immune to such terrorist attacks (NACTEST)
	Enduring or long-lasting	• Nigerians should be aware and come to terms with the fact that it is a phenomenon that would require long-term measures to contain (NACTEST)

Constructing terrorist threats as ‘new terrorism’

4.1. Constructing terrorism: newness, blurriness of boundary, borderless or faceless

As outlined above, the following section explores constructions of certain threats as new terrorism by situating them within a trajectory of political violences in Nigeria, as well as through references to a range of characteristics including the relationship between terrorism, violent extremism, and insurgency, and the borderless or faceless features constituting such

threats. This representation is, however, flexible and open to interrogation. In particular, the distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ terrorism demonstrates terrorism’s unstable ontological existence and highlights the politics of labelling particular acts of violence or threats as terrorism. In what follows, I show the underlying assumptions, contradiction, and ramification of this representation, using the textual mechanism of predication and presupposition.²

4.1.1. Predication

As explained in Chapter 3, predication entails the ways in which specific nouns or subjects, such as terrorism in this regard, are constituted and made meaningful. Nigeria’s National Counter-terrorism Strategy (revised in 2016) provides a useful entry into this discussion:

Terrorism in its present form is a relatively **new phenomenon** in Nigeria. Suicide attacks were never a part of the calculation whenever the issue of terrorism was discussed. The **early acts of terrorism**, especially the Kano killings of 1952, **were dismissed as mere violent crimes**. The first recorded major incident was in 1980 when an extremist religious group, “the Maitatsine religious sect” which is believed to have developed from a neighbouring country carried out attacks in many parts of northern Nigeria over a period of time, but was successfully contained by Government largely because the frontlines were easily defined. In October 1993, a political dimension was added to the national experience when a Nigeria Airways flight was hijacked in Kano by a group known as the Movement for the Advancement of Democracy in Nigeria led by Jerry Yusuf. Terrorist attacks were also perpetrated by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other South-South and South-East groups predicated on agitations against environmental degradation, perceived marginalization and the quest for resource control. The culminations of these agitations were incidents of kidnapping, killings of government security agents, attacks on oil installations, illegal oil bunkering and other acts of armed banditry witnessed in the Niger Delta.³

The predication of ‘in its present form is a relatively new phenomenon’, clearly signify a characteristically different – and indeed a new – form of terrorism in relation to other types or ‘early acts of terrorism’ in Nigeria. The reference to ‘suicide attacks’, moreover, gives vitality

² Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters*.

³ NACTEST 2016, p.13; see also, NSS 2014, p.10

to this notion of new terrorism by pointing to its potential lethality.⁴ This supposedly set such threats apart from ‘early acts of terrorism,’ or older threats including acts of terrorism dismissed as ‘mere violent crimes’ in 1952; ‘religious extremism’ in 1980; ‘political terrorism’ in 1993; and a ‘socio-economic’ type according to certain regional peculiarities of southern Nigeria, as references to ‘environmental degradation,’ or ‘marginalization and resource control’ suggests. This trajectory of political violence points to certain emblematic features to distinguish between old and new terrorism, as illustrated in the National Security Strategy:

Nigeria is one of the countries in Africa in which terrorism has taken root. **Although different groups have emerged at different points in the country’s political history and have assumed different forms, in scope, choice of targets and logistical capability, none is quite comparable with Boko Haram.** Using the relatively hostile and sometimes impenetrable swathe North East as their base, the Boko Haram in the past couple of years have carried out relentless savage attacks on both soft and high-profile targets in northern parts of the country. The severity of the Boko Haram insurgency is underscored by captured territories, pillage, mass abductions and indoctrination.⁵

Here, the predication of ‘none is quite comparable with Boko Haram’ suggests – and reinforces – a distinction between ‘different forms’ of terrorism or political violence. Such references to ‘the severity of Boko Haram’, or to the ‘relentless savage attacks’ carried out by Boko Haram vitiates notions about the new-ness of terrorism in Nigeria (and elsewhere). Having identified this distinction between old and new terrorism, the NACTEST describes its evolution since 2000:

The current threat is mainly from the *Boko Haram*, which emerged in Borno State in 2000. The group was founded by the late Mohammed Yusuf who moved to Kanamma, Yobe State, close to the border with Niger Republic, in 2003 at a base dubbed ‘Afghanistan’. The movement, ‘The Nigerian Taliban’, which eventually emerged, targeted the Police and other security agencies to source for weapons, thus creating fear and a sense of insecurity in the locals. Currently, a splinter faction has emerged from the wider Boko Haram umbrella called *Jama’atu Ansarul Muslimina* □ *Biladis Sudan* simply known as *Ansaru*.⁶

⁴ For more references to “suicide attacks” see, Boko Haram lures people together to bomb. *DefenceHq*. December 21, 2015. Available online from: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/news/11867> [Accessed 24 June 2020]

⁵ NSS (2014), p.14

⁶ NACTEST, p.13

The above highlights an underpinning feature of this idea of new terrorism, as constituted by the emergence of different terrorist groups including the Nigerian Taliban, Boko Haram, and Ansaru. Specifically, as we saw with ‘older’ forms of terrorism, these new terrorist groups share a common identity as Islamist groups. As the NACTEST puts it: “the threat we face is from ‘Islamic terrorism’...and eliminating it would require dynamic and sustained measures.”⁷ Thus, this constructs such threats as a form of religious-inspired violence, although significantly different from other forms of religious extremism (such as the Maitatsine in 1980s), and essentially difficult to overcome given other characteristics identified subsequently.

A second assumption embedded in, and reproduced through, this construction of threats is the linkage (or blurred boundary) between terrorism, violent extremism, and insurgency. The Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Country Report, which complements the broader National Counter-terrorism Strategy,⁸ illustrates this as follows:

The current situation faced by Nigerians is a direct result of violent extremism practices and blooming domestic insurgencies that are driven by homegrown terrorism and other unresolved factors, relentlessly fuelling disenchantment among citizens...Undeniably, the most recent and widespread extremist group in Nigeria, Boko Haram, continues to grow and commit various terror acts, posing one of the main threats to national security. A self-declared ally of the Islamic State, this terrorist organization has been responsible for immense damage and suffering in Nigeria and surrounding countries, including Chad, Niger, and Cameroon.⁹

As this text indicates, the ‘current situation’ or threats facing Nigeria(ns) includes ‘violent extremism practices’, ‘domestic insurgencies’, and ‘homegrown terrorism’ especially manifested by Boko Haram. The definition of Boko Haram as an ‘extremist group’ that commits ‘various terror acts,’ suggests a causal linkage between (their) radical beliefs and violent actions. Moreover, the connection to other global terrorist organisations such as ISIS reinforce assumptions about the ideological or religious feature grounding such threats. And, according to the PCVE Country Report, ‘the development and adoption of the national counter

⁷ Ibid, p.14

⁸ CTC Report, p.5

⁹ PCVE Country Report 2017, pp.5-6

terrorism strategy...paved the way forward for a multi-faceted approach to preventing and countering violent extremism.’¹⁰ The Counter-terrorism Committee Report also notes that, ‘to tackle terrorism and violent extremism, including its root causes...the government developed the NACTEST and the PCVE...providing a clear policy environment that connect peace, security and development.’¹¹ All of this demonstrates the criss-crossing of policies, programmes, and initiatives on counter-terrorism emanating from either a particular, or different governmental sites, with different ambitions. In other words, it shows the different ways in which the problem of terrorism is approached, offering different or overlapping interpretations of the threats faced by Nigeria.

What is more, the Presidential Committee on North-East Initiatives Report explains that ‘Boko Haram transformed from a group of radical Salafi proselytisers to a terrorist organisation engaged in fearsome insurgency that has claimed many lives and destroyed properties.’¹² This again suggests similar causal linkage identified above, integrating terrorism with violent extremism and insurgency. Further examples of this can be found in the National Security Strategy:

In realization that military approach alone cannot adequately counter **ideology-based terrorist insurgency**, the government has adopted a soft approach to counter-terrorism which has resulted in the development of Nigeria’s program to countering violent extremism. This programme is designed to involve local governments, state government, civil society organisations (especially faith/community based) and the private sector.¹³

The phrase of ‘ideology-based terrorist insurgency’ reinforce this notion of new terrorism, that is, as a form of violence driven by extremist beliefs with increased dexterity and potentially destructive. Put otherwise, terrorism is constructed as involving extreme religious beliefs and

¹⁰ Ibid, p.10

¹¹ CTC Report, p.5; see also p.34; NSS 2019, p.24

¹² PCNI 2015, p.138; see also, p.13, 26; NSS 2014, p.9

¹³ NSS 2014, pp.32-33

violent acts carried out by insurgents or illegitimate groups, or as tactics within a broader strategy of insurgency.

The third assumption, and another feature of this idea of new terrorism, is its lack of defined borders and face. According to the NACTEST: “the current threat posed by Boko Haram, unlike its predecessors, has **remained faceless with no defined frontiers**, making it extremely difficult to effectively contain the threat.”¹⁴ Furthermore, it adds, ‘when it [terrorist threats] metamorphosed into the Boko Haram sect, it gradually went underground and became faceless.’¹⁵ The predication of ‘faceless with no defined frontiers’ suggests, on the one hand, the decreasing importance of territoriality or locality with regard to new terrorist threats. And on the other, signifies the difficulty of identifying and responding to (potential) threats, given the impermanence or evasiveness of new terrorist groups. As articulated in the NACTEST:

Terrorism is generally ubiquitous – the same way terrorist attacks have been carried out in many countries. These attacks have been carried out by individuals or groups from the core group or by outsiders or a combination of both. This accounts for the nexus between the domestic and international dimensions of terrorism.¹⁶

Here, terrorism is defined as ‘generally ubiquitous’ to de-emphasise the importance of locality or nation-state borders, blurring the boundary between domestic and international terrorism or threats thereof. Defined in this way, the measures advanced by the Nigerian state largely draw upon common accepted knowledge(s) and practices of counter-terrorism, as the NACTEST clearly states:

The assumption is that future activities of Boko Haram will evolve in accordance with the modus operandi of global Islamic terrorist groups. Challenging though this might seem, **it provides the opportunity to make predictions and outline elements that should be incorporated into a strategy that would comprehensively address the threat.**¹⁷

¹⁴ NACTEST 2016, p.2

¹⁵ Ibid, p.13

¹⁶ NACTEST 2016, p.15

¹⁷ NACTEST 2016, p.10

As the above indicates, state interventions against specific terrorist threats in Nigeria are primarily informed by common (unsettled) claims about terrorism, especially according to narratives around ‘global Islamic terrorism’. Furthermore, the NACTEST notes that ‘terrorist groups operate indiscriminately, mostly in loose or sleeper cells. They could also be nimble and therefore difficult to trace.’¹⁸ Such discursive claims about the borderless and faceless features of terrorism, which ostensibly makes it increasingly obscure and difficult to address (within state borders), permits a range of counter-terrorism responses as outlined in the NACTEST:

The Police/DSS will reactivate their respective crime registries immediately and store information digitally for ease of access. The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) is being strengthened to ensure that all Nigerians are identified through biometric data capture and at every opportunity well ahead of any requirements, e.g. in hospitals, health centres, health posts and schools. The Police/ DSS will also develop a fingerprint identification system for all persons arrested for any offence, which can also be accessed, centrally by any of the national security agencies. The Police and other counter-terrorism outfits will have unrestricted access to the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), Population Census and Voter Registration Data Base.¹⁹

Constructing (new) terrorism as borderless and faceless inevitably permits new and extensive counter-terrorism responses, including giving new powers to security agencies in Nigeria, and equally enables the expansion of counter-terrorism into new spaces such as hospitals, schools, and cyberspace, as the following illustrates:

An important aspect of the data is communication data, as terrorists are known to use all available modes to convey organizational messages, information and threats. It is, therefore, necessary for all Nigerians to register their SIM cards. Efforts are in top gear to ensure that the cyberspace, especially the Internet, is well monitored in conjunction with other countries. Where appropriate, legislation will be enacted to allow lawful interception of communication between individuals/organizations by security agencies. This will greatly assist intelligence gathering and data collection on terrorist activities, their supporters and sponsors.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid, p.15

¹⁹ NACTEST 2016, p.32

²⁰ NACTEST 2016, p.27

References to the ‘need for SIM registration’, as well as ‘legislation to permit the interception of communication between individuals or groups’ reflect the above-discussed assumptions about the borderless or facelessness of new terrorism.

In sum, I have explored how particular threats are constructed – and represented – as new terrorism to produce a contrast between ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms of terrorist violence. Also, I have identified a range of contestable characteristics of this construction, including assumptions about the religious elements, the linkage with violent extremism and insurgency, and assumptions about its lack of locality or territoriality. In what follows, I assess this representation to show its flexibility and contestability, as well as its functions for counter-terrorism intervention.

4.1.2. Presupposition

Presupposition, as discussed in Chapter 3, refers to certain background knowledges or assumptions underpinning, and reproduced through, a particular discourse. In the following section, I examine three discursive claims identified in the above section underpinning this notion of new terrorism to reveal certain ambiguities and consequences of this representation in the Nigerian context.

The first presupposition relates to the new-ness of terrorism, delineated according to a (questionable) trajectory of political violence in Nigeria to highlight certain marked distinctions between ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms of terrorism. The NACTEST, for instance, states that ‘terrorism in its present form is a relatively new phenomenon in Nigeria, and different from other early form of terrorism in Nigeria.’²¹ The NSS also writes that, although there have

²¹ NACTEST 2016, p.13

been other terrorist groups in Nigeria's political history, none is quite comparable to Boko Haram.²² Such claims about the historical changes in the nature of terrorism especially concerning the emergence of a new and potentially deadly form, has received immense treatment in terrorism studies since at least the 1990s (and increasingly post 9/11),²³ with a few notable studies questioning its underpinning premises and the overall analytic usefulness of such distinction of old and new terrorism.²⁴

According to the NACTEST, the (re-)emergence of terrorism in Nigeria since 2000 constitutes this new type of terrorism given its religious motivation, as well as the severity or level of destruction often associated with such terrorist acts. Importantly, this storying conflates different terrorist groups based on a shared religious identity, as 'Islamic terrorist groups'.²⁵ While it identifies other forms of religious extremism particularly those manifested by the Maitatsine sect in 1983, new terrorism – and new terrorist groups – is supposedly set apart by other constitutive features, including its linkage with extremism and insurgency, and its borderless and faceless features which I discuss further below. Yet, representations of political

²² NSS 2014, p.14

²³ Laqueur, for one, argued that there has been a radical transformation, if not a revolution, in the character of terrorism. Also, according to Hoffman, "religious imperative for terrorism is the most important characteristic of terrorist activity today, while Neumann traces the origins of this development back to factors embedded in late modernity and globalisation. For more on this new/old debate, see: B. Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*; P.R Newmann, *Old and New terrorism–Late modernity, globalization and the transformation of political violence*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009); W. Laqueur, *No end to war: terrorism in the twenty-first century* (London: Continuum, 2003); S. Gray and I. Adeakin, "The evolution of Boko Haram: from missionary activism to transnational jihad and the failure of the Nigerian security intelligence agencies;" I. Aghedo, "Old wine in a new bottle: ideological and operational linkages between Maitatsine and Boko Haram revolts in Nigeria"; O. Osumah, "Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria and the vicious cycle of internal insecurity." W. Laqueur, *The new terrorism: fanaticism and the arms of mass destruction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

²⁴ Field observed that the 'overall accuracy and analytical value of new terrorism is questionable...historical evidence demonstrates that there is significant continuity.' See, A. Spencer, "Questioning the concept of New terrorism;" I. Duyvesteyn, "How new is the new terrorism?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 27 (2004), 439-454; T. Copeland, "Is the 'New Terrorism' really new?: An analysis of the new paradigm for terrorism," *The Journal of Conflict Studies* (2001), 1-19; A. Field, "The 'new terrorism': revolution or evolution," *Political Studies Review*. 7 (2009), 195-207; D.C Rapoport, "The four waves of modern terrorism," in A.K Cronin and J.M Ludes, eds., *Attacking terrorism– Elements of a grand strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), pp.47-48; See, R. Jackson, L. Jarvis, J. Gunning, M. Breen-Smyth. *Terrorism: A critical introduction*, pp.116; R. Jackson, "Knowledge, power and politics in the study of political terrorism" In R. Jackson, M. Breen-Smyth, and J. Gunning. *Critical Terrorism Studies: a new research agenda*. (London: Routledge, 2009), pp.66-83; M. Stohl, "Old myths, new fantasies and the enduring realities of terrorism."

²⁵ NACTEST 2016, p.14

violences in Nigeria offered by the above-identified historical reading demonstrates the flexible – and questionable – existence of terrorism.

To emphasise, the killings in Kano state in 1952 is doubly represented as ‘an early form of terrorism’, and yet, dismissed as ‘mere violent crimes’.²⁶ This apparent contradiction invigorate claims about certain important conceptual differences between ‘terrorism’ as politically motivated violence, and ‘criminal violence’ such as drug trafficking, murders and other acts carried out by criminal organisations devoid of political goals.²⁷ This framing of ‘mere violent crime’ arguably serves to de-legitimise and isolate the attacks in Kano from any political ambitions. Similarly, the above-mentioned Maitatsine religious sect in 1983 is represented as a form of ‘religious extremism’ which implicitly suggests a distinction between terrorism (political acts/goals) and extremism (religious beliefs/goals).²⁸ Contra this assumption, as Isichei show in a study, the activities of Maitatsine raise crucial political and strategic questions about Nigeria’s territorial borders, the transnational identities of its population, and the movement of people and objects across Nigeria’s northern borders.²⁹

Also, according to the NACTEST, the ‘hijacking of a Nigerian airways flight in 1993, by the Movement for Democracy in Nigeria introduced a ‘political dimension’ to these violences.’³⁰ This notion of ‘political violence’ ultimately reinforce a set of accepted claims, including about the internal political conditions as responsible for terrorist violence, about hijacking as a political strategy, terrorists as freedom fighters, among others.³¹ This is especially significant in the context of the successive military regimes during this period (1966-

²⁶ Ibid, p.13

²⁷ See, M. Stohl, “Old myths, new fantasies and the enduring realities of terrorism.”

²⁸ See, Iro Aghedo, “Old wine in a new bottle: ideological and operational linkages between Maitatsine and Boko Haram revolts in Nigeria;” A. Adesoji, “Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic fundamentalism and the response of the Nigerian state.”

²⁹ E. Isichei, “The Maitatsine rising in Nigeria 1980-85: a revolt of the disinherited,” *Journal of Religion in Africa*. 17, 3 (1987), 194-208

³⁰ NACTEST 2016, p.13

³¹ R. Jackson, L. Jarvis, J. Gunning, M. Breen-Smyth. *Terrorism: A critical introduction*. p.22

1998),³² which largely portray the Movement for Democracy group as posing a threat to the prevailing political order.³³ Even more telling, is the fact that cases of terrorism in southern Nigeria are characterised and represented as agitations for ‘socio-economic and environmental justice’.³⁴ This suggests another discursive type of terrorism – socio-economic – which takes its meaning from certain regional dynamics and conflicts, including issues around resource control (especially crude oil), and environmental degradation due to oil spillages in the Niger delta.³⁵ The foregoing demonstrate the deeply precarious existence of terrorism, and the intensely political activity of representing security threats which inevitably works to exclude, blur, expand, or restrict other possible interpretations.

The second presupposition entails the relationship between terrorism, (violent) extremism, and insurgency, which supposedly represents an essentially distinguishing feature of the above-identified new terrorism. This portrays such threats as religiously driven, carried out by non-state groups in pursuit of illegitimate goals. The NSS describes Boko Haram as an ‘ideology-based terrorist insurgency’.³⁶ This view about the relationship between terrorism, insurgency, and extremism indeed gained traction in both policy and academic debates after 9/11 and is reproduced in much of the literature on counter-terrorism in Nigeria.³⁷ Thus, several accepted claims about the relationship between these concepts and in these related fields – such

³² Nigeria’s post-independence years, beginning from 1966, include experiences of civil war, military coups, and different military governments continuing until the return to democratic rule in 1999. As Ake notes, the military era was marked by arbitrary power, and sovereignty was largely determined by force and coercion. Thus, framing of the activities of the Movement for Democracy in Nigeria as introducing a ‘political dimension’ to terrorism highlights the positioning of an equivalent (or threat) to military rule (that is, democracy). See, C. Ake. *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Washington. D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1996)

³³ Se, C.W. Ogbondah, “Political repression in Nigeria, 1993-1998: a critical examination of one aspect of the perils of military dictatorship,” *African Spectrum*. 35, 2 (2000), 231-42

³⁴ NACTEST 2016, p.13

³⁵ A. Olaniyan and L. Asuelime, “Boko Haram insurgency and the widening of cleavages in Nigeria.” *African Security*. 7, 2 (2014), 91-109

³⁶ NSS 2014, pp.32

³⁷ See, for example, D.M Jones and M.L.R. Smith, “Whose hearts and whose minds? The curious case of global counter-insurgency,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*. 33, 1 (2010), 81-121; D. Byman, “Counterinsurgency and the war on terror,” *International Security*. 31, 2 (2006), 79-115; B. Price, “Targeting top terrorists: how leadership decapitation contributes to counterterrorism,” *International Security*. (2012), 9-46; F.C Onuoha, “The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria’s Boko Haram crisis explained.”

as the notion of small wars, emphasis of winning hearts and minds, and processes of radicalisation – are frequently taken for granted. However, while the NSS defines ‘terrorism in Nigeria as a form of insurgency’ (a tactic),³⁸ the PCNI provides a (contrasting) developmental interpretation: ‘Boko Haram transformed from a group of radical Salafi proselytisers to a terrorist organisation engaged in fearsome insurgency.’³⁹

The above ambiguity illustrates the flexibility of this representation and contestability of the claims underpinning it. Specifically, assumptions about the linear development of terrorism or about the causal power of ideas – commonly invoked in analyses of radicalisation – belies the point that extremism, including its non-violent form, may not necessarily lead to terrorism or insurgency as this discourse suggests. Yet this presupposition produces certain conceptual and political problems – and implication – worth considering in turn. First, is that it flattens out important nuances and boundaries between various concepts, including the different forms of extremism or radicalism, and insurgency which potentially expands the focus of counter-terrorism. As Smith, Stohl, and Al-Gharbi observe, the attributes framing extremism, terrorism, and insurgency, are functionally equivalent,⁴⁰ and highlights the political activity of mobilising these categories to designate and manage specific threats.

Second, it poses crucial questions about the appropriate responses and responders to terrorism and, more importantly, about the ends of counter-terrorism itself. The NSS, in this regard, notes that ‘military approach alone cannot adequately counter ideology-based terrorist insurgency, the government has adopted a soft approach to counter-terrorism.’⁴¹ Such an emphasis on the inadequacy of militaristic or coercive measures, as well as the incorporation of other development-oriented measures reflect this broadness or expansion of state

³⁸ NSS 2014, pp.32-33

³⁹ PCNI 2015, p.138; see also, p.13, 26; NSS 2014, p.9

⁴⁰ B. K. Smith, M. Stohl, and M. al-Gharbi. “Discourses on countering violent extremism: the strategic interplay between fear and security after 9/11/.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 12, 1 (2019), 151-168

⁴¹ NSS 2014, pp.32

intervention.⁴² Kilcullen argued along this line too, though in relation to counter-insurgency, noting that the War on Terrorism increasingly obscures the nature of insurgency assumed to reside broadly within military and strategic purview through the synchronization of security, development and governance.⁴³ The same could be said about counter-terrorism approaches in Nigeria, as we have seen. Moreover, the notion of integrating softer or population-centred approaches, as Gilmore show, is not too far from the idea of ‘winning hearts and minds’ in traditional COIN discourse, further entrenching state power or presence.⁴⁴

The third presupposition is concerning the borderless and faceless features of new terrorism. On the one hand, borderless points to the geographical reach of so-called new terrorist groups, making terrorism increasingly difficult to address within a delineated state boundary. On the other hand, faceless suggest a certain degree of cowardice and the anonymity of new terrorist groups which makes such threats difficult to identify and address. As the NACTEST puts it: ‘the current threat posed by Boko Haram, unlike its predecessors, has remained faceless and have no defined frontiers, making it difficult to contain.’⁴⁵ These claims are also espoused in several studies on counter-terrorism in Nigeria. Onapajo, Uzodike, and Whetho, for example, argued that there are indeed transnational and international links to the operations of Boko Haram, and as such, demands an international response.⁴⁶ Weerartne explored the de-centralization of Boko Haram, shedding light on the group’s loosed organisational structures and the increasing horizontal affiliations to other terrorist groups, including Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.⁴⁷

The foregoing claims are often legitimated through references to the advancement in modern technology and communication, a global terrorist network seeking to invent an Islamic

⁴² See, Eugene Eji, “Rethinking Nigeria’s counterterrorism strategy.”

⁴³ D. Kilcullen, “Countering global insurgency,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*. 28, 4 (2005), 597-619

⁴⁴ J. Gilmore, “A kinder, gentler counter-terrorism: counter-insurgency, human security and the War on Terror,”

⁴⁵ NACTEST 2016, p.2

⁴⁶ H. Onapajo, U.O Uzodike, and A. Whetho, “Boko haram terrorism in Nigeria: the international dimension.”

⁴⁷ S. Weeraratne, “Theorizing the expansion of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria,”

‘community’ that transcends nation-state borders, a shared anti-western sentiment, among others.⁴⁸ Yet, several problems can be identified with regard to this presupposition of borderless and faceless features. For one, the NSS describes Nigeria as ‘one of the countries in Africa in which terrorism has taken root,’⁴⁹ implying a foreign or an endogenous origin. Contra the NSS, however, the NACTEST notes that new terrorist groups emerged from Borno state in north-eastern Nigeria, which suggests its local origin.⁵⁰ It is also important to highlight that the Maitatsine sect referred to above, traversed the territorial borders of Nigeria and its neighbours especially Cameroon. As Isichei explain, the leader of the movement originally migrated from Cameroon to north-eastern Nigeria and the group’s activities spread across the Lake Chad Basin.⁵¹ All of this suggest, on the one hand, that much of what is represented as ‘new’ was exhibited by other manifestations of terrorism or political violence in Nigeria. At the same time, it points to the functions of the representation of (new) terrorism as borderless and faceless.

This ultimately contributes to justifying various counter-terrorism measures both within and across state boundary, including interventions into new spaces such as cyberspace, and profiling of individuals or groups deemed dangerous.⁵² As the NACTEST indicates, the Police and the Department of State Security will store and use biometric data, while the National Identity Management Commission will ensure that all Nigerians are identified through biometric data capture and at every opportunity well ahead of any requirements.⁵³ ‘A major step in this direction’, it continues, ‘will be the identification and profiling of suspected

⁴⁸ See, for example, M. Stohl, “Old myths, new fantasies and the enduring realities of terrorism.”

⁴⁹ NSS 2014, p.14

⁵⁰ NACTEST 2016, p.13

⁵¹ E. Isichei, “The Maitatsine rising in Nigeria 1980-85: a revolt of the disinherited.”

⁵² NACTEST 2016, p.27

⁵³ This notion of anticipatory response or preventive strategies, indeed, cuts across academic and legal debates. Badalich notes that the redefinition of “anticipatory responses” by states against terrorist threats, from doctrines of ‘imminent threats’ and ‘concrete threats’ to flexible and broad conceptualisations, can be located in state practices within the ‘war on terror’ discourse. This allows for the broad application of counter measures without providing convincing evidence about the possibility and imminency of terrorist attacks. See, V. Badalich, “The war against vague threats: the redefinitions of imminent threat and anticipatory use of force.” *Security Dialogue*. (2020), 1-18

terrorists and their sympathisers.’⁵⁴ Similarly, the Terrorism Prevention Act 2013 (revised) grants essential powers to state security agencies ‘to conduct all forms of searches on individuals and structures, intelligence gathering and detention of suspects.’⁵⁵ This does not only empower these state agencies, such processes of generating and using personal data could potentially lead to a serious breach of human rights. In addition to this, such claims about the lack of locality of terrorism or the faceless-ness of terrorist groups may hinder other possible course of action. It is often assumed that ‘even if negotiation was considered a possible solution to resolving terrorism, the multi-faceted and transnational character of terrorism and terrorists ostensibly makes difficult for such course of action.’⁵⁶

4.2. Constructing the causes of terrorism: Ideological or theological, socio-psychological, and inequality

Section 4.1 explored the framing of specific threats as new terrorism in Nigeria, along with a range of problems and implications of this representation. Building on this, the following section examines constructions of causes of terrorism in Nigeria which isolates a range of factors including theological or ideological, socio-psychological, and other root causes such as poverty, marginalization, poor governance, and multiculturalism. This heterogenous designation of the causes of terrorism, again, suggest its underlying flexibility and contestability. Employing the textual technique of predication and presupposition, I examine these discursive claims to make visible certain attending contradiction and implication.

⁵⁴ NACTEST 2016, p.27

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.26

⁵⁶ H. Toros, “We don’t negotiate with terrorists!’: Legitimacy and complexity in terrorist conflicts.” *Security Dialogue*. 39, 4 (2008), 407-426

4.2.1. Predication

As with Section 4.1.1 above, the NACTEST offers a useful entry into this discussion in that it refers to specific theological and socio-psychological drivers, and the wider root causes of terrorism in Nigeria:

...With links to other global Islamic groups like al- Qaeda and al-Shabaab, the group [Boko Haram] is considered to be genuinely international in scope and, like its foreign affiliates, **driven by particularly violent and extremist Islamist beliefs**. Clearly, **the threat from global Islamist terrorism is real and involves a variety of groups, networks and individuals blinded by extremist beliefs** and determined to cause indiscriminate mass casualties, regardless of age, sex, race and nationality, or the religion of the victims.⁵⁷

The predication of ‘links to other global Islamic groups’, or ‘driven by particularly violent and extremist beliefs’ clearly construct terrorism in Nigeria as driven by a global social movement involving different terrorist groups held together by a unifying extremist ideology. Moreover, these individuals, groups, or networks involved in terrorism are described as ‘blinded by extremist beliefs,’ reinforcing notions of the theological and socio-psychological causes of terrorism. Closely related to this theological and socio-psychological narrative is the assumption about the process of radicalisation, which problematically links certain shared or ‘internalised’ beliefs to violent acts. According to the NACTEST:

Radicalization has been the main factor behind acts of faith-based terrorism in Nigeria. To address this trend with a view to its reversal, the CTC-ONSA will develop measures towards counter radicalization and de-radicalization of extreme ideologies. The Government will carry out effective monitoring of the radicalization processes and its indicators, systematic identification of the highly vulnerable groups for assimilation into the society, and launching of anti-radicalization campaigns.⁵⁸

With radicalisation explicitly described as ‘the main factor behind acts of faith-based terrorism in Nigeria’, the aim of counter-terrorism thus involves preventing violence through targeting

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.2

⁵⁸ NACTEST 2016, p.37; see also PCVE Country Report 2017, p.6

specific beliefs, individuals, and groups deemed dangerous or susceptible to extremism and violence. The PCVE Policy Framework provides further intertextualities in relation to these theological and socio-psychological drivers:

Young persons are vulnerable to the **drivers of violent extremism** and oftentimes are also victims of violent extremism. Violent extremist groups recruit children and kidnap children, forcing them to commit violent acts. These children and young adults are offered gifts, group support and the lure of adventure. Separated from their parents, these young persons are denied access to education and life's opportunities. **We cannot afford to allow this trend** as our future can only be guaranteed through the youth. That is why we must **break the chain of recruitment** now and ensure that children are protected from the consequences of violent extremism.⁵⁹

As the above implies, 'breaking the chain of recruitment' signifies the supposed linear connection between radicalism and violent actions or terrorism. This discourse of the theological or ideological drivers of terrorism also constructs young persons or youths as target of radicalisation and, as such, a significant focus of counter-terrorism. Similar perspectives are reassembled in another important – gendered – way in the PCVE Policy Framework:

As wives, sisters and mothers, policy makers or law enforcement officers, women have a strategic role to play in the treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders. We know that mothers can play an emotive role in reaching out to extremist offenders to change their violent behaviour. **Women's roles in homes and communities can pick up early signs of radicalisation in young persons.** This insight is also relevant for counter messaging to break up the cycle of radicalisation. We will tap into this insight in designing effective prevention programmes.⁶⁰

While the above constructs women as strategic actors, rather than as victims of terrorist violence or suicide bombers, they are still defined as intrinsically emotive given certain inherent attributes – including caring and compassionate – which seemingly enables them to 'pick up early signs of radicalisation in young persons.' On top of this, the NACTEST registers that in 'responding to ideological and extremist beliefs that justify the use of violence are a

⁵⁹ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, pp.17-18; see also NACTEST 2016, p.10

⁶⁰ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, p.18

priority...government will leverage on the capacities of institutions like hospitals and schools to de-radicalise persons who may not have reached the tipping point in the radicalization ladder.’⁶¹ The foregoing narratives about ideological and socio-psychological causes of terrorism reinforces much of the assumptions about new terrorism discussed in Section 4.1.

Besides theological and socio-psychological factors, other wider structural problems such as poverty, marginalization, and multiculturalism are also described as possible causes of terrorism in Nigeria. The PCVE Policy Framework described this in the following way:

The **push factors are the structural conditions** that make an environment more conducive to the growth of violent extremism, such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, social exclusion, health, other socio-economic factors (although not in isolation) and the role of governance.⁶²

As this suggest, certain root causes provide ground for the formulation of extremist views or behaviours which potentially lead to terrorist acts, or violence. Similarly, the NACTEST states:

Another area of action to prevent terrorism lies in addressing **structural problems in the Country that may contribute to providing willing hands for recruitment by terrorist groups**. Governments (Federal, State and Local) will aggressively tackle structures, which give vent to **social systems that exploit and impoverish individuals** in their formative years. As young adults, these people are neither educated nor possess any skills to enable them to integrate fully into the society. Thus, promotion of good governance, education and economic prosperity will be emphasized and aggressively implemented at all levels.⁶³

Here too, the predication of ‘providing willing hands for recruitment by terrorist groups’ designates poverty and marginalisation as important drivers of terrorism in Nigeria. At the same time, this constructs certain groups as highly vulnerable to extremism and terrorism – and as target of counter-terrorism – due to their relatively disadvantaged backgrounds. Such groups include communities in north-east Nigeria, young adults, and Koranic school pupils

⁶¹ NACTEST 2016, p.20

⁶² PCVE Policy Framework 2017, p.15

⁶³ NACTEST 2016, P.19

known as al-majirai who are described as ‘products of a dysfunctional system and potential terrorists.’⁶⁴ Interestingly, another (constructed) cause of terrorism beyond theological, socio-psychological, and socio-economic inequality, involves Nigeria’s external relationship with Western countries described as major targets of Islamist terrorism:

Several factors are responsible for the creation and nurturing of terrorism in Nigeria by individuals and groups. They could be categorized under economic, political and social reasons. Nigeria is perceived as a potential terrorist interest area as expressed in a televised Osama Bin Laden video message. Furthermore, Nigeria is the gateway to the strategically important Gulf of Guinea from where Western countries especially the USA draw a huge amount of their energy requirements. **The close economic ties with USA could be a major reason for singling out Nigeria as a country ripe for a Jihad.** With the Salafist ideological teaching that propagates western civilisation as evil, the predominantly large Muslim population is cited as a fertile ground for recruitment.⁶⁵

In this case, Nigeria’s economic ties with the US and other external relationships with western countries, is described as a major reason for terrorism in Nigeria. This also reflect the above-discussed notion of ideological and socio-psychological drivers of terrorism in Nigeria, as well as the underlying connotations of anti-western sentiments which problematically links Islam – or a form of it – to violent extremism or positions it against certain western values especially liberal democracy. Such reference to Nigeria’s ‘large Muslim population as a fertile ground for [terrorist] recruitment’ indirectly represent its multicultural society (or part thereof) as a potential factor, and in so doing, position its Muslim ‘community’ as an important target of counter-terrorism.

4.2.2. Presupposition

The above-discussed predication illustrates constructions of causes of terrorism in Nigeria underscored by a range of factors and assumptions, posing crucial implications for counter-

⁶⁴ NACTEST 2016, p.19

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp.13-14

terrorism policy and for security in Nigeria. In this sub-section, I examine two presuppositions about the causes of terrorism in Nigeria including its ideological or socio-psychological drivers, as well as other structural problems especially marginalization and poverty.

The first presupposition refers to religious and socio-psychological factors as responsible for terrorism in Nigeria. This often represents a particular form of (radical) Islam or Islamic beliefs as a direct cause of violence. It portrays certain Islamic ideology or beliefs (Salafism, for example) as inherently violent, driving ‘at-risk’ individuals or groups to commit terrorist acts. As the NACTEST writes, ‘Boko Haram is linked to other global Islamist terrorist groups and is particularly blinded by violent and extremist Islamist beliefs.’⁶⁶ In addition, the text describes ‘Salafi religious teachings as promoting anti-western sentiments, thus, providing a fertile ground for terrorism in Nigeria.’⁶⁷ Thus, portraying Salafi beliefs as fundamentally opposed to mainstream western values (including democratic norms) and as intrinsically intolerant. Furthermore, this discourse points to notions of a shared ideological and psychological disposition by individuals and groups who commit or support terrorism. This expands the analytical scope by integrating cognitive, social networks, and religious affinity to this composition of ideological factors.

Similar narratives are frequently rehashed in much terrorism and radicalisation scholarship.⁶⁸ Onuoha, for example, refers to Salafi radicalism as an important driver of terrorism in Nigeria and the major ideology of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram.⁶⁹ More broadly, Sageman’s work around radicalisation and terrorism is frequently cited in this debate about the theological and socio-psychological causes of political violence and terrorism.⁷⁰ He

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.2

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ J. Gunning and R. Jackson, “What’s so ‘religious’ about ‘religious terrorism.’”

⁶⁹ F.C Onuoha, “The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria’s Boko Haram crisis explained.”

⁷⁰ See, M. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: terror networks in the twenty-first century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p.126

argues that extremism is triggered by other factors (apart from ideological), especially the collective influence of other people who share and are willing to enforce similar radical beliefs.⁷¹ Moreover, as discussed in Section 4.1, assumptions about the ideological or socio-psychological causes of terrorism invokes a limiting notion of radicalisation, represented either as a linear or complex process which ultimately leads to violence.⁷² As stated in the NACTEST, ‘the Government will carry out effective monitoring of the radicalization processes and its indicators, systematic identification of the highly vulnerable groups for assimilation into the society.’⁷³ Likewise the NACTEST, the PCVE indicates that ‘picking up early signs is significant to breaking the cycle of radicalization.’⁷⁴

Such claims about Islamic radicalism as a prominent cause of terrorism in Nigeria are seriously limiting for a number of reasons. For one, they ignore other (non-religious) forms of radicalism and essentially equates a particular strand of Islam, and Islamist groups, with violence. In so doing, this produce various ‘suspect categories’ or targets of counter-terrorism, including the Muslim community, young persons, and other disadvantaged groups considered ‘at-risk-of-being-risky’.⁷⁵ The PCVE Policy Framework describes thus: ‘young persons are vulnerable to the drivers of violent extremism and oftentimes are also victims, as violent extremist groups recruit or kidnap children, forcing them to commit violent acts.’⁷⁶ Such a construction of youth vulnerability takes for granted questions of individual agency, as well as the effects of state violence in radicalization processes.⁷⁷ Represented thus, however, it permits

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Debates around radicalisation commonly comprise of the theological or ideological, socio-psychological, and wider structural drivers of radicalisation. Also, discussions about the relationship –and distinction– between cognitive and behavioural, or violent and non-violent forms of radicalisation has been adequately covered. This is, however, outside the scope of my thesis and contributes marginally to this current chapter.

⁷³ NACTEST 2016, p.20

⁷⁴ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, p.18

⁷⁵ C. Heath-Kelly, “Reinventing prevention or exposing the gap? False positives in UK terrorism governance and the quest for pre-emption.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 5, 1 (2012), 69-87

⁷⁶ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, pp.17-18

⁷⁷ See, for instance, Hakeem Onapajo and Kemal Ozden, “Non-military approach against terrorism in Nigeria: deradicalization strategies and challenges in countering Boko Haram.” *Security Journal*. (2020)

a range of interventions into the lives of young people ostensibly to prevent violence. A clear illustration of this is the integration of ‘youth security’ into Nigeria’s National Security Strategy, framed as a way to ‘overcome the challenges, including extremist indoctrination, that expose our youth to deviant tendencies and negative outcomes.’⁷⁸ The continuing police brutality on Nigerians especially the youth, leading to widespread protest across the country in 2020, has been linked to problems of policing and counter-terrorism strategies in Nigeria.⁷⁹

Furthermore, discourses of extremism and radicalisation leads to another questionable assumption about the role of women as ‘strategic actors’ in counter-terrorism efforts. The PCVE Policy Framework writes that ‘mothers can play an emotive role in reaching out to extremist offenders to change their violent behaviour.’⁸⁰ In other words, ‘women’s roles in homes and communities can help pick up early signs of radicalisation in young persons.’⁸¹ This highlights an important gendered dimension of Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse, illustrating how women are constituted as ‘emotive’ subjects to reinforce various accepted claims about (new) terrorism and counter-terrorism. On the one hand, it links women to the private realm and domestic affairs, such as taking care of the home and identifying signs of radicalisation. And on the other, contributes to the women and children connection, represented as interlinked and similar.⁸² Such representations of women, in part, serves to reinforce claims

⁷⁸ NSS 2019, p.51

⁷⁹ See, for example, Nigeria’s #EndSars protests also concern counter-terrorism. *Institute for Security Studies*. Available online from: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/nigerias-endsars-protests-also-concern-counter-terrorism> [Accessed 07/6/2021].

⁸⁰ NSS 2019, p.18

⁸¹ NSS 2019, p.18

⁸² Representations of women in (counter-)terrorism discourse often shift from the notion of women as referents (alongside children) to the portrayal of women suicide bombers as pawns used by terrorist groups, lacking individual intent or agency. These narratives have been critiqued, especially by feminist scholars. Sjoberg and Gentry, for example, outlined three narratives that typically forge women participation in political or armed violence, in academic literature on political violence. These include women as ‘mother,’ women as ‘monster,’ and women as ‘whore’. The narrative of women as ‘mother,’ that is, emotional, caring, and compassionate being, illustrates the gendered dimension of the discourse examined in this thesis. Specifically, women are constituted as an element in the maintenance of the status-quo, and as such, a problem-solving mechanism with regard to the counter/de-radicalisation of vulnerable ‘young people.’ More broadly, this reproduces the core assumptions that characterise this thesis of “new terrorism” especially the religious causes of terrorism. See, for example, Laura Sjoberg and Gentry C., *Mothers, monsters, whores: women’s violence in global politics*. (London: Zed, 2007),

about the religious driver of terrorism and radicalisation process. Also, such misogynistic narratives contribute to reinforcing existing inequalities against women in the Nigerian society.⁸³ As Ajayi found in a study, the disproportionate impact of terrorism on women in Nigeria (including problems of displacement and abuses) has been notably ignored in state policies.⁸⁴

The second presupposition points to different root causes including poverty, marginalization, multiculturalism or ethno-religious diversity, and Nigeria's external relations, as possible causes of terrorism. These root causes, though, are not isolated from the above-discussed ideological drivers or other 'pull factors',⁸⁵ instead they are represented as providing ground for radicalisation and terrorism. As described in the PCVE Policy Framework, structural conditions make an environment more conducive to the growth of violent extremism.⁸⁶ This includes unemployment, poverty, marginalization, and the role of governance [or lack thereof].

The link between poverty and terrorism is obviously a contested one, as there is not enough evidence to suggest that poverty directly leads to terrorism in Nigeria (and elsewhere).⁸⁷ In the study carried out by Anneli and Botha, for example, they show that economic –and religious– reasons are not significant factors responsible for participation in terrorist activities in Nigeria.⁸⁸ Though poverty and inequality could indirectly cause violence, this may not necessarily be connected to religious motivation or other forms of radicalism.⁸⁹

Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, "Introduction: gender and everyday/intimate terrorism." *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 8, 3 (2015), 358-361; Katherine Allison, "Feminism and the war on terror." *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 6, 2 (2013), 320-322

⁸³ See, for example, Titilope F. Ajayi, "Women, internal displacement and the Boko haram conflict: broadening the debate." *African Security*. 13, 2 (2020), 171-194

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, p.15

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ See, for example, A. Botha and M. Abdile, "Reality versus perception: toward understanding Boko haram in Nigeria;" M. Sageman, *Understanding terror networks*, pp.93, 97, 110, 115

⁸⁸ A. Botha and M. Abdile, "Reality versus perception: toward understanding Boko haram in Nigeria."

⁸⁹ M. Sageman, *Understanding terror networks*.

That said, assumptions concerning the root causes of terrorism further expand the aim of counter-terrorism to include issues of governance and development, targeting specific groups and communities deemed to be susceptible to extremism and violence (see Chapter 5 for constructions of ungoverned spaces). Specifically, north-east Nigeria is isolated as an outlier, leading to increased military/state presence in this region. The counter-insurgency operations codenamed Lafiya Doyle (inaugurated in 2015) – in which the military command and control centre was moved to Maiduguri in Borno state – has been reported to contribute to human rights violations and other related freedoms in the north-east.⁹⁰

What is more, the NACTEST also identifies ‘the close economic ties between Nigeria and different western countries, especially the USA, as a major reason for terrorism in Nigeria.’⁹¹ This is because, it adds, ‘the Salafist ideological teaching that propagates western civilisation as evil, the predominantly large Muslim population is cited as a fertile ground for recruitment.’⁹² In essence, Nigeria’s external relations with western countries and its (ethno-)religiously diverse society encourages the spread of extremism and terrorism in Nigeria. This of course implies that Islamist groups or Muslim communities in Nigeria are fundamentally against anti-western values, or hold opposing views which makes them susceptible, tolerant, or supportive of extremist views (including from outside Nigeria).

In sum, the preceding section explored constructions of causes of terrorism which isolate religious, socio-psychological, and other structural factors as either direct or possible drivers of terrorism in Nigeria. This clearly reinforce the idea of new terrorism examined in Section 4.1. In the preceding paragraphs, moreover, I identified certain problems with each of these (constructed) causes of terrorism. Thus, the final section below examines the ways in which the threats posed by (new) terrorism is represented as severe, global, and long-lasting.

⁹⁰ The Guardian, army denies alleged killings by troops on Kaduna-Abuja Highway. *Guardian news*. Available online from: <https://guardian.ng/tag/operation-lafiya-doyle/> [Accessed 10 August 2021].

⁹¹ NACTEST 2016, pp.13-14

⁹² Ibid

4.3. Constructing the threat of terrorism: severe, global, long-lasting

I began in Section 4.1. by exploring the presence and framing of specific threats within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse, identifying notions about the newness of terrorism, blurred boundary with (violent) extremism and insurgency, and its faceless and borderless characteristics. In Section 4.2., I explored constructions of causes of new terrorism to identify the theological, socio-psychological, and structural factors described as drivers of terrorism in Nigeria. This final section looks at the ways in which terrorism is constructed as posing a significant and worrying threat, often, placed above other security and social problems in Nigeria. This construction of the threat posed by terrorism specifically represent it as severe, global, and enduring.

4.3.1. Predication

The NACTEST provides a useful example of constructions of the threat of terrorism as severe and, accordingly, lethal:

Terrorism is the most serious security threat confronting Nigeria today...the acts, which were hitherto considered as mere violent crimes, have claimed many lives and have been on the increase in the recent past. The **current intensity** clearly points to an intention to create fear among the people and undermine the government.⁹³

The predication of ‘the most serious security threat confronting Nigeria today,’ conjures ideas about the seriousness of the danger posed by terrorism while, at the same time, ignore other possible, and equally significant, security issues. Such a reference to ‘an intention to create fear among the people and undermine the government’, which mostly signify the potential vulnerabilities to terrorist violence, further serves to reinforce this notion of severity. Moreover, this idea of the severity of terrorist violence is underpinned by assumptions about the intention

⁹³ NACTEST 2016, p.11

of terrorist groups, which is indeed open to interrogation. Furthermore, in describing the gravity of the threat posed by terrorism to Nigeria, the NACTEST writes that ‘the phenomenon lends itself to reckless and indiscriminate use of violence and has assumed a level of sophistication that has seen incidents rise in profile.’⁹⁴ It adds:

Using the relatively hostile and sometimes impenetrable swathe North-East as their base, the Boko Haram in the past couple of years have carried out relentless savage attacks on both soft and high-profile targets in northern parts of the country. **The severity of the Boko Haram insurgency** is underscored by captured territories, pillage, mass abductions and indoctrination.⁹⁵

This draws on several related elements, including the potential targets, scope and aims of terrorism, in constructing terrorism as significantly threatening and severe. On the one hand, references to ‘the reckless and indiscriminate use of violence on soft and high-profile targets,’ as well as the rise in terrorist attacks, suggests a wide range of possible target and the recurrent nature of such attacks, making it even more worrying. On the other hand, the severity of terrorist violence – or threat thereof – is signified by the ‘captured territories, pillage, mass abductions and indoctrination’ which suggests its alarming aims and objectives. Bringing these claims together, that is, about the widening scope of terrorism, its far-reaching target and infinite aims, serves to construct the threat posed by terrorism as increasingly severe.

What is more, assumptions about the possible use of chemical, biological, radioactive, and nuclear weapons equally contribute to this construction of terrorism as severe or deadly. As the NSS indicates, ‘terrorist groups, such as ISIS, are believed to have sought to possess CBRNE weapons.’ Also, it adds that ‘Boko Haram terrorists’ affiliation to ISIS and their willingness to use any deadly weapon at their disposal increases the possibility of a CBRNE attack in the future, thereby underscoring the need for a counter-strategy.’⁹⁶ Boko Haram’s

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.II

⁹⁵ NSS 2014, p.14

⁹⁶ NSS 2019, p.32; see also, CTC Report 2018, p.33-34

assumed affiliation to other Islamist terrorist groups ‘believed to have sought to possess lethal weapons’ – which reflects the above-discussed assumption about the borderless features of new terrorism – is drawn upon to reinvigorate claims about the severity or lethality of terrorism in Nigeria. This idea of severity specifically entails the means or forms of attack, rather than the above-discussed scope, target, and purposes of terrorism. Nevertheless, this construction also rests on assumptions about the intentions of terrorist groups.

Further illustrations of constructions of the threat posed by terrorism can be gleaned from presidential speeches and official press releases. In 2014, President Jonathan remarked in a speech at the 69th United Nations General Assembly meeting that, “Today’s terrorism in Nigeria is vicious and aimless. Its consequences are extremely agonizing, marked by a tendency to annihilate victims, destroy infrastructure and properties.”⁹⁷ Importantly, ‘today’s terrorism’ in this context, reflects the distinction between old and new terrorism. The predication of ‘extremely agonizing [threat], marked by the tendency to annihilate and cause destruction’, signifies the seriousness or severity of terrorism. The Defence Headquarters recycled this idea in the following way: “citizens are advised to be wary of such terrorist threats which seeks to perpetuate fear in the minds of the populace, through malevolent attacks in such places as parks, worship centres and recreation spots.”⁹⁸ Arguably, this implies that such new terrorist threats seek to kill as many, and frighten as many too, re-emphasising its indiscriminate target, objectives, means, and the intention of terrorist groups.

A second idea regarding the globality of terrorist threats is embedded in, and reproduced through, this counter-terrorism discourse which constructs the threat posed by terrorism as global, far-reaching, and transnational. The NACTEST notes that: “since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, in the United States of America by al-Qaeda, the

⁹⁷ Address by President Jonathan United Nations General Assembly 69th session, 2014. Available online from: <https://gadebate.un.org/en/69/nigeria> [Accessed 10 April 2020]

⁹⁸ Boko Haram lures people together to bomb. *DefenceHq*. December 21, 2015

phenomenon has assumed a **global dimension**. No country, including Nigeria, is immune to such terrorist attacks.”⁹⁹ A similar notion about the global aspects of the threat posed by violent extremism and terrorism was described in the PCVE Policy Framework:

There is urgent need to sustain the momentum in preventing and countering not only the insurgency of Boko Haram but all other manifestations of violent extremism in Nigeria. It is equally important to recognise a very worrisome aspect of violent extremism, namely: **the global nature of its spread**.¹⁰⁰

As this suggests, the problem of violent extremism in Nigeria is significantly troubling especially due to its global reach. Apart from references to ideological elements underpinning this construction of terrorism as posing a global threat, other financial and symbolic elements are drawn upon in a speech by Ayodele Oke, the director-general of the National Intelligence Agency of Nigeria, in 2015:

There were no surprises when Boko Haram pledge allegiance to ISIS. This affords the sect a propaganda boost but could **further globalise the conflict**. By pledging allegiance to IS, BH has highlighted its intention to engage in even more gruesome tactics. Boko Haram could also be **targeting financial assistance from ISIS**.¹⁰¹

This describes alliances between different terrorist groups as indeed a predictable outcome given a set of reasons, including financial and operational goals, which reinforces the idea of a loosed global network of terrorist groups unconstrained by domestic structures. In 2015, Nigeria’s national security advisor, Sambo Dasuki, described the threat posed by terrorism in a speech at Chatham House: “the real and existential threat posed by Boko Haram is perhaps a millennial challenge. However, how we approach it will have immediate as well as

⁹⁹ Ibid, p.6

¹⁰⁰ PCVE 2017, p.9

¹⁰¹ Update on security in Nigeria and the campaign against Boko Haram, *Atlantic Council*, 2015. Available online from: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/unused/webcasts/update-on-security-in-nigeria-and-the-campaign-against-boko-haram/> [Accessed 10 April 2020]

generational consequences.”¹⁰² This construction of the threat of terrorism as ‘a millennial challenge,’ or references to ‘generational consequences,’ reproduce the temporal claim of new terrorism, as well as claims about its global dimension. As the NACTEST puts it:

Intelligence is vital towards countering their threats. Successful counter-terrorist operations depend upon the collection and exploitation of information and intelligence that helps identify terrorist networks, including their membership, finances, intentions and modes of operation.¹⁰³

A third, and final, theme describes (new) terrorism as posing an enduring or long-standing threat. This often entail representing such terrorism as an integral part of everyday life and, as such, justifies the routinising of security practices and interventions. Here, I turn to the Handbook on Safety and Security Tips which states that:

Growing acts of terrorism has become part of our daily lives. Consequently, the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) developed, as part of the National Counter Terrorism Strategy, a National Counter Terrorism Threat Level System which is aimed at alerting and initiating appropriate responses from Security Agencies and citizens alike. In order to complement this system, ONSA deemed it necessary to prepare a National Handbook of Safety and Security Tips for the public, government and private entities.¹⁰⁴

This construction of the threat posed by terrorism as mundane and commonplace produce assumptions about a continuous condition of fear, demanding the routinization of security measures to monitor, respond to, and manage emerging risks. A similar notion was articulated in the NACTEST and, even more explicitly, integrate the above-discussed claims about the severe and global aspects of the threat posed by new terrorism:

Nigerians should be aware and come to terms with the fact that **it is a phenomenon that would require long-term measures to contain. What is happening now is not an anomaly.** Rather, it is an unfolding reality of the twenty-first century, which has witnessed advancements in

¹⁰² Nigeria’s security: insurgency, elections and coordinating responses to multiple threats, *Chatham House*, 22 January 2015 Available online from: https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20150122NigeriaSecurityQA_0.pdf. Last accessed: 15 July 2021.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.26

¹⁰⁴ Handbook on safety and security tips 2016, p.i

technology and transformed the world into a massive global village. It is only our collective effort and resolve as a people to come to terms with this phenomenon and our determination to fight it that **will keep the situation at tolerable levels.**¹⁰⁵

The predication of ‘a phenomenon that would require long-term measures to contain,’ describes terrorism as enduring to justify continuous state intervention. In another sense, such a representation of terrorism as a predictable outcome – of recent transformations in the twenty-first century – unsettles the idea of new terrorism as significantly different or never-seen-before, as discussed in Section 4.1. That said, this construction of terrorism as posing an enduring threat, produces contrasting ambitions of counter-terrorism. On the one hand, risk management is described as the objective of counter-terrorism, rather than defeating or ending terrorism. This contrasts significantly with other stated ambitions, including to defeat or end terrorism in Nigeria. For example, during an interview in 2015, Buhari stated that:

no matter how long it takes, we will reclaim every inch of Nigerian territory from Boko Haram...as a government we know that it would be a long and bruising struggle... Nigeria has made progress in **our resolve to defeat Boko Haram** whose capacity to launch attacks has been degraded.¹⁰⁶

4.3.2. Presupposition

I discuss three core presuppositions in this section regarding the threats posed by new terrorism, represented as severe, global, and protracted. Each of these representations, indeed, are underpinned by a set of questionable assumptions and problems discussed in what follows.

The first presupposition points to the increased lethality or severity of the threat posed by terrorism in Nigeria (and beyond). This is underpinned by assumptions about the intentions of terrorist groups to use WMDs, suicide attacks, and multiple or indiscriminate targets, making

¹⁰⁵ NACTEST 2016, p.10; see also, p.20

¹⁰⁶ Buhari says legislation that curbs US military aid is abetting Boko haram insurgency. *Atlantic Council*. July 22, 2015. Available online from: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/nigerian-president-slams-us-law/> [Accessed 10 April 2020].

it extremely dangerous. President Jonathan in his new year address in 2015 described ‘today’s terrorism’ as characteristically ‘vicious and aimless...extremely agonizing, marked by a tendency to annihilate victims, destroy infrastructure and properties.’¹⁰⁷ Even more succinctly, the NACTEST writes that ‘suicide attacks were never a part of the calculation whenever the issue of terrorism was discussed [in Nigeria].’¹⁰⁸ Another purportedly significant marker involves the use of chemical, biological, radioactive, and nuclear weapons, as the NSS suggests: ‘Boko Haram terrorists’ affiliation to ISIS and their willingness to use any deadly weapon at their disposal increases the possibility of a CRBNE attack in the future.’¹⁰⁹

Such claims are indeed recounted in many scholarly analyses of counter-terrorism in Nigeria, and elsewhere.¹¹⁰ Onuoha, for example, describe the qualitative increase of terrorism violence as a new dimension of terrorism in Nigeria.¹¹¹ In a study conducted by Lunch and Ryder, which analysed 129 articles published in the *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism Journal*, they found that ‘the increase in violence or increased causalities of such violence is most linked to the category of ‘new terrorism’.’¹¹² To be sure, there has been a significant rise in the level of attacks and expansion of terrorist violence in Nigeria, especially since 2009. Figures by the Nigerian state puts this at 20,000 deaths and about 9 million people affected by the violence

¹⁰⁷ Address by President Jonathan United Nations General Assembly 69th session, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ NACTEST 2016, p.13

¹⁰⁹ NSS 2019, p.32

¹¹⁰ Laqueur notes that new terrorism is different in character, aiming at the destruction of society and the elimination of large sections of the population. And, as opposed to ‘old’ terrorism which, in Jenkin’s much cited formulation, ‘wants a lot of people watching and a few dead,’ this new terrorism seeks to frighten and kill as many as possible, making it highly severe. This assumption is further kindled by the possibility (or intentionality) of using WMDs often linked to other factors including technological advancements. As Hoffman suggested, many of the constraints, both self-imposed and technical, which previously inhibited terrorist use of WMD are eroding. See, O. Lynch and C. Ryder, “Deadliness, organisational change and suicide attacks: understanding the assumptions inherent in the use of the term ‘new terrorism’,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 5, 2 (2012), 257-75; B. Jenkins, *The likelihood of nuclear terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1985), p.6; B. Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, p.197; W. Laqueur, *The new terrorism*, p.8

¹¹¹ F.C Onuoha, “The Isamist Challenge: Nigeria’s Boko Haram crisis explained.”

¹¹² Ibid

including displaced persons as of 2014, while figures from the Global Terrorism Database START also show an increase in terrorist attacks in Nigeria between 2018 and 2019.¹¹³

These matrices often exclude state violence and other type of violences. Moreover, it ignores the point that terrorist attacks are often symbolic and communicative, as the NACTEST suggests: ‘like al-Qaeda, the established trend has been to launch attacks on symbolic structures.’¹¹⁴ The wide range of targets – including the kidnapping of the schoolgirls in Chibok, attacks on the UN headquarters in Abuja, and religious houses – is not especially new. The NACTEST, for instance, referred to the hijacking of planes in 1993, as well as the kidnapping of (mostly foreign) oil workers and attacks on oil installations in southern Nigeria.¹¹⁵ These attacks obviously share certain similarities with recent forms of terrorism, particularly in respect of the communicative and political aspects of terrorist attacks. Moreover, kidnapping has been described as retaliation by terrorist groups for the arrest of their members or members of their family by the Nigerian security agencies, rather than the intentional targeting of victims to cause harm.¹¹⁶

In addition to the above, the distinction between ‘selective’ and ‘indiscriminate’ target of terrorist violence is analytically unhelpful. As Weeraratne observes, Boko Haram militancy initially targeted the Nigerian security agencies and even though the group has broadened its targets to include educational and religious sites, the security agencies prominently remain within its range of targets.¹¹⁷ Also, claims about the use of WMDs based primarily on assumptions about terrorist intention (and their global affiliation) is greatly exaggerated, partly because it is extremely difficult to correctly determine or predict the intentions of individuals

¹¹³ See, The Buhari Plan 2016, pp.15-16; PCNI Report 2016, p.13; National consortium for the study of terrorism and responses to terrorism, Global Terrorism Overview: terrorism in 2019. START Background Report. Available online from: https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_GTD_GlobalTerrorismOverview2019_July2020

¹¹⁴ NACTEST 2016, p.15

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.13

¹¹⁶ S. Weeraratne, “Theorizing the expansion of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria,”

¹¹⁷ Ibid

or groups engaged in terrorism. The NSS offers a rather alternative writing by describing the risk of WMDs as relatively low, though remain a possibility. Specifically, it states that ‘the implementation of international agreements hinders the proliferation of CBRNE and their means of delivery.’¹¹⁸ In general, this narrative about the increased threat levels, which often assume doomsday scenarios, is unhelpful as it reproduces the same problem (terrorism) it seeks to address, turning it into a self-fulfilling prophecy.¹¹⁹

The second presupposition portrays the threat posed by terrorism as global, or far-reaching. According to the NACTEST, ‘since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the phenomenon has become global, and no country, including Nigeria, is immune from terrorist attacks.’¹²⁰ It further adds that ‘links to other global Islamic groups like al-Qaeda and al-shabaab, as indication of Boko Haram’s international scope, extremist beliefs, and wide-ranging target.’¹²¹ Similarly, Ambassador Oke explained that ‘there were no surprises when Boko Haram pledged allegiance to ISIS, as this affords them a propaganda boost as well as financial assistance from ISIS.’¹²² Within scholarly discussions too, Onapajo, Uzodike, and Whetho argue that there are indeed transnational and international dimension to Boko Haram’s operations and the threat it poses to Nigeria and the international community more widely.¹²³

However, terrorist groups in Nigeria, including Boko Haram, have been linked to multiple sources of funding than support from other transnational terrorist groups, including criminal activities such as bank-robbery and kidnap-for-ransom (which also contributes to their delegitimization. See Chapter 6 for constructions of the terrorist other), as well as local

¹¹⁸ NSS 2019, p.32

¹¹⁹ See, J. Zulaika, *Terrorism: the self-fulfilling prophecy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp.28-31

¹²⁰ NACTEST 2016, p.6

¹²¹ Ibid, p.2

¹²² Update on security in Nigeria and the campaign against Boko Haram, *Atlantic Council*, 2015

¹²³ H. Onapajo, U.O Uzodike, and A. Whetho, “Boko haram terrorism in Nigeria: the international dimension.”

donations and through legitimate businesses.¹²⁴ As the NACTEST puts it, terrorists tend to generate funds by engaging in conventional crimes such as bank robberies, kidnapping, syndicated car snatching, human and narcotics trafficking and operating lawful business ventures, among others.¹²⁵ In contrast to this representation of the threat of terrorism as global, the NACTEST writes that ‘the extent of its international reach cannot be ascertained.’¹²⁶ This suggests an uncertainty about the global reach of terrorist groups in Nigeria which further demonstrates the flexibility of this representation.

The third presupposition portrays terrorist threats as exceptionally enduring or long-lasting, ostensibly to justify the routinising of security practices. This, however, produces contrasting notions of counter-terrorism objectives in Nigeria. A first notion of ‘containment’ is expressed in the NACTEST: ‘Nigerians should come to terms with the fact that terrorist threats would require long-term measures to contain.’¹²⁷ What is happening now, it adds, ‘is not an anomaly given technological and other global transformations...we aim to keep the situation at tolerable levels.’¹²⁸ This writing, on the one hand, portrays terrorism as a knowable and predictable outcome of recent social, economic, and technological developments, which contrasts with representations of terrorism as new or unusual, as discussed in Section 4.1. On the other, it portrays the danger posed by terrorism as something to be managed – or contained – rather than defeated or eliminated. The Handbook for Security and Safety clearly illustrates this point: ‘growing acts of terrorism has become part of our daily lives.’¹²⁹ Similarly, in 2015

¹²⁴ See, for example, Suranjan Weeraratne, “Theorizing the expansion of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria.” For more on terrorist financing, see: Tom Keatinge and Kerstin Danner. “Assessing innovation in terrorist financing.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. (2019); Michael Freeman, “Terrorism financing methods: an overview.” *Perspectives on Terrorism*. 7, 4 (2013), 14-16

¹²⁵ NACTEST, p.28

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.13

¹²⁷ NACTEST 2016, p.10

¹²⁸ NACTEST 2016, p.10

¹²⁹ Handbook on safety and security tips 2016, p.i

Buhari described counter-terrorism as a ‘long and bruising struggle’ which also reinvigorates this idea of terrorism as posing an enduring threat.

That said, a second notion was offered by Buhari in 2016: ‘Nigeria has made progress in our resolve to defeat Boko Haram whose capacity to launch attacks has been degraded.’¹³⁰ While this suggests certain elements of continuity and the significance of terrorist threats, the aim of counter-terrorism here is to ‘defeat’ terrorism which contrasts considerably with the goal of ‘containment’ identified in the NACTEST.

In sum, the preceding representation of the threat of (new) terrorism as protracted or long-lasting increasingly ‘justifies a set of restrictive counter-measures,’¹³¹ and the routinising of security practices to monitor, manage, or eliminate risks. It raises questions concerning the ends, effectiveness, and the legitimacy of counter-terrorism in Nigeria. If the aim is to manage risks, rather than to eliminate or defeat terrorism, how does this justify certain counter-terrorism measures especially the excessive use of military force? And, in addition, what does this mean for security in Nigeria especially in this context of prolonged and routine security measures? These questions are indeed important for further evaluation or reflection around the successfulness and proportionality of counter-terrorism measures in Nigeria.

Conclusion

My focus in this chapter entailed identifying – and questioning– constructions of particular threats as new terrorism, within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. In view of the conceptual assumptions detailed in Chapter 3, constructing terrorism ultimately involves categorising,

¹³⁰ Address by President Buhari at 71st UNGA, 2016. Available online from: <https://gadebate.un.org/en/71/nigeria> [Accessed 10 April 2020]

¹³¹ A. Spencer, “Questioning the concept of New terrorism,”

labelling, and representing threats in certain ways. Such an activity is, however, underpinned by various unsettled claims about the nature of terrorism, its causes, and the threat it poses to Nigeria (and beyond). This raises pertinent questions for counter-terrorism, as the social and political process of framing terrorism legitimises, and makes possible, a set of measures while ignoring others possible alternatives. Moving on from this, I explore in Chapters 5 and 6 how counter-terrorism functions as a way through which the Nigerian self is constructed, often, in opposition to specific terrorist other. My problematising of constructions of self and other, in the next part of this thesis, meets my second research question about the ways in which counter-terrorism strategy contributes to identity construction.

Chapter 5

Constructing the Nigerian self

5.0. Introduction

As argued in Chapter 4, representations of specific threats as new terrorism are ontologically flexible and encompass a range of contestable claims. This, in turn, presuppose that counter-terrorism involve something far more than a set of policies – or practices – in response to terrorist violence or threats in Nigeria. Thus, this current chapter examines the ways in which Nigeria’s counter-terrorism strategy contributes to constructing Nigeria’s identity, in opposition to the threats posed by specific terrorist other.¹ This effectively describes who or what Nigeria(ns) fear or should fear, as much as what Nigeria is or seeks to become. In addition, this discourse entails certain assumptions about the state, society, and regions in Nigeria, structuring their relationship within precarious formulations.²

Thus, I demonstrate in this chapter how the Nigerian self or ideograph³ is constructed – and represented – within official counter-terrorism discourse especially through the linkage of different signifiers and discourses about ‘democracy’ and ‘progress.’ Forthwith, I argue that this ostensibly invents a highly restrictive identity of a democratic and, an increasingly, progressive Nigeria which pose important social and political consequences for citizenship, peoples, and communities in Nigeria (and beyond). As discussed below, democracy in this context broadly includes the notion of freedom, equality, justice, and good governance, while progress, on the other hand, reflects various ideas of inclusivity and development. There is

¹ R. Jackson, *Writing the war on terrorism: language, politics, and counter-terrorism*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018)

² In Chapter 4 of my thesis, I explained the productive of discourse: including the production of things, endowing them with certain qualities, and structuring their relationships. According to Jackson, the discourse of identity within counter-terrorism constitutes the political and permits the state as practice. See, Richard Jackson, “Security, Democracy, and the rhetoric of counter-terrorism.”

³ See, M.C. McGee, “The ‘Ideograph’: a link between rhetoric and ideology.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 66 (1980), 1-16; Janis L. Edwards and Carol K. Winkler, “Representative form and the visual ideograph: the Iwo Jima image in editorial cartoons.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 83, 3 (1997), 289-310

indeed no permanent essence to these concepts, rather they are continuously re-defined in and of themselves, and are also linked together in the production of identity.⁴ Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 2, constructing identity – or otherness – transcends fixed oppositional binary of self and other. Rather, this involves the continuous negotiation of difference which reveals the precarity and contestability of the Nigerian self, re-articulated in three important ways: society, geography, and time (see table 2 below).

This chapter develops in three sections: I begin in section 5.1. by examining constructions of the Nigerian self through references to ethno-religious diversity and various forms of inequality which purportedly characterise the Nigerian society. This complexity is linked to terrorism and specific terrorist groups, to permit the production of a democratic and progressive identity. Section 5.2. examines the reproduction of this self-image through constructions of “ungoverned spaces” in north-eastern Nigeria, as well as in the Lake Chad Basin, given a perceived lack of democratic governance and development. Section 5.3. examines the re-invocation of this identity through constructions of time, approached here as a discursive resource.⁵ Specifically, I identify constructions of different temporal chronotypes including temporal linearity, temporal discontinuity, and timelessness which ultimately reinforce this Nigerian identity. I conclude by outlining the contribution of this chapter especially in answering an important question underpinning my thesis regarding constructions of the Nigerian self within official counter-terrorism discourse, before moving to examine constructions of the terrorist other in Chapter 6.

Table 2

⁴ According to Finlayson and Martin, it is important not to only study what we imagine to be “the things in themselves but the relations between them.” A. Finlayson and J. Martin, “Poststructuralism” In C. Hay et al. *The state theories and issues*, p.155

⁵ See, for example, L. Jarvis, “Times of terror: writing temporality into the War on Terror.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 1, 2 (2008), 245-262

Constructing ethno-religious diversity and Marginalization	Discursive claims • Nigeria is an ethnically and religiously diverse society, which creates platforms for competition that find expression in perennial challenges such as violent extremism (NSS 2019). • Nigeria is characterised by poverty and illiteracy, which produces terrorists or provide willing hands for recruitment by terrorist groups of young adults or groups who are neither educated nor possess any skill to enable them to integrate fully [into the society] (NACTEST 2016)	Responses • Working with religious leaders as agents of nation-building, who contribute to building an inclusive society, through the dissemination of counter-narratives and the de-radicalisation of convicted terrorists, in order to promote diversity and equality (PCVE 2017). • long-term plans against terrorism include “focusing on sustainable development, and the re-engineering of social systems to ensure progress (PCNI 2017).
Constructing ungoverned spaces	• To defeat terrorism, we cannot leave anyone behind, we cannot have ungoverned spaces in the north-east. (NSS 2014).	• It is time we leverage on our democratic processes to increase access to decision making for a majority of our citizens (NSS 2014)
Constructions of time and identity	• Violent attacks on civilians by Boko Haram since 2009, has left widespread devastation in Nigeria especially in the north east; however, since the inauguration of President Buhari’s administration in 2015, there has been intensified military operations against Boko haram, which has degraded the group’s capability, leading to a significant improvement of the security situation in Nigeria (The Buhari Plan 2016).	• Consequently, we promised to pursue progressive change...On security, we proceeded to immediately strengthen our international partnerships, particularly our participation in the Multi-National Joint Task Force and to consolidate our collaboration with the Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit... a major reorganisation of the Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency operation, codenamed LAFIYA DOLE and moved the Military Command and Control Centre to Maiduguri in Borno State, the epicenter of the insurgency (NSS 2019).

Constructing the Nigerian Self

5.1. Constructing the Nigerian self: ethno-religious diversity, poverty and marginalization

The following section explores constructions of the Nigerian self, articulated whether implicitly or otherwise by constructing Nigeria as an ethno-religiously diverse society on the one hand. And, on the other, constructing social, economic, and political inequality as essentially constitutive of the Nigerian society. These characteristics of the Nigerian society are linked to terrorism and specific terrorist groups represented as a hinderance to, and a necessary ground for, inventing a collective (national) identity. I show a set of competing claims and ambiguity underpinning this construction, including about Nigerian society, citizenship, and nation, using the textual technique of predication, presupposition, and subject-positioning.⁶

5.1.1. Predication

Nigeria's National Security Strategy is a useful text for locating constructions of self, not least because it specifies the various security threats – including terrorism – facing the country and a range of strategies for responding to these. The text explicitly describes Nigeria: as “an ethnically and religiously diverse society, which creates platforms for competition that find expression in perennial challenges such as violent extremism.”⁷ This, it adds, increasingly “leads to the lack of national cohesion and also impede development, and thus presents a compelling reason to forge [national] bonds beyond ethnic and religious.”⁸ Written in this way, it sets out the following objectives of counter-terrorism: ‘to reform violent extremists for their possible re-entry into society,’ and ‘prepare them for a diverse [democratic] society’.⁹ The NSS further outline various de-radicalization initiatives pursued by the state to ostensibly ‘unite

⁶ Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters*.

⁷ NSS 2019, p.4

⁸ Ibid

⁹ NSS 2014, pp.32-33; NSS 2019, p.24

Nigerians against violent extremism, to promote communal living, and to engage young Nigerians in activities that promotes diversity.’¹⁰

From the above, references to the ‘possible re-entry [of extremists] into society,’ or, ‘uniting Nigerians against extremism and promoting diversity,’ signifies the idea of a tolerant and democratic Nigerian self, in opposition to the threat posed by religious extremists creating division among the Nigerian society. The NSS reinvigorates this perspective in the following way:

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is committed to **the ideals of freedom, equality and justice**. Our peace, security and prosperity rest upon the **foundational values of democracy**, the rule of law, free enterprise, respect for human rights including women and minority rights. We recognize the need to create an enabling environment for the full expression of the potentials of our people in the form of political inclusion, economic empowerment, social integration, as well as equal opportunity and access to justice [to prevent political violence and terrorism].¹¹

Nigeria is constituted by the ‘ideals of freedom, equality and justice’, as well as the ‘foundational values of democracy’ upon which its security, including against terrorism or terrorists, is grounded. Nigeria’s National Counter-terrorism Strategy, which is the main strategic text outlining the state’s policies around counter-terrorism, provides further illustrations of this construction of self through references to (liberal) democratic and progressive ideas. This selected section of the text, though partial, aptly describes the aim of Boko Haram as ‘inflaming religious and ethnic sentiments to cause division in the ‘polity’ by targeting Christian worship centres.’¹² As such, it identifies the control of ‘terrorist recruitment in religious sites through legislations, as well as the proscription, deportation, and the prosecution of persons involved in terrorism, as ways of preserving national unity, democratic

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ NSS 2019, p.1

¹² NACTEST 2016, p.10

values, and sovereignty.’¹³ This explicitly highlights the exclusionary, and indeed far-reaching, measures advanced to enforce – and reproduce – a particular identity.

In the acclaimed,¹⁴ though academically-neglected, Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Policy Framework, “Nigeria” is precisely written “as a free, peaceful and enterprising nation, and majority of our citizens are against the twisted ideology of the terrorists.”¹⁵ This view about Nigeria(ns) was elaborated subsequently:

Nigerians adhere to major world religions (such as Islam and Christianity). These religions are part of our rich history as a nation. Violent extremists misinterpret religious text in pursuit of political ends. **They seek to divide us along religious lines** while unleashing violence on all worshippers. For instance, Boko Haram kills both Muslims and Christians, bombing worshippers in churches and mosques. We reject the use of religion to cause harm. We are committed to amplify the message of peace and security championed by both Islam and Christianity.¹⁶

The above text clearly illustrates constructions of a unique Nigerian self – underpinned by democratic ideas of freedom, peace, and equality – defined in opposition to religious fundamentalists, violent, and intolerant terrorist other. Put otherwise, Nigeria is constituted by peaceful, tolerant, and enterprising individuals, groups, and communities supposedly united within a territorially bounded (nation-)state with status (and duties) as citizens, working towards a progressive society. This produces the subject-position of citizens (as well as an inside/outside distinction) which applies to those (peaceful/majority) who oppose the radical beliefs of terrorist groups (violent/minority). Written in this way, religious organisations and leaders are constructed as ‘agents of nation-building, who contribute to building an inclusive

¹³ Ibid, p.42, 27-28,

¹⁴ During my fieldwork in Abuja, Nigeria, the PCVE policy framework was described by state officials as a comprehensive policy text that significantly expands the other strategic texts such as NACTEST. This claim is cited in various text, although much of the academic discussion typically focus on the NACTEST. See, for example, CTC report, 2018, p.34; PCVE 2017, pp.9-10

¹⁵ PCVE, 2017, p.3

¹⁶ PCVE, 2017, p.20

society, through the dissemination of counter-narratives and the de-radicalisation of convicted terrorists to promote diversity and equality.’¹⁷

Such a strategy for promoting democracy, tolerance, and equality is consistently referred to in other official texts. According to the PVEC Country Report, developing a counter-narrative to terrorist ideology includes “projecting the role of democracy in preventing extremism through an evidence-based approach that helps tackle fundamental issues of social and economic marginalisation.”¹⁸ The idea of democracy here is, of course, underlined by notions of inclusivity, equality, secularism, and ethno-religious tolerance as opposed to religious intolerance and extremism.

Presidential speeches and addresses to audiences in Nigeria and beyond, offer significant intertextualities worth exploring. The speech by President Buhari at the 70th United Nations General Assembly in 2015, is a significant case in point not least because it draws an important parallel to the discourse around the ‘Global War on Terror.’¹⁹ In this particular speech Nigerians are defined as ‘peaceful’ in opposition to ‘violent terrorists’, thus, producing an ‘us’ and ‘them’ binary. Buhari also stated that: “we are in the front line in the war on terror; this is a war about values between progress and chaos; between democracy and the rule of law. Boko Haram celebrates violence against the weak and the innocent, they hide behind their perverted interpretation of Islam”.²⁰

Such references to the rhetoric of ‘war on terror,’ or the predication of ‘war about values between progress and democracy’ in Buhari’s UN speech, seeks to align Nigeria’s aims with those of other democratic societies opposed to religious extremism and terrorism. This also

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ PCVE Country Report 2017, p.35

¹⁹ Address by President Buhari at 70th UNGA, 2015. Available online from: <https://gadebate.un.org/en/70/nigeria> [Accessed 10 April 2020]

²⁰ Ibid.

construct the capability of Nigeria to deal with the problem of terrorism within (and beyond) its territorial borders. Thus, it reinvigorates a specific idea of Nigeria constituted by liberal democratic values and progressive ideas, while implicitly illustrating the contestation of political authority within Nigeria (between the state and terrorist groups). Buhari's speech, in addition, markedly distinguishes between 'radical' terrorists – 'who misinterpret Islam' – and the 'moderate' Muslim community who are supposedly tolerant of ethnic and religious differences in Nigeria.

Similarly, the new year address by President Jonathan in 2015 describes counter-terrorism as a 'fight against the common enemy'.²¹ He further stated that: "we will confront those who seek to destroy our bonds of unity, through cooperation between the state security agencies and all Nigerians."²² References to the 'fight against a common enemy,' or 'confronting those who seek to destroy our bond of unity' invents oppositional subjects, including a democratic Nigerian self, against the fundamentalist terrorist other. Moreover, this also highlights Nigeria's resilience and capability of the Nigerian state to manage the problem of terrorism, communicated to Nigerians. As Jonathan puts it: "they [terrorists] have violated the cultural way of life of our country, our democracy, which took generations to build. And, we will bring justice to the savage terrorists known as Boko Haram."²³ Such allusions to protecting 'our way of life,' embed democracy as a fundamental element of Nigeria's identity, defined in opposition to savage or barbaric terrorists. Similar civilizational themes saturate the discourse around the Global War on Terror, as I show in Section 5.1.2.

A second contrasting notion of marginalization and inequality, which seemingly characterise the Nigerian society, is linked to terrorism and terrorists to enable the

²¹ President Goodluck Jonathan's New Year message, *Channels News*. January 1, 2015. Available at: <https://www.channelstv.com/2015/01/01/full-text-president-goodluck-jonathans-new-year-broadcast/>. Last accessed: 15 July 2021.

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

(re)production of Nigeria's identity. This posits a Nigerian self that is being blocked by religious fundamentalists/terrorists, on the one hand, but also by underlying structural problems of inequality which facilitates terrorism, on the other. The NACTEST, in this regard, writes that: "Nigeria is characterised by poverty and illiteracy, which produces terrorists or provide willing hands for recruitment by terrorist groups of young adults or groups who are neither educated nor possess any skill to enable them integrate fully [into the society]." ²⁴ Described thus, the following responses are outlined:

These systems, which thrive in areas of extreme poverty and deprivation, produce youths who are easily radicalized through inappropriate teachings. The **promotion of good governance**, education and economic prosperity will be emphasized and aggressively implemented at all levels. **Deterrence** [to terrorism] can be achieved where infrastructural facilities such as roads, energy, hospitals and health centres are available. ²⁵

Here, references to poverty and deprivation points to socio-economic marginalization as a constitutive feature of the Nigerian society especially the north-east, which contributes to terrorism or support for terrorist activities. Such measures, including 'good governance, education, and economic prosperity,' introduced to address these so-called root causes alongside managing terrorist threats, clearly highlight the innate political activity involved in counter-terrorism practices. Similarly, in the Presidential Committee on North-East Intervention, 'long-term' plans against terrorism include 'focusing on sustainable development, and the re-engineering of social systems to ensure progress.' ²⁶ Signifiers such as 'non-kinetic measure', 'soft approach', 'whole of society approach', are also used in other texts ²⁷ to depicts and reproduce this Nigerian self, grounded on notions of democracy and progress.

²⁴ NACTEST 2016, p.19

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ PCNI 2017, p.21

²⁷ PVCE Policy Framework 2017, 13; NACTEST 2016, 6-7; NSS 2019, 24; CTC Report 2018, 5.

The Buhari Plan for the North-East is yet another significant, and academically-neglected, text for identifying constructions of the Nigerian self. Countering terrorism, as explained in this text, entails promoting ‘good governance, education and economic prosperity at all levels; the building of infrastructural facilities such as roads, energy, hospitals, and health centres, as deterrence to terrorism.’²⁸ The PVCE also states that: “the state seeks to address all the conditions that are conducive to the spread of violent extremism such as poverty and illiteracy, and supporting the youths to contribute to peace, security, and development...to prevent them from radicalization.”²⁹ In 2015, Buhari puts this rather succinctly in an interview: “as we ramp up our efforts to defeat Boko Haram, we know that winning this battle, sustainability, will require that we expand economic opportunities and create jobs for our teeming young population.”³⁰ Therefore, he adds, “we must also improve the condition of governance in order to win and sustain the trust of the people we govern.”³¹

Interestingly, references to ‘promoting women and girls rights,’³² ‘gender and sexual violence,’³³ ‘social exclusion’³⁴ and so on, offer an important meaning of progress beyond socio-economic inequality given that these are, according to the PCNI, “forms of exclusion, inequality, and violence [in Nigeria] prior to the insurgency”.³⁵ In one sense, this highlights certain problems of the above-discussed Nigerian self, not least because it undermines the so-called democratic values underpinning it. Yet, the PCNI contrastingly writes that: “Boko Haram’s abduction and abuse of women and girls has received attention”.³⁶ This corroborates

²⁸ The Buhari Plan 2016, p.31

²⁹ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, p.3

³⁰ Nigeria: A conversation with President Muhammadu Buhari, at United States Institute for Peace, 2015

³¹ Ibid

³² PCNI 2015, p.26

³³ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, 18

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ PCNI 2017, p.26

³⁶ PCNI 2017, p.26

Jonathan's speech in 2015, that "terrorists have unleashed agony on our land, they have made widows of our mothers and orphans of our children."³⁷ The PCVE, again, states that:

Boko Haram's use of female suicide bombers is a worrisome development. Through kidnapping, forced marriages and violence, **Boko Haram continue to abuse women and girls. We are taking measures to free women and girls** in captivity of parents' or husbands' authorities in forced marriages and captivity of kidnapping as have been done with some Chibok School Girls. In all circumstances, **we are determined to protect the dignity of women and girls caught up in the web of terror.**³⁸

Through this articulation, however, terrorist groups in Nigeria are represented as violent/abusive/misogynistic, to permit the construction of a democratic and progressive Nigerian self-image.

5.1.2. Presuppositions

The discourse emanating from the above portrays Nigeria as democratic and progressive, in opposition to certain terrorist groups defined as religious extremists or fundamentalists. As discussed in Section 5.1.1, this construction of identity is underpinned by, and reproduced through, certain discursive claims and competing ideas about Nigeria – including about its ethno-religiously diverse and marginalized society, citizens, nation – and terrorism. In this section, I examine three important presuppositions grounding this representation of the Nigerian self.

It is worth highlighting here that this notion of a homogenous (national) identity can be located in debates pertaining to the emergence of the modern state in Europe in the 17th century, and later, the concept of nation in the 19th century.³⁹ The state is commonly delineated through

³⁷ President Goodluck Jonathan's New Year message.

³⁸ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, p.18

³⁹ See, R. Axtmann, "The state of the state: the model of the modern state and its contemporary transformation." *International Political Science Review*. 25, 3 (2004), 259-279; Bernard Cohn and Nick Dirks, "Beyond the fringe: the nation-state, colonialism, and the technologies of power." *Journal of Historical Sociology*. 1, 2 (1988), 224-229; C. Hay and M. Lister. "Introduction: theories of the state" In C. Hay et al., pp.1-3.

the separation of the political sphere from the religious, and functions as the mechanism through which a collective of individuals, groups, and communities assumed to share a single identity are organised and secured from perceived threats.⁴⁰ Yet, regional identities, multiculturalism, and transnational identity increasingly unsettles this idea of national homogeneity.⁴¹ Furthermore, liberal democratic values underlined by notions of freedom, secularism, and equality, are typically discussed in theories of democratic peace and debates around democracy more widely, as inevitably crucial organising principles of modern – multicultural – societies.⁴² Such views percolates policy and academic debates on counter-terrorism (and beyond), increasingly since the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11th September 2001.⁴³ These accepted claims about liberal democracy and nation-building has consistently been interrogated not least because it often takes for granted important historical, social, and cultural forces at play in African societies, and elsewhere.⁴⁴

That said, the first presupposition I explore is about the threats posed by religious extremism to democracy and democratic societies. This reinvigorates common assumptions surrounding the Global War on Terror discourse and, in so doing, situates Nigeria within a broader civilizational discourse (western democracy against Islamic culture).⁴⁵ Buhari's UNGA speech explicitly refers to 'a war about values between progress and chaos, between democracy and the rule of law.'⁴⁶ Jonathan, too, referred to 'our culture of democracy,' and

⁴⁰ For more on this, see: Bhambra G.K., "Comparative historical sociology and the state: problems of method." *Cultural Sociology*. 10, 3 (2016), 335-3551

⁴¹ R. Axtmann, "The state of the state: the model of the modern state and its contemporary transformation."

⁴² A. Franceschet, "Popular sovereignty or cosmopolitan democracy? Liberalism, Kant and International reform." *European Journal of International Relations*. 6, 2 (2000), 277-302; F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992); C. Layne, "Kant or Cant? The myth of Democratic Peace." *International Security*. 19, 2 (1999), 5-49

⁴³ C. Aradau and R.V Munster, "Insuring terrorism, assuring subjects, ensuring normality: the politics of risk after 9/11." *Alternatives*. 33 (2008), 191-210

⁴⁴ Thomas A. Koelble and Edward Lipuma "Democratizing democracy: a postcolonial critique of conventional approaches to the 'measurement of democracy'."

⁴⁵ See, for instance, M.B Salter, *Barbarians and Civilisation in International Relations* (London: Pluto Press, 2002)

⁴⁶ Address by President Buhari at 70th UNGA, 2015

bringing 'justice against savage terrorists'.⁴⁷ These statements, *inter alia*, create symbolic connections by invoking civilizational, political, and developmental themes that generally permeate discourses on the War on Terror.⁴⁸ It facilitates the forceful infusion of Nigeria into a global template of liberal democratic societies (us), opposed to religious extremists or terrorists (them).

Such claims about liberal democracy recycled in the GWOT discourse, as Jeffrey shows, 'relies upon the promise that democratic societies are inherently peaceful which inexorably lead to a global compromise between democratic states and the Kantian notion of perpetual peace.'⁴⁹ Nazir describes the ideology and practices embedded in this discourse as 'the continuation of the civilizing mission against 'anti-western values'.'⁵⁰ Even more importantly, Salter notes that the binary of 'civilised' and 'barbarian' re-inscribed through various tropes, including (Nigerian) self and terrorist other functions as a way in which groups, communities, and societies occupy certain positions in the definition of belonging and progress.⁵¹ As such, constructing Nigeria's identity through references to 'savage terrorists,' or 'our culture of democracy,' or 'war against those that seek to divide us along religious lines', ultimately defines the limits of belonging according to a highly restrictive notion of democracy or secularism, assumed to be universally obtainable and desirable.⁵²

What is more, this representation inexorably serves to delegitimise the political goals of terrorist groups in Nigeria, or those positioned as its constitutive outside.⁵³ In so doing, it

⁴⁷ President Jonathan new year speech, 2015

⁴⁸ M.B Salter, *Barbarians and Civilisation in International Relations*.

⁴⁹ A. Jeffrey, "Containers of fate: problematic states and paradoxical sovereignty." In A. Ingram and K. Dodds, *Spaces of security and insecurity* (London: Ashgate, 2009), p.45

⁵⁰ P. Nazir, "War on terror in Pakistan and Afghanistan: discursive and political contestations." *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 3, 1 (2010), 63-81

⁵¹ M.B Salter *Barbarians and Civilisation in International Relations*, p.157.

⁵² See, Fahed Al-Sumait, Colin Lingle and David Domke, "Terrorism's cause and cure: the rhetorical regime of democracy in the US and UK." *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 2, 1 (2009), 7-25; Jeroen Gunning and Richard Jackson, "What's so 'religious' about 'religious terrorism'?"

⁵³ R. Jackson, "Security, democracy, and the rhetoric of counter-terrorism."

provides justification for various state (-sanctioned) policies such as anti-terror legislation to regulate places of worship, collaborating with religious leaders in counter/de-radicalization processes, proscription, deportation, among other exclusionary policies. The recent state-backed court sentences for blasphemy, including in 2020 a musician, Yahaya Sahrif-Aminu was charged and sentenced to death by hanging for blasphemy in a (private) Whatsapp message, is significant in this respect.⁵⁴ Also, in 2019, the state security forces cracked down on Shi'a protestors affiliated to the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) on grounds of religious extremism.⁵⁵ The literature on counter-terrorism is, of course, replete with similar cases regarding the mobilization – and reproduction – of discourses around the GWOT and their continuing effects.⁵⁶ Bartolucci, for instance, explores how they are employed by state officials to delegitimize political opponents or opposition in Morocco,⁵⁷ while Keenan demonstrates how this permits US (and western) imperialistic interests and intervention in Africa and the Middle East.⁵⁸

Yet this representation is flexible and open to interrogation. First, is that the use of 'war' rhetoric in describing the threats posed by religious extremism/extremists conflates various forms of warfare, as Zulaika observes, or is used in different ways (including metaphorically and literally).⁵⁹ For example, Buhari referred to the 'war about democratic values', while Jonathan points to military 'warfare against savage terrorists.' Second, is that this construction takes its meaning by problematising certain Islamic beliefs or Islamic groups, which runs the

⁵⁴ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. *Country update Nigeria: religious freedom conditions in Nigeria in 2020*. Available online from: <https://www.justice.gov/coir/page/file/1345386/download> [last accessed 26/10/2021].

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ P. Graham et al., "A call to arms at the End of History: a discourse-historical analysis of George W. Bush's declaration of War on Terror." *Discourse and Society*. 5, 2-3 (2004), 199-221; V. Bartolucci, "Analysing elite discourse on terrorism and its implications: the case of Morocco." *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 3, 1 (2010), 119-135; J. Keenan, "US militarization in Africa: what anthropologists should know about AFRICOM." *Anthropology Today*, 24, 5 (2008), 1-5

⁵⁷ V. Bartolucci, "Analysing elite discourse on terrorism and its implications: the case of Morocco."

⁵⁸ J. Keenan, "US militarization in Africa: what anthropologists should know about AFRICOM."

⁵⁹ J. Zulaika, *Terrorism: the self-fulfilling prophesy*, p.6

risk of positioning Islam or the Muslim community as the target of counter-terrorism. Despite the persistence of neo-orientalist, Islamophobic, and Euro-centric narratives in much counter-terrorism discourse, its inflection in the Nigerian context presents other implications discussed further below. This avoids the risk of reifying and temporalizing the terrorist attacks against the US on 9/11 and the discourses accompanying this event, as the hallmark for understanding counter-terrorism discourses in Nigeria.⁶⁰ Put differently, 9/11, though relevant here, does not represent an unproblematic starting – or end – point for counter-terrorism discourse in Nigeria.

The second core presupposition suggests a link between Nigeria's ethno-religiously diverse society and terrorism/terrorists, formulating a problematic notion of citizen(ship) and nation(hood). Buhari stated at the 70th UNGA in 2015 that 'peace is close to the hearts of Nigerians, and [we] are at the frontline in the war on terror.'⁶¹ The PCVE Policy Framework also defines Nigeria as a 'free, peaceful, and enterprising nation, in which majority of our citizens are opposed to the twisted ideologies of terrorists.'⁶² This constructs ideal-type citizens who are inherently peaceful, tolerant, and forcefully opposed to violent behaviours or radical ideas. In so doing, creates limiting binaries of 'bad' and 'good' citizens, or 'majority' and 'minority', which ultimately justifies the use of coercive responses against certain predetermined targets.⁶³

On top of this, such an othering creates distinctions between 'moderate' and 'radical' Muslims, as indicated in the PCVE Policy Framework: 'violent extremists misinterpret religious text in pursuit of political ends.'⁶⁴ Other texts use signifiers such as 'twisted

⁶⁰ Many studies have stressed this risk of reifying 9/11 and the War on Terror, for example, see Harmonie Toros, "'9/11 is alive and well" or how critical terrorism studies has sustained the 9/11 narrative." *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 10, 2 (2017), 203-219; Stuart Elden, "Terror and territory." *Antipode*. 39, 5 (2007), 1-25.

⁶¹ Address by President Buhari at 70th UNGA, 2015

⁶² PCVE, 2017, p.3

⁶³ For more on this rhetorical trope of 'good' and 'evil', see, for example, R. Jackson, "Security, democracy, and the rhetoric of counter-terrorism;" —, "Language, policy and the construction of a torture culture in the War on Terrorism." *Review of International Studies*. 33, 3 (2007), 353-71

⁶⁴ PCVE policy, p.20

ideology’,⁶⁵ or ‘evil ideas’,⁶⁶ or ‘perverted interpretation of Islam’⁶⁷ to differentiate radical terrorist groups from moderate or tolerant Muslims. As discussed in Chapter 4, this facilitates the creation of a ‘suspect category’⁶⁸ persistently reinforced through various state policies – and practices – supposedly to identify terrorist sympathisers, supporters, and sponsors. For example, the various collaborations between the state security agencies and religious leaders, organisations, communities, and other individuals serve as one way through which this suspect category is reinforced. And, as the NACTEST indicates, the ‘de-radicalization of terrorists provides the possibility for their re-entry into the (mainstream) society,’ re-constituting them as moderate Muslims (or citizens). This augurs with Elshimi’s conceptualisation of ‘de-radicalization as technologies of self-production.’⁶⁹ Clubb and Tapley, more directly, argue that the de-radicalisation and re-integration programmes in Nigeria typically centre on the ‘conversion of the terrorists into ‘better citizens’, imbued with genuine nationalism.’⁷⁰

In addition to the above problematic notion of citizen, this discourse produces a questionable idea of the Nigerian nation. The analysed texts variously referred to the ‘fight against a common enemy’,⁷¹ or ‘our bond of unity,’⁷² or ‘Nigeria as free, peaceful, and

⁶⁵Ibid, p.3

⁶⁶ ISWAP execution: don’t let terrorists divide us, Buhari tells Nigerians. *The Guardian*. December 28, 2019. Available online from: <https://guardian.ng/news/iswap-execution-dont-let-terrorists-divide-us-buhari-tells-nigerians/>. [Accessed 10 April 2020]; NSS 2019, p.2

⁶⁷ PCVE Country Report 2017, p.6; PCVE Policy Framework, p.20; NACTEST 2016, p.2; Address by President Buhari, 70th UNGA, 2015

⁶⁸ See, F. Ragazzi, “Suspect community or suspect category? The impact of counter-terrorism as ‘policed multiculturalism’.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 42, 5 (2016), 724-41. For other accounts on this, see also: Marie Breen-Smyth, “Theorising the “suspect community”: counterterrorism, security practices and the public imagination.” *Critical Studies on terrorism*. 7, 2 (2014), 223-240; Adrian Cherney and Kristina Murphy, “What does it mean to be a moderate Muslim in the war on terror? Muslim interpretations and reactions.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 9, 2 (2016), 159-181; Mahmood Mamdani, “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: a political perspective on culture and terrorism.” *American Anthropologist*. 104, 3 (2002), 766-775

⁶⁹ M. Eishimi, “De-radicalisation interventions as technologies of the self: a Foucauldian analysis.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 8,1 (2015), 110-129

⁷⁰ G. Clubb and M. Tapley, “Conceptualising de-radicalisation and former combatant re-integration in Nigeria.” *Third World Quarterly*, (2018), p.1

⁷¹ President Jonathan’s new year speech, 2015

⁷² Ibid

enterprising nation,⁷³ or ‘terrorists are inflaming ethno-religious sentiments to cause division in the polity.’⁷⁴ All of this largely portray an idea of a homogeneous nation or, at least, mobilises secular democracy as a self-evident ‘truth’ capable of transcending various (contested) notions of nationality that constitute the Nigerian society.⁷⁵ This comes close to what Laclau and Mouffe described as the ‘impossibility of society’, in which the social only exist – partially – through efforts of constructing society or nation.⁷⁶ In this case, youth vocational and recreational training to promote diversity and tolerance,⁷⁷ the promotion of women and girl rights,⁷⁸ developing and disseminating messages about democracy, among other policies, essentially contribute to produce this (national) effect.

Moreover, debate around nation-building in post-colonial African societies usually accentuates the role of state sovereignty or coercion in these processes.⁷⁹ Ake’s account of democracy and development in Nigeria and Africa more widely, for example, illustrates the use of coercion to impose political unity ‘in the midst of considerable social pluralism.’⁸⁰ Similarly, Falola and Heaton highlights the ethnic, religious, linguistic pluralism in Nigeria through a historical analysis of its pre-colonial and colonial past,⁸¹ while Mbembe identifies the functions of the Commandment (which is a mode of sovereignty organised by coercion and arbitrary practices) in the imposition of subjectivity in the postcolony.⁸² Nonetheless, the

⁷³ NSS 2019, p.1

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.4

⁷⁵ See, A. Franceschet “Popular sovereignty or cosmopolitan democracy? Liberalism, Kant and International reform;” Fahed Al-Sumait, Colin Lingle and David Domke “Terrorism’s cause and cure: the rhetorical regime of democracy in the US and UK.”

⁷⁶ L. Ernesto and C. Mouffe. *Hegemony and socialist strategy: towards a radical democratic politics*.

⁷⁷ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, p.38

⁷⁸ Pratt has cautioned that counter-terrorism practice provides a fertile context for the politicisation of women’s bodies and political efforts to control them through violence. See, Nicola Pratt, “A response to Afiya Zia’s call for prioritising gender.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 6, 2 (2013), 334-335

⁷⁹ See, for example, J.O Ihonvbere, “The ‘irrelevant’ state, ethnicity, and the quest for nationhood in Africa.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 17, 1 (1994), 42-60; A.A Mazrui, “Africa Between Nationalism and Nationhood: a political survey.” *Journal of Black Studies*. 13, 1 (1982), 23-44; A.B Bah *Democracy, the nation-state, and ethnicity in Nigeria*. (New York: Lexington Books, 2005), pp.69-99

⁸⁰ C. Ake. *Democracy and Development in Africa*.

⁸¹ T. Falola and M.M. Heaton. *A history of Nigeria*.

⁸² A. Mbembe. *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001)

above-discussed representation of nation implicitly suggests the idea of rational autonomous subjects (or Nigerian citizens) capable of making deliberate choices, including disavowing irrational behaviours and opposing extremist ideology. This entails the ability, and intention, to distinguish between radical beliefs and mainstream democratic values, with or without state coercion.

However, notions of individuality, secularism, and nationalism,⁸³ as Koelble and Lipuma argues, does not hold in most parts of non-western societies,⁸⁴ as well as in western societies too, due to increasing complexity posed by multiculturalism, regional, and transnational identities. This aptly apply in the Nigerian context in which different ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups define themselves (in relation to Nigeria, and beyond) in different ways. As Olaniyan and Asuelime observe, ‘the interpretation of Boko Haram’s activities by the Nigerian populace points to the ethnic, regional, cultural, and religious cleavages in Nigeria.’⁸⁵ Thus, this relationship between ethno-religious diversity and counter-terrorism illustrates constructions of identity through ‘sweeping mythologies of national unity, democratic solidarity, tolerance, and the promise of progress.’⁸⁶

This representation is, nonetheless, contestable and ambiguous. For one, the various forms of exclusion and marginalization against different groups in Nigeria especially women and girls, as described in the PCNI for example,⁸⁷ reveal the problems associated with this notion of a democratic Nigerian society or nation. Ajayi argues that ‘women’s experiences of conflict and terrorism in Nigeria derive from their unequal status within the ‘Nigerian

⁸³ T.A Koelble and E. Lipuma, “Democratizing democracy: a postcolonial critique of conventional approaches to the ‘measurement of democracy’.” *Democratization*. 15, 1 (2008), 1-28; Aurel Croissant and Wolfgang Merkel, “Conclusion: good and defective democracies.” *Democratization* 11, 5 (2004), 199-214

⁸⁴ Thomas A. Koelble and Edward Lipuma “Democratizing democracy: a postcolonial critique of conventional approaches to the ‘measurement of democracy’.”

⁸⁵ A. Olaniyan and L. Asuelime, “Boko Haram insurgency and the widening of cleavages in Nigeria”; see also, A.B Bah. *Democracy, the nation-state, and ethnicity in Nigeria*, pp.37-60

⁸⁶ Fahed Al-Sumait, Colin Lingle and David Domke “Terrorism’s cause and cure: the rhetorical regime of democracy in the US and UK.”

⁸⁷ PCNI 2015, p.26

polity’.⁸⁸ Ajayi further notes that, although women and girls make up at least 79 percent of persons displaced by Boko haram conflict, state policies typically overlook their needs, experiences, and priorities in these processes.⁸⁹

The third presupposition examined here entails references to structural problems of marginalization which ostensibly characterise the Nigerian society, providing ground for terrorism and terrorist groups. This conjures a linear understanding of progress, portraying liberal democratic values as inherently good and potentially leading to a more inclusive and progressive society. The NSS states that, ‘our peace, security, and prosperity rest upon the fundamental values of democracy, rule of law, free enterprise, and human rights.’⁹⁰ Similarly, the PCVE Country Report describes democracy ‘as an evidence-based approach to resolving violent extremism and addressing social and economic marginalisation.’⁹¹ And, according to Buhari, in order to ‘defeat terrorism we must ensure sustainable development through the promotion of good governance.’⁹² The underlying assumption in all this, is that certain democratic values and practices precipitate social cohesion and, by the same token, guarantees various forms of progress (including social, economic and political).

This relationship between democracy and progress is, however, not atypical in security scholarship and beyond. Such linkages frequently permit the securitising of societies in the global south, particularly in the Middle East and Africa.⁹³ As Duffield observes, the integration of peace, security, and development in the policy of Western states such as the Security Sector Report of the United Kingdom in the 1990s was largely based on the assumption that security

⁸⁸ See, Titilope F. Ajayi, “Women, internal displacement and the Boko haram conflict: broadening the debate,” p.171

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ NSS, p.1

⁹¹ PVCE Country Report 2017, p.35

⁹² Nigeria: A conversation with President Muhammadu Buhari, at United States Institute for Peace, 2015

⁹³ See, for example, M. Duffield, “Development, territories, and the people: consolidating the external sovereign frontier.” *Alternatives*. 32, 2 (2007), 225-46

issues in developing societies could be resolved by democracy and development.⁹⁴ Also, Duffield adds that, neo-liberal institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF through their indicators of good governance, democracy, among other yardsticks, perpetuate this geo-political differentiation and ‘securitisation’.⁹⁵ Other studies on counter-terrorism commonly use labels such as ‘failed state’, or ‘weak state’, to emphasise the perceived lack of democracy or/and development as the reason, and cure, for terrorism.⁹⁶ Agbiboa, for instance, argues that terrorism in Nigeria is precipitated by socio-economic deprivation and marginalization.⁹⁷

Such a teleological perspective of progress can be identified in the analyses – and critique – of western development model approached differently (modernization, dependency, multiple modernities, world systems, postcolonial and decolonial studies) in sociology, economics, international relations and beyond these fields.⁹⁸ Obviously, this chapter of my thesis cannot discuss this substantially. Yet much of these studies often respond to, critique, modify, or reject assumptions about the stages of development popularised by (Western) scholars especially the Rostowian theory of development⁹⁹ which creates distinctions between modern and traditional forms of development. This ‘developmental view of humanity,’ as Hindess notes, permits the differentiation of various societies, in which time functions as a signifier of progress or backwardness.¹⁰⁰ Specifically, the ‘past’ signifies another culture, people, or society that are yet to reach a certain (Euro-centric) ‘present’.

⁹⁴ M. Duffield, *Global Governance and New Wars* (London: Zed Books, 2001)

⁹⁵ Ibid, 16; see also, World Bank. *Sub-Saharan Africa: from crisis to sustainable growth* (Washington DC.: World Bank, 1989); K. Menkhaus, “Chapter Nine: state failure and ungoverned space.” *Adelphi Series*. 50, 412-13 (2010), 171-188

⁹⁶ See, Kwesi Aning, “Security, the war on terror, and official development assistance.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 3, 1 (2010), 7-26; Pillar, P.R, *Terrorism and US foreign policy*. (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institutions, 2001); M. Doornbos, “‘Good governance’: the rise and decline of a policy metaphor.” *Journal of Development Studies*. 376 (2001), 93-108

⁹⁷ D.E Agbiboa, “Why Boko Haram exists: the relative deprivation perspective.”

⁹⁸ See, for example, W. Mignolo, “Delinking: the rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of decoloniality.” *Cultural Studies*. 21, 2 (2007), 449-514; D. Arif, “Global modernity? Modernity in an age of global capitalism.” *European Journal of Social Theory*. 6, 3 (2003)275-92.

⁹⁹ See, H. Bernstein, “Modernization theory and the sociological study of development.” *The Journal of Development Studies*. 7, 2 (1971), 141-160

¹⁰⁰ B. Hindess, “The past is another culture.” *International Political Sociology*. 1 (2007), 325-338

In other words, this linkage between democracy and progress depicts a limiting identity of Nigeria, suggesting the transition from a traditionally burdened ‘present’ to a modernised ‘future.’ The PCVE Policy Framework, for instance, writes that ‘we must address all the conditions that promote violent extremism, for safer communities, and development’,¹⁰¹ including ‘building of roads, schools, hospitals, and other infrastructural facilities, as well as promoting social inclusion and equality’.¹⁰² There are nonetheless several ambiguities worth pointing out.

In contrast to the above-discussed presupposition about ethno-religious diversity, this posits an identity that is being blocked by various socio-economic and socio-political problems which supposedly exacerbates terrorism in Nigeria. Put otherwise, poverty and marginalization directly undermine Nigeria’s self-image through facilitating terrorism, as opposed to religious fundamentalism/fundamentalists itself. Indeed, counter-terrorism entails a deeply political work which often takes its meaning from other political activities including fostering social cohesion and development promotion, inexplicably expanding its target and objectives. This shows the flexibility of this Nigerian self, which is not only threatened by religious extremists but also by poverty and marginalization (as well as the different representations of Nigerian society: ethno-religiously diverse and marginalized).

In all, the presuppositions examined in the preceding paragraphs present a restrictive and a-historical representation of Nigeria which implicitly reify various Eurocentric, colonial, and state-centred discourses. A similar point was identified by Parashar in her examination of state counter-terrorism governance in India, noting that postcolonial societies often perpetuate these Eurocentric conceptions of the nation and state as the goal of their national independence.¹⁰³ The implication of this representation is two-fold. First, is that such

¹⁰¹ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, p.3

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Swati Parashar, “Terrorism and the postcolonial state.” In *Routledge Handbook of Postcolonial Politics*. Edited by Olivia U. Rutazibwa and Robbie Shilliam, p113

valorisation of Western values, including the notion of secular democracy, encourage the universalisation of security practices in different geographies, including Nigeria, justified on the grounds of protecting democratic values and human progress.¹⁰⁴ It also contributes to reproducing symbolic (hegemonic) meanings which privilege particular western ideas – and societies – as the universal standard. A rebuttal to this was offered by Pratt, stating that secularism is not necessarily progressive– as Europe’s post-Enlightenment history, including slavery, genocide, and the Holocaust, illustrates.¹⁰⁵

Second, is that this delegitimises other ways of organising society through alternative ideas, including from indigenous and religious knowledges, constituted as radically opposed to liberal democracy.¹⁰⁶ For example, north-east Nigeria especially Borno state – as well as other parts of Nigeria – is known for its rich history, as well as its vibrant cultural beliefs and practices which cuts across national boundary.¹⁰⁷ In one sense, this representation of Nigeria reinforce certain colonial narratives about Nigeria’s territorial frontiers and its national composition which contributes to the elision of important transnational, multi-ethnic and linguistic identities across – and beyond – Nigeria, as well as reproducing existing postcolonial state structures and privileges.¹⁰⁸ The Nigerian (nation-)state, as such, is naturalised within this formulation as the means through which political life is produced, managed, and sustained.¹⁰⁹

5.1.3. Summary: subject-positioning

¹⁰⁴ See, Joanne Sharp, “A Subaltern critical geopolitics of the war on terror: postcolonial security in Tanzania.”

¹⁰⁵ Nicola Pratt, “A response to Afiya Zia’s call for prioritising gender.” See also, D.C Chandler, “The uncritical critique of ‘liberal peace’.” *Review of International Studies*. 36, 1 (2010), 137-155

¹⁰⁶ B. Hindess “The past is another culture.”

¹⁰⁷ T. Falola and M.M. Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, pp.16-39.

¹⁰⁸ M. Duffield and N. Waddell, “Securing humans in a Dangerous world.” *International Politics*. 43, 1 (2006), 1-23

¹⁰⁹ See, P. Taylor, “The state as container: territory in the modern state system.” *Progress in Human Geography*. 18, 2 (1994), 151-162

The discussions in Sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2, identified and problematised constructions of the Nigerian self, defined in opposition to specific terrorist other(s). This construction links ethno-religious diversity and marginalization with terrorism or terrorists, representing these as hindrances to democracy and progress in Nigeria. In general, this perpetuates common Eurocentrism –including neo-orientalist or Islamophobic discourse– which overlaps with, and reinforce, other discourses especially colonial and state-centred ones, in this Nigerian study. Such statist discourse (as well as colonial narratives about Nigeria which ignores important pre-colonial and post-colonial realities) place the Nigerian state as primarily responsible for creating the necessary conditions for security. On the other hand, terrorist groups are positioned as a hindrance to Nigeria’s democratic unity and collective progress.

In addition, discursive claims about the benefits of liberal democracy or secularism implicitly creates a Euro-centric or west-centric positioning.¹¹⁰ Specifically, this positions Euro-America as the standard of political, social, and economic development of which other societies, including Nigeria, should gravitate towards. In so doing, Nigeria is tacitly positioned as its radical counterpart or a deviant other, plagued by political instability, religious intolerance, and issues of development or lack thereof.¹¹¹

5.2. Constructing ‘ungoverned spaces’ in north-eastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin

I continue in this section by examining the reproduction of the Nigerian self through constructions of ungoverned spaces in north-eastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin. More specifically, this entails the construction of certain geographical spaces, including north-east Nigeria and the LCB, as largely ungoverned and as sites for terrorist activities due to the perceived lack of democratic structures and development. As such they are portrayed as posing

¹¹⁰ Parashar, “Terrorism and the postcolonial state.”

¹¹¹ See, Kwesi Aning “Security, the war on terror, and official development assistance.”

a significant threat to, and at the same time enable the reproduction of, Nigeria's identity. This construction of ungoverned spaces evidently facilitates the othering peoples, communities, and societies in Nigeria and beyond, posing important consequences as I show below.

5.2.1. Predication

The National Security Strategy offers a good starting point in that it makes an explicit reference to this trope of "ungoverned spaces," which I draw upon to unpack this construction of the Nigerian self. The "north-east" is specifically defined as follows:

To defeat terrorism, we cannot leave anyone behind, **we cannot have ungoverned spaces in the north-east**. It is time **we leverage on our democratic processes** to increase access to decision making for a majority of our citizens. Inclusive, non-discriminatory and participatory governance is more likely to detect discontent before it erupts. The goal of politics must be to lift our people out of poverty and provide them with the enabling environment to compete favorably. **We are confident that our governance approach** to countering insurgency addresses the multiple factors that link peace, security, development, rule of law and respect for human rights.¹¹²

This designation of 'ungoverned spaces' in north-east Nigeria is underpinned by the perceived lack of governance structures, described as providing ground for terrorism. Thus, the predication of 'leveraging on our democratic processes to increase access,' or the 'goal of lift[ing] our people out of poverty' illustrates the ways in which Nigeria's identity is constructed, by positioning the north-east as its deviant equivalent. This spatial othering enables managing peoples and communities in north-east Nigeria according to certain accepted standards supportive of democratic values and processes, designating this region as comparatively backward (in relation to other parts of Nigeria), as terrorist sanctuaries and, most importantly, a blockage to a unique Nigerian self.

¹¹² NSS 2014, p.35. see also; NSS 2014, p.14; NSS 2019, p.9; The Buhari Plan, p.28

In 2013, a similar narrative was articulated by Jonathan in his address at the 68th UNGA: “terrorism in a few states in the north east of our country is a challenge to national stability, and we will spare no effort, we will use every resource at our disposal, with due regard for human rights and the rule of law.”¹¹³ In one sense, this seeks to project the image of a democratic Nigeria to a global audience, acting with due consideration of human rights and within the framework of the law. It also constructs the credibility and capability of the Nigerian federal government to deal with the problem of terrorism in Nigeria. Yet, this depicts the north-east as a specific kind of place where political authority is contested, and normal life is disrupted by violence and danger.

The Buhari Plan for the North-East is another important text outlining the presidential initiative, policies, and programmes for the north-east region. Hence, it provides a significant source of information about counter-terrorism and constructions of identity.¹¹⁴ In particular, north-east Nigeria is defined in the following way:

The failure of leadership and effective institutions to drive the advancement of human capacity from peasant dependence to independence and self-determination **has held back the North-East region** over the years; **they are root causes of the current insurgency**. The region’s states need to achieve a system of government that works for the people and guarantees their welfare and progress. The system should promulgate policies and governmental actions that will boost the socio-economic wellbeing of the populace at large and enhance **democratic development**. The different elements of good governance to be addressed include accountability and transparency in public administration, eliminating the root causes of corruption, a credible electoral process, the rule of law, working to promote justice through the judiciary, and effective leadership skills to address these and the security challenges in the region.¹¹⁵

Leadership failure and the lack of effective institutions in the north-east, are linked to terrorism and terrorists to permit the reproduction of Nigeria’s image of democratic and progressive.

¹¹³ Address by President Jonathan at the 68th UNGA, 2013. Available online from: <https://gadebate.un.org/en/68/nigeria> [Accessed 10 April 2020]

¹¹⁴ Another significant text outlining various state initiative for the north-east, is the Presidential Initiative for the North East (PINE) 2015-2020, pp.6-9

¹¹⁵ The Buhari Plan 2016, p.31

More specifically, the predication of ‘advancement of human capacity from peasant dependency to self-determination’ especially points to modernization discourses and the biopolitics of counter-terrorism, as ways through which social life is produced. The Buhari Plan for the North-East, though, adds that: “security is the precondition for the return of productive normality in the region, through increased military presence to recover territories from the terrorists to ensure the safe return of displaced persons and development.”¹¹⁶

This notion of increased state/military presence in the north-east as the pre-condition for stability and progress, populates other official texts too.¹¹⁷ The PCNI writes that ‘military victory over the insurgents is the first prerequisite for restoring normalcy in the north-east, as this will give confidence to millions of IDPs to return and, begin rebuilding their lives and livelihoods.’¹¹⁸ The Ministry of Interior Report equally notes that “after the military win the war, by dismantling the structures of the terrorists in the north east before the strategic plan to win the peace can be implemented.”¹¹⁹ Again, Buhari stated that: “the government that I lead will do everything to free Nigeria from terrorism...no matter how long, we will reclaim every inch of the Nigerian territory in the north east under the control of Boko Haram.”¹²⁰ The underpinning assumption and objectives of counter-terrorism here entails designating troubled spaces to appropriately manage potential threats through different modes of governing, including military and developmental measures. This may also serve as a way of disavowing responsibility for failures, thus re-assuring audiences in Nigeria (and beyond) of the state’s commitment or competence.

A rather flexible, and an expansive, construction of ungoverned spaces is offered in the NSS, which ambiguously includes territories beyond Nigeria’s north-east. Specifically, north-

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p.21

¹¹⁷ See also: PCVE Policy Framework 2017, p6; NSS 2019, p1; Address by President Jonathan 69th UNGA, 2014

¹¹⁸ PCNI 2015, p.21. see also, p.13, and 19

¹¹⁹ Ministry of Interior, The journey so far, 2015-2018, p.18

¹²⁰ Nigeria: A conversation with President Muhammadu Buhari, at United States Institute for Peace, 2015

east Nigeria is constructed “as a vast territory with a shared boundary with three countries (including Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republic) which has a history of sectarian violence and cross-border crime.”¹²¹ It adds thus:

It is the staging base of the Boko Haram currently waging a costly asymmetrical war on the country. Beside the Boko Haram insurgency, the North-East with its unique geo-weather conditions is a potentially rich region in solid minerals, hydrocarbon and water resources (Lake Chad and other bodies of water). **The relative economic, geographic and sometimes political challenges in some of the neighbouring countries encourage illegal migrations, free-flow of illegal small arms and light weapons, radical indoctrination and recruitment and other cross-border crimes.**¹²²

On the one hand, this text constructs the north-east region as a vast, under-governed space encompassing the Lake Chad Basin which includes countries such as Cameroon, Chad, and Niger republic. And on the other, we see an alternative construction of these spaces as potential sites for resource exploitation for economic benefits. Written thus, the following measures are outlined to manage state weakness or failure within this region: “taking interest in the conflicts and events in neighbouring countries...and collaborating with contiguous neighbours.”¹²³

Other examples of this construction of ungoverned spaces in Nigeria’s north-east and around the LCB is expressed in the NACTEST:

A major security concern within Nigeria is the ease with which persons and goods enter and leave the country through borders, which are inadequately protected. Notwithstanding the provisions of the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement between member states, it is expected that persons entering the country must be duly documented and accounted for. **The porous nature of the borders has been responsible for the influx of illegal aliens, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, smuggling, trafficking in persons, illegal cross-border trading and other trans-border crimes. Irrespective of the strength in cross-border cultural affinity, the effect of criminally minded individuals entering the country to perpetrate acts of terrorism is high.** This will require establishing joint border patrols with contiguous neighbours and enhancing traditional border security systems.¹²⁴

¹²¹ NSS 2014, p.9

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ Ibid, p.15

¹²⁴ NACTEST 2016, p.22

This illustrates the ways in which Nigeria's territorial boundary – and identity – is constructed, in opposition to its 'problematic' region and neighbours. Such references to 'the influx of illegal aliens,' or 'criminally minded individuals 'entering' the country to perpetuate acts of terrorism,' signify the lack of democratic structures and progress in countries around the LCB. It provides justification for intervention and upholds the idea of Nigeria as (comparatively) democratic and progressive. Thus, joint border patrols with neighbouring countries, as well as membership in sub-regional organisations such as ECOWAS, ultimately acts as a way of self-writing (or self-preservation).

In 2016, the Defence Headquarters stated in a press release that "the security forces will continue to pursue terrorists who operate on the fringes of our borders, until they are completely flushed out of our country."¹²⁵ Similarly, the Counter-terrorism Centre Report stated in 2018: "Boko Haram's attacks in the North-east is attributed to use of hard drugs, hence we must control chemical substances beyond materials for explosives but also illicit drug trafficking...smuggled into Nigeria due to the porosity of the borders in the north east."¹²⁶ These official pronouncements further illustrate constructions of Nigeria's identity which, as we have seen, relies upon the designation of threatening spaces or territories in north-east Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin. This, of course, constructs Nigeria's sovereignty over its territorial borders and communicates its relative safety (in relation to the LCB) to Nigerians and other audiences.

5.2.2. Presupposition

The predication above show constructions of ungoverned spaces in north-east Nigeria and the LCB, and how this enables the reproduction of a precise Nigerian identity. The following

¹²⁵ Terrorists lay land mines on farmland. *DefenceHq*. April 26, 2016. Available online from: <https://defenceinfo.mil.ng> [Accessed 24 June 2020]

¹²⁶ CTC Report 2018, pp.43-44

section interrogates this representation, which uses geography as a discursive resource.¹²⁷ For context, the emergence of this concept of ‘ungoverned spaces’ can be located in the databases of the RAND corporation,¹²⁸ as well as in speeches by U.S presidents, European cabinet ministers, and is commonly reproduced in different political, humanitarian, and economic contexts.¹²⁹ This narrative often suggest ambiguous meanings and perform different geopolitical and biopolitical functions worth identifying in turn (although this section of my thesis is primarily interested in how it contributes to reinforcing a specific Nigerian self).

A first meaning is a geopolitical one, underpinned by two related assumptions. On the one hand, such designations draw on several attributes to pathologize, de-territorialise and differentiate between spaces, territories, countries, and communities. And on the other, it attempts to fix terrorism and terrorists within these designated spaces. According to Elden, this illustrates the performance – and control – of territory through which the fluid network of terror could be fixed in a bounded space.¹³⁰ This link between terror and territory is highlighted in various texts analysed above through references to, for example, ‘reclaiming territory from terrorists,’ or ‘military victory over terrorists,’ or ‘control of our borders’, which serves in fixing Nigeria’s territorial borders (and identity). This justifies state/military presence ostensibly to fill the power vacuum exploited by the terrorist groups in so-called ungoverned areas. Bilgin and Morton describes this as ‘embedded statism’, which implies the unquestioned

¹²⁷ See, Andrew Teverson and Sara Upstone. *Postcolonial Spaces: the politics of place in contemporary culture*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Madhu Krishnan, “Introduction: postcolonial spaces across forms.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. 53, 6 (2017), 629-633; Agnew J., and Corbridge S. *Mastering space: hegemony, territory and international political economy*. (London: Routledge, 1995).

¹²⁸ A. Rabasa et al. *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and reducing terrorism risks* (Santa Monica, Pittsburgh: Rand Corporation, 2007)

¹²⁹ P. Janosch and C. Schetter, “Spatial-moral ordering in the War on Terror: ungoverned spaces as challenge to Humanitarianism.” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*. (2020)

¹³⁰ S. Elden, “Terror and territory.”

and naturalised reliance on the state as the primary container or provider of political life (including security).¹³¹

A second related meaning is a biopolitical one.¹³² This entails how territories, populations, and communities are managed through various techniques of governing. The Buhari Plan for the North-East refers to the various developmental strategies for ‘advancement of human capacity in the north east in order to transform it from peasant dependence to self-determination.’¹³³ Duffield has showed how the linkage of development and security function as a biopolitical configuration through which populations and societies are managed in a form that is supportive of global order.¹³⁴ Themes such as development, good governance, and progress, he adds, can be characterised as advocating a normative neoliberal democratic doctrine which re-emerged in the 1990s in fields of development studies and development policy.¹³⁵ Marquette and Beswick also notes that these practices of enhancing the capacities and structures of states in developing countries re-emerged in the post-cold war, especially post-9/11, era.¹³⁶

The literature on counter-terrorism is replete with analyses around the concept of ungoverned spaces, safe haven, black hole, or terrorist sanctuary in so-called weak states or regions.¹³⁷ Empirical cases typically include societies in the Middle East, Africa, and

¹³¹ P. Bilgin and D. Morton, “Historicising the representation of “failed states”: beyond the Cold War annexation of the social sciences.” *Third World Quarterly*. 23, 1 (2002), 55-80.

¹³² See, M. Dillon and L. Lobo-Guberrero, “Biopolitics of security in the 21st century: an introduction.” *Review of International Studies*. 34 (2008), 265-92; M. Foucault, *The history of sexuality. Vol. 1: the will to knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1998).

¹³³ The Buhari Plan, p.31

¹³⁴ M. Duffield, “Development, territories, and the people: consolidating the external sovereign frontier.”

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ H. Marquette and D. Beswick, “State building, security and development: state building as new development paradigm.” *Third World Quarterly*. 32, 10 (2011), 1703-14

¹³⁷ See, E.G Arsenault and T. Bacon, “Disaggregating and defeating terrorist safe havens”; S.P Cohen. *The idea of Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 309-311; R. Korteweg, “Black holes: on terrorist sanctuaries and governmental weakness.” *Civil Wars*. 10, 1 (2008), 60-71

increasingly, Latin America.¹³⁸ Much of this work explore how space is mobilised in designating security threat and justifying various forms of (state) intervention. For example, Pakistan is frequently described as ‘an overarching safe haven, or a home of several sanctuaries.’¹³⁹ The concept of ungoverned space, though, has been modified, challenged, and rejected in academic and policy circles¹⁴⁰ but still remain within the discursive repertoire of Nigerian policymakers. In view of this background, I examine two important presuppositions emanating from Section 5.1.1.

The first presupposition relates to the representation of north-east Nigeria (this includes Yobe, Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, and Taraba state) as deficient of democratic structures and development and as such different from other geographical parts of Nigeria. As the Buhari Plan writes: ‘the region’s states need a system of government that guarantees democratic development and progress, due to widespread illiteracy and poverty.’¹⁴¹ Jonathan also stated that, ‘terrorism in a few states in the north east as a challenge to national stability.’¹⁴² The NSS puts this succinctly: ‘to defeat terrorism [in Nigeria] we cannot leave anyone behind, we cannot have ungoverned spaces in the north east.’¹⁴³ And, according to the PCNI, ‘reclaiming territories in the north east through military victory will enable the promotion of good governance, democracy, and progress.’¹⁴⁴

Such representations of north-east Nigeria reinforces common assumptions about northern(eastern) Nigeria as sites of religious or sectarian violence, backward communities,

¹³⁸ See, for example, E. Newman, “Weak states, state failure, and terrorism.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 19, 4 (2007), 463-88

¹³⁹ E.G Arsenault and T. Bacon “Disaggregating and defeating terrorist safe havens.”

¹⁴⁰ See, D. Oakley and P. Proctor, “Ten years of GWOT, the failure of democratization, and the fallacy of “ungoverned spaces”.” *Journal of Strategic Studies*. 5, 1 (2012), 1-14; S. Dalby, “Calling 911: Geopolitics, security and America’s New War.” *Geopolitics*. 8, 3 (2003), 61-68

¹⁴¹ The Buhari Plan, p.31

¹⁴² Address by President Jonathan at the 68th UNGA, 2013.

¹⁴³ NSS, p.35

¹⁴⁴ PCNI, p.21

poverty, and illiteracy, while the southern region is cast as a zone of peace, with modernising and democratic communities.¹⁴⁵ In another sense, however, this highlights the flexibility (and contradiction) of the Nigerian self. Specifically, although this (constructed) regional deficit contributes to upholding a certain image of Nigeria (as democratic and progressive), it shifts from assumptions about ethno-religious diversity and marginalization as discussed in Section 5.1. This representation, nonetheless, pose several problems for policy, social identity, and security in the north-east and beyond, as I show later in this section.

The second presupposition describes the north-east as a ‘vast territory’,¹⁴⁶ sprawling across the LCB and includes countries such as Cameroon, Niger Republic, and Chad. This, in part, illustrates the malleability of this designation of ungoverned spaces, as well as Nigeria’s identity. The NSS describes north-east Nigeria as ‘the staging base of Boko Haram waging war on Nigeria, due to the relative economic, political, and geographical challenges facing our neighbouring countries.’¹⁴⁷ Similarly, the NACTEST writes that ‘irrespective of the strength in cross-border cultural affinity, the effect of criminally minded individuals entering our country to perpetrate acts of terrorism is high.’¹⁴⁸ This representation seeks to distinguish Nigeria from its ‘problematic’ neighbours and, through this, portray terrorists as outsiders, foreigners, or aliens from these troubled spaces. In other words, terrorism in Nigeria is externalised, inverted, and reconfigured as a regional problem encouraged by state weakness or failure in the LCB.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ In his examination of terrorism in Nigeria, Onuoha argued that the north-east is ‘a breeding ground for terrorism in Nigeria.’ Other studies refer to the prominence of sectarian violence, poverty, illiteracy, and other forms of marginalization in the north-east as constituting a ground for terrorism. See, F.C Onuoha, “The Isamist Challenge: Nigeria’s Boko Haram crisis explained.” See also, A. Adesoji, “Boko Haram uprising and Islamic revivalism in Nigeria,” I. Abhedo and O. Osumah, “The Boko Haram uprising: how should Nigeria respond?”

¹⁴⁶ NSS 2014, p.9

¹⁴⁷ NSS 2014, p.9

¹⁴⁸ NACTEST 2016, p.22

¹⁴⁹ V. Comolli, “The regional Problem of Boko Haram.” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*. 57, 4 (2015), 109-117

There is a growing body of literature exploring counter-terrorism efforts in the LCB,¹⁵⁰ although, outside the scope of my thesis. Nonetheless, I briefly highlight representations of the LCB within this literature to show important intertextualities between policy and academic debates (as well as national and regional objectives of counter-terrorism). Agbiboa describes Nigeria's neighbours and region as 'borders that continue to bother us';¹⁵¹ which pertinently invigorate assumptions regarding certain geopolitical differences, and about the threats posed by Nigeria's neighbours in the LCB. Tar and Mustapha explore subregional counter-terrorism efforts in the LCB to identify different factors impeding state or multinational intervention, including poor governance, relative deprivation, porosity of borders and the illicit flow of weapons across borders.¹⁵² This stream of ideas and analyses, as we can see, reproduce similar assumptions about the threats posed by ungoverned spaces in the LCB to the Nigerian self (as well as dominant ideas regarding the causes of insecurity in this region).

Yet the above representation raises pertinent questions, confusion, and implication. One is that such fluid constructions of space raise questions concerning Nigeria's territorial boundary, interrogating the location and limits (or lack) of its colonial inherited frontiers. It also highlights an important conflict at the heart of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies, especially between national and sub-regional goals which may potentially undermine ongoing or future collaborations between Nigeria and the countries within the LCB. What is more, these spaces are alternatively written as potential sites for economic activities given their favourable 'climatic conditions, as well as the deposit of natural minerals, hydrocarbon, and water

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, D.E Abgiboa, "Borders that continue to bother us: the politics of border security cooperation in Africa's Lake Chad Basin." *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*. 55, 4 (2017), 403-25; U.A Tar and M. Mustapha, "The emerging architecture of a regional security complex in the Lake Chad Basin."; E.M Atangana, "The underlying reasons for the emerging dynamic of regional security cooperation against Boko Haram." *Africa Review*. 10, 2 (2018), 206-15

¹⁵¹ D.E Abgiboa "Borders that continue to bother us: the politics of border security cooperation in Africa's Lake Chad Basin."

¹⁵² U.A Tar and M. Mustapha "The emerging architecture of a regional security complex in the Lake Chad Basin."

resources.’¹⁵³ These connotations sit alongside other negative representations, revealing the flexibility of this representation. That said, it reinforces statist and colonial discourses, posing two important consequences.¹⁵⁴

First, it places emphasis on state/military power ostensibly to fill the so-called vacuum exploited by terrorist groups in north-east Nigeria and the LCB. The PCNI describes military intervention as the ‘first prerequisite for the return to normalcy and the introduction of other non-military forms of intervention.’¹⁵⁵ A good illustration here is the counter-insurgency operations codenamed LAFIYA DOLE, in which the military command and control centre was moved to Maiduguri in Borno state, described as ‘the epicentre of the insurgency.’¹⁵⁶ There are several reports and allegations of human rights violations linked to this move.¹⁵⁷ This may also contribute to legitimising external intervention in the LCB, and beyond. Bachmann, for example, shows how the Sahel region, which includes the northern parts of Nigeria, is represented as ungoverned by U.S. state officials to justify U.S. intervention in this region.¹⁵⁸

Such state-centric perspectives and territorial conceptualisation of space, as Campana and Ducol argue, typically ignore the changing meaning of state boundaries and their social consequences.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, Africa’s inherited borders have featured prominently in discussions around decolonisation for various reasons, including the challenges posed to African mobilities and identities.¹⁶⁰ Apart from contributing to fixing Nigeria’s inherited colonial borders

¹⁵³ NSS 2014, p.9

¹⁵⁴ S. Elden “Terror and territory;” Agbibo “Borders that continue to bother us: the politics of border security cooperation in Africa’s Lake Chad Basin.”

¹⁵⁵ PCNI 2017, p.21

¹⁵⁶ NSS 2019, p.23

¹⁵⁷ The Guardian, army denies alleged killings by troops on Kaduna-Abuja Highway. *Guardian news*. Available online from: <https://guardian.ng/tag/operation-lafiya-doyle/> [Accessed 10 August 2021]

¹⁵⁸ J. Bachmann, “The danger of ‘under-governed’ spaces: the ‘war on terror’ and its effects on the Sahel region,” pp. 131-162

¹⁵⁹ A. Campana and B. Ducol, “Rethinking terrorist safe havens: Beyond a state-centric approach.” *Civil Wars*. 13, 4 (2011), 396-413

¹⁶⁰ Adotey E. “An Imaginary Line? Decolonisation, Bordering and Borderscapes on the Ghana–Togo Border.” *Third World Quarterly*. (2020) doi:[10.1080/01436597.2020.1813019](https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1813019).

(including through increased border security and regimes), this discourse encourages imperialistic practices such as Nigeria's interference in the internal affairs of its neighbours which may elicit resistance to Nigeria's influence and undermine other sub-regional collaboration.¹⁶¹

The second implication is that the othering of peoples, communities, and territories through this discourse enables the designation of particular social beliefs and practices as backward or dangerous, making them the target of counter-terrorism. Abrahamsen, for example, shows how the discourse of ungoverned spaces links Africa's poor – her dangerous classes – the marginalised and excluded, to international security problems and terrorism.¹⁶² This representation, as such, contributes to producing a negative image of fear of the north-east and the LCB, creating hostility and suspicion towards the population and communities in these spaces, as well as for their beliefs and practices.¹⁶³

5.2.3. Summary: subject-positioning

This construction and representation of ungoverned spaces, invariably positions north-east Nigeria and the countries along the LCB as problematic and deviant, in relation to other parts of Nigeria.¹⁶⁴ At the same time, this situates the Nigerian state as primarily responsible for providing security and stability in spaces designated as ungoverned. Furthermore, Nigeria is positioned as relatively democratic and progressive, in relation to other countries in the Lake

¹⁶¹ Keenan explains how the increased U.S presence in the Sahara-Sahel region since 2003 sustained through operations such as the US-Africa Command (US-AFRICOM), which has increased the instability in the region. See, J.H Keenan, "Africa unsecured? The role of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) in securing US imperial interests in Africa."

¹⁶² R. Abrahamsen, "Blair's Africa: the politics of securitization and fear." *Alternatives*. 30 (2005), 55-80

¹⁶³ A. Adesoji "Boko Haram uprising and Islamic revivalism in Nigeria;" Onuoha "The Isamist Challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram crisis explained."

¹⁶⁴ Onuoha "The Isamist Challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram crisis explained."

Chad basin. Such an implicitly imperialistic discourse portrays Nigeria as the main regional actor in the LCB, and within West African more broadly.¹⁶⁵

One fall out of this, apart from the contestation of Nigeria's territorial boundary, include potential resistance to Nigeria's leadership in various regional affairs. So far, regional collaboration especially through the MNJTF, whose operations were expanded to include counter-terrorism in 2012, remain the major effort in this regard. This regional effort, however, has been plagued by the lack of intelligence sharing among the participating countries and the difficulty of a borderless operation against terrorist groups (cutting across in Borno state, Nigeria; Diffa in Niger; Kolofata in Cameroon; and around some Lake Chad Islands).¹⁶⁶

5.3. Constructions of time and the Nigerian self

In Section 5.1, I examined constructions of the Nigerian self through references to Nigeria's ethno-religiously diverse and marginalized society. Section 5.2 looked at how this identity is reproduced using geography as a discursive resource, to illustrate constructions of ungoverned spaces in north-east Nigeria and the LCB. Building on this, the following section explores the reproduction of this identity through constructions of time and temporality. In particular, I explore different temporal chronotypes offering contrasting ideas about Nigeria. Precisely, 'pre-2015' suggest a first chronotype of temporal linearity, in which increased terrorist violence is linked to other economic, political, and social predicaments that characterises state weakness and regression. '2015' and beyond, on the other hand, represent a temporal interval or rupture from the 'past,' as well as a linear, predictable, and knowable 'future' which reinforce the idea of a democratic and progressive Nigeria.

¹⁶⁵ D.E Abgiboa "Borders that continue to bother us: the politics of border security cooperation in Africa's Lake Chad Basin."

¹⁶⁶ U.A Tar and M. Mustapha "The emerging architecture of a regional security complex in the Lake Chad Basin."

5.3.1. Predication

The NACTEST provides a useful starting point in mapping this discourse, given that it is described as “the first published document in 2014, that outlines Nigeria’s effort at combating terrorism, and as a subset of the National Security Strategy”.¹⁶⁷ This was re-stated in the CTC report: “the launch of the NACTEST in 2014 is Nigeria’s first policy level response to terrorism in order to re-engage the population that is losing or may have lost faith in the ongoing efforts against terrorism.”¹⁶⁸ Rear Admiral Okoi, Nigeria’s chief of Intelligence Agencies, described 2015, particularly between February and May, as ‘an important period giving the various far reaching operations to defeat Boko Haram.’¹⁶⁹ He subsequently stated that this objective, as ‘instructed by President Jonathan, must be achieved before the election in May 2015 to restore faith in Nigerians.’¹⁷⁰ Thus, the elaboration of the NACTEST in 2014 and other counter-terrorism efforts to ‘re-engage a disillusioned population’, explicitly point to a temporal discourse of linearity. This suggests the continued dominance of terrorist groups in Nigeria or part thereof, along with other structural issues such as poverty. The Buhari Plan for the North-East explains:

violent attacks on civilians by Boko Haram since 2009, has left widespread devastation in Nigeria especially in the north east; however, **since the inauguration of President Buhari’s administration in 2015**, there has been intensified military operations against Boko Haram, which has degraded the group’s capability, leading to a significant improvement of the security situation in Nigeria.¹⁷¹

This narrative is reinforced in the NACTEST in the following way: ‘terrorism stems from poverty, lack, poor governance which are the derivative of the cancer of corruption, a radicaliser, as it destroys faith in the government; it has eaten deep into the fabric of the

¹⁶⁷ NACTEST 2014, p.3

¹⁶⁸ CTC Report 2018, p.34

¹⁶⁹ Update on security in Nigeria and the campaign against Boko Haram, Atlantic Council, 2015

¹⁷⁰ The Buhari plan 2016, p.5

¹⁷¹ Ibid

nation.’¹⁷² But since 2015, however, ‘the insurgency has been degraded and corruption is also being fought by the administration.’¹⁷³ Here the predication of ‘violent attack on civilians since 2009,’ or ‘since 2015 the insurgency has been degraded,’ presents at least two additional – and contrasting – temporal shapes, underpinned by certain assumptions about Nigeria. First, 2015 and beyond, implies a temporal rupture from certain ‘regressive’ past, that is, pre-2015. Second, this also points to a linear, predictable, and progressive future of decreasing violence and socio-economic progress. Buhari, in a conversation in Washington D.C. in 2015, stated that:

We are confident that we would defeat terrorism in our country and region because we have the will to win this fight, because we have the support of the Nigerian people **who voted us into office to do things differently in order to secure them from harm**. We must change our strategy in a manner that will prioritize the mobilization of maximum capacity to fight terrorism while ensuring the safety of local communities.¹⁷⁴

In 2016, at the UNGA, Buhari again declared that: “Nigeria has made remarkable progress to defeat Boko Haram whose capacity to launch attacks has been degraded.”¹⁷⁵ This signifier of ‘degrading terrorists’ capability’ is consistently referred to in other texts too, including in press releases by the Defence Headquarters which are not covered here.¹⁷⁶ This reinvokes assumptions of a past discontinuous to the present/future, as well as a predictable, continuous and knowable future marked by a steady decline in terrorism.

The PCVE Policy Framework provides more illustrations of constructions of time and identity: “the challenge of violent extremism to national progress, democracy, and development was recognised by successive governments, however, there was no commitment

¹⁷² NACTEST 2016, p.4

¹⁷³ NACTEST 2016, p.4

¹⁷⁴ Nigeria: A conversation with President Muhammadu Buhari, 2015

¹⁷⁵ Address by President Buhari at 71st UNGA, 2016

¹⁷⁶ See, Boko Haram now gives loans to youth as bait for membership. *DefenceHq*. April 20, 2016. Available online from: <https://defenceinfo.mil.ng> [Accessed 24 June 2020]; Terrorists lay land mines on farmland. *DefenceHq*; August 16, 2015; Boko Haram lures people together to bomb. *DefenceHq*; PCNI 2015, p.21; ISWAP execution: don’t let terrorists divide us, Buhari tells Nigerians. *The Guardian*.

for dealing with this and its root causes.”¹⁷⁷ This corroborates the PCVE Country Report which states that ‘Boko Haram emerged out of an environment of disillusion, characterised by corruption, poverty, in which Nigerians felt socially, politically, and economically marginalized by a government perceived as too weak.’¹⁷⁸ Still, the text adds: “recent attempts have increased significantly, demonstrated in part by the launch of a broad policy framework to provide direction and coordination.”¹⁷⁹ The Ministry of Interior Report provides clear intertextualities by explicitly stating that:

At the time this administration came into power in May 2015, huge swathes of Nigeria’s territory particularly in the North-east were under the control of the Boko Haram insurgents. **One distinctive characteristic of the period was the overwhelming presence of violence in the Nigerian society.** Whether it is bomb blasts going off in a marketplace or places of worship (churches and mosques), government offices, business centres, crowded areas, or kidnapping of innocent school children of the political class and of ordinary citizens or great politicians themselves or innocent people are held at ransom by some unemployed violent group to achieve some ends. In fact, major highways had become all but impassable. It was indeed a difficult situation.¹⁸⁰

As we can see, references to ‘successive governments’, ‘recent attempts’, ‘this administration’, or ‘this period’, reproduce the above-mentioned temporal shapes which ultimately serve as resources in fixing – or contesting – a specific identity of Nigeria. Pre-2015 signifies a linear sequence of the ‘overwhelming presence of terrorist violence, corruption, and the general lack of progress, democracy, and development.’ On the one hand, 2015 and beyond, suggest a radical rupture from this regressive past, with renewed commitment (and competence) to address these issues which suggest a linear, progressive, future.

A similar theme recurs in the National Security Strategy: “in 2015 Nigeria was at a defining moment in her history, as acts of terrorism were at their peak and constituted an

¹⁷⁷ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, pp.9-10

¹⁷⁸ PCVE Country Report 2017, p.6

¹⁷⁹ PCVE Country Report 2017, p.6

¹⁸⁰ Ministry of Interior, p.14

existential threat, in that Boko Haram occupied large swathes of territory in the north east to consolidate its dominance.”¹⁸¹ Further adding that, “the economy was in recession, corruption was eroding confidence in the government, and our country was in despair, bereft of self-confidence and in dire need of repositioning.”¹⁸² Here again, 2015 signify ‘a defining moment, marked by the dominance of the terrorists, corruption, and economic regression’, reproduce the idea of a temporal break from a gloomy ‘past’ and implies a predictable, progressive future.

The NSS further outlines the following measures:

Consequently, we promised to pursue progressive change on three fronts: security, economy and the fight against corruption. On security, we proceeded to immediately strengthen our international partnerships, particularly our participation in the Multi-National Joint Task Force and to consolidate our collaboration with the Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit. Internally, we initiated a major reorganisation of the Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency operation, codenamed LAFIYA DOLE and moved the Military Command and Control Centre to Maiduguri in Borno State, the epicenter of the insurgency. We also facilitated improved funding, procurement, operations, training, logistics and welfare for the security agencies to ramp up security operations across the nation. Under the relentless onslaught of our Armed Forces and allies, Boko Haram has been substantially degraded. Areas previously occupied by the terrorists in the North East have also been freed and Internally Displaced Persons are voluntarily returning to their homes.¹⁸³

This idea of ‘progressive change’ constituted by security, economy, and the fight against corruption, clearly illustrates constructions of identity. Also, the predication of ‘reclaiming of territories through a relentless onslaught by the military’ (re-)constitutes terrorist groups as relatively inferior, in relation to a stronger and progressive Nigeria. According to the NSS:

Since 2015, there have been several significant changes in Nigeria’s security environment. The most prominent is the gradual but steady degrading of the capability of Boko Haram Terrorists and other forms of insurgency. **Nigeria is stronger in 2019**, having significantly incapacitated the terrorists. This was achieved through the valiant efforts of our Armed Forces, security agencies and other Nigerians, in collaboration with our international allies.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ NSS 2019, p.iii

¹⁸² NSS 2019, p.iii

¹⁸³ Ibid

¹⁸⁴ NSS 2019, p.59

As indicated in the above text, Nigeria is ‘stronger in 2019’ having significantly incapacitated the terrorist groups, and in so doing, reproduce binaries of self/other, past/present/and future, and regressive/progressive. This, however, legitimises increased state intervention and the use of military force in counter-terrorism exercise, as well as re-assuring the Nigerian electorate and others of the state’s (or administration’s) capability.

5.3.2. Presuppositions

Section 5.3.1 illustrates the role of time in constructing the Nigerian self,¹⁸⁵ producing two contrasting ideas: regressive and progressive. I discuss these in turn, along with certain assumptions underpinning them including about the Nigerian state, and what this means for security in Nigeria. The first presupposition portrays the period before 2015 – notably from 2009 – as temporally linear due to the increased dominance of terrorist groups in Nigeria, along with other structural problems such as poverty. The Buhari Plan for the North-East writes that, ‘since 2009 Nigeria has been devastated by Boko Haram insurgency which was facilitated by poverty, poor governance, and systemic and institutional corruption.’¹⁸⁶ In agreement with this perspective, the PCVE Policy Framework point to the failure of successive governments to take concrete steps towards addressing the insurgency and its root causes.¹⁸⁷

This inevitably incites the idea of weak state structures, in relation to the dominance of the threats posed by specific terrorist groups. As the PCVE Country Report puts it: ‘Boko

¹⁸⁵ The productivity and importance of time has received considerable attention in critical scholarship on security and terrorism. Jarvis, for example, explores how the Bush administration’s War on Terror discourse produce different temporal forms, including temporal discontinuity, linearity, and timeless(ness). Also, Aradau and Munster’s work describes how the practice of ‘underwriting terrorism’ by insurance companies produces time as an indefinite continuity which attempts to resolve the distance and uncertainty between the present and the future. See, for example, C. Aradau and R.V Munster, “Insuring terrorism, assuring subjects, ensuring normality: the politics of risk after 9/11”; K.M Fisher, “Exploring the temporality in/of British counterterrorism law and law making”; L. Jarvis, “Times of terror: writing temporality into the War on Terror.”

¹⁸⁶ The Buhari Plan 2016, p.5

¹⁸⁷ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, pp.9-10

Haram emerged out of an environment of disillusion, in which Nigerians felt socially, politically, and economically marginalised by a ‘weak’ government.’¹⁸⁸ The Ministry of Interior Report equally describes the overwhelming presence of terrorist violence especially since 2009, as a distinctive feature of Nigeria before the emergence of the Buhari administration in May 2015. This implies, on the one hand, a steady decline of state structures (or power) since 2009 reflected in the loss of territories to terrorist groups. The issue of corruption and lack of economic progress also re-inscribes this idea of weak state structures, which cogently refers to the discourse of democracy and progress discussed in Section 5.1. Yet, in another sense, this notion of state regression suggests the stagnation of other aspects of the Nigerian society including social cohesion, economic progress, and security. The PCVE country report hints at this: ‘Nigerians felt marginalized due to the disillusionment created by state weakness in which Boko Haram emerged.’¹⁸⁹

Similar state-centric narratives are commonly deployed – and reproduced – in terrorism studies especially since the 1990s and, increasingly, after 9/11.¹⁹⁰ I have already highlighted some of these studies and a range of unresolved claims about the link between state failure and terrorism, in Sections 5.1 and 5.2. It is worth highlighting, though, that this notion of state sovereignty typically requires the conception of anarchy or difference. Thus, representing the Nigerian state as weak ultimately relies upon constructions of the dominant terrorist other¹⁹¹ and, in so doing, provides justification for re-defining state sovereignty through state-led counter-terrorism interventions that prioritise military force.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ PCVE Country Report 2017, p.6

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p.6

¹⁹⁰ See, A. Campana and B. Ducof “Rethinking terrorist safe havens: Beyond a state-centric approach.”

¹⁹¹ R.K Ashley, “Untying the sovereign state: a double reading of the anarchic problematique.” *Millennium*. 17, 2 (1988), 227-62

¹⁹² P. Bilgin and D. Morton “Historicising the representation of “failed states”: beyond the Cold War annexation of the social sciences.”

The second presupposition, contrastingly, portrays the emergence of the Buhari administration in May 2015 as a ‘defining moment in repositioning the country, through progressive changes introduced to degrade the terrorists/terrorism.’¹⁹³ In this sense, ‘pre-2015’ symbolises the ‘other’s’ time’, or a ‘discontinuous past.’ Specifically, it points to the increasing terrorist violence and poor governance which constitutes a regressive past, while ‘2015 and beyond,’ suggests a rupture from this ‘past’ and a linear, progressive ‘future.’ This produces an equally questionable assumption about state sovereignty or a strong state, as the pre-condition for social and political life. The NSS, for example, writes that ‘we promised ‘progressive’ changes on security, economic, and anti-corruption; Nigeria is stronger in 2019, having significantly incapacitated the terrorists.’¹⁹⁴ It refers to various counter-terrorism efforts, including international and regional security partnerships, the re-organisation of the state’s counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operation (Lafiya Dole), funding, and procurement of weapons.¹⁹⁵ Reclaiming of occupied territories and the relocation of the military command and control to Borno, are cited in other texts as ways of repositioning the state, and most importantly, projecting a specific image of Nigeria.¹⁹⁶

Furthermore, counter-terrorism is linked to other policy initiatives such as anti-corruption and economic regenerative programmes to invigorate the idea of good governance or progress. Corruption, in particular, is described in the NACTEST as a ‘cancer and a radicaliser which breeds violent extremism and terrorism as it destroys faith in the government.’¹⁹⁷ According to the PCVE Country Report, ‘corruption created an environment of disillusionment before the emergence of Buhari’s administration in 2015’.¹⁹⁸ This of course

¹⁹³ Ministry of Interior, p.14

¹⁹⁴ NSS 2019, p.59

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁶ See, Ministry of Interior Report, 18; CTC Report 2018, 5; The Buhari Plan 2016, 21; NACTEST 2016, 23; PCNI 2015, 21-51

¹⁹⁷ NACTEST 2016, p.4

¹⁹⁸ PCVE Country Report 2017, p.6

functions as a means of producing a rather distinct idea of Nigeria through exteriorising corruption – and economic regression – to an imagined ‘past’, or pre-2015.

The above-identified temporal discourse permeates academic work on Nigeria’s counter-terrorism approach. For example, Onapajo examine counter-terrorism strategies of the Jonathan and the Buhari administrations,¹⁹⁹ arguing that some significant changes are identifiable since the emergence of Buhari in 2015. Among this include, he adds, ‘the steady reduction in terrorist attacks due to the sustained military pressure on the terrorists, and the overall commitment of the administration to end the insurgency.’²⁰⁰ Ugwueze and Onuoha in a recent study, observe that there has been significant improvements in the security situation in Nigeria due to the increased use of the military approach under Buhari’s administration.²⁰¹ However, to effectively end the insurgency, these studies interject that the state should incorporate and routinise the use of other ‘non-military’ measures.

This temporal narrative is not as stable or infallible as often assumed in policy and academic discourse. The Buhari Plan for the North-East, for instance, writes that ‘degrading terrorists’ capability ‘will lead to’ significant improvement in the security environment in Nigeria.’²⁰² In 2016, Buhari also declared at the UNGA that ‘Nigeria ‘has made progress’ to defeat Boko Haram, whose capacity to launch attacks has been degraded.’²⁰³ This indicates the continued perception of terrorist threats in Nigeria which, in one sense, upsets the temporal distance between pre- and post- 2015. Such perceptions of threats, as Fisher observe, are ‘continuously reconfigured through conceptions of time in which the past, present, and future

¹⁹⁹ H. Onapajo, “Has Nigeria defeated Boko Haram? An appraisal of the counter-terrorism approach under the Buhari administration.”

²⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁰¹ M.I Ugwueze and F. Onuoha “Hard versus soft measures to security: explaining the failure of counter-terrorism strategy in Nigeria.”

²⁰² The Buhari Plan, p.5

²⁰³ Address by President Buhari at 71st UNGA, 2016

risk and counter-terrorism governance are coterminous.’²⁰⁴ Hence, ‘degrading terrorist capability,’ or ‘making significant progress to defeat specific terrorist groups,’ suggests the interlocking of perceptions of such threats rather than a temporal distance as implied.

Another telling aspect is revealed by the political moves made by different government administrations to produce a seemingly positive image of Nigeria, through various counter-terrorism efforts. For example, Ambassador Okoi identified the various attempts by the Jonathan administration to ‘end the insurgency before the elections in May 2015.’²⁰⁵ According to the CTC Report, the NACTEST was promulgated in 2014 to ‘re-engage the Nigerian population which was losing faith in the government due to the surge in violence.’²⁰⁶ The PCNI, on the other hand, writes that ‘the armed forces and security agencies must fulfil the presidential directive [of the Buhari administration] to quell the insurgency by the end of December 2015.’²⁰⁷ This clearly demonstrate the various (and often desperate) moves by different government administrations to invent a certain representation of Nigeria, with regard to the threats posed by terrorism.

The NACTEST, moreover, indicates that ‘even with a robust programme in place, complete prevention of terrorism acts is impossible, hence the goal is to minimise attacks by ensuring improvements in security.’²⁰⁸ This notion of infinite continuity of terrorist violence and the management of risks was re-echoed in the NSS, through defining counter-terrorism as ‘a continuous and long-term effort to degrade the threat.’²⁰⁹ This shift in the objectives of counter-terrorism – from defeating terrorism to managing risks – and further show the flexibility of this temporal discourse. That said, assumptions underpinning this discourse –

²⁰⁴ K.M Fisher, “Exploring the temporality in/of British counterterrorism law and law making.”

²⁰⁵ Update on security in Nigeria and the campaign against Boko Haram, Atlantic Council.

²⁰⁶ CTC Report 2018, p.34

²⁰⁷ PCNI 2015, p.21

²⁰⁸ NACTEST 2016, p.20

²⁰⁹ C. Aradau and R.V Munster, “Insuring terrorism, assuring subjects, ensuring normality: the politics of risk after 9/11;” D.G Marieke and D.G Beatrice “Sentencing risk: temporality and precaution in terrorism trials.”

especially concerning notions of weak and strong state – reproduce limiting Euro-centric and state-centred common senses worth clarifying.

In particular, the binary of ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ state can be located in discussions about the emergence of the modern state in Europe and, later, elsewhere.²¹⁰ Hay and Lister notes that the concept of the state was first invoked in the 17th century to highlight the transition from nomadic life to organised agrarian societies.²¹¹ The modern state is commonly described to have emerged in western Europe, constituted by functional and organisational attributes. Within this formulation of the state(hood), the principle of exclusive sovereignty invested in the state is often taken for granted, otherwise the political community is assumed to descend hastily into the Hobbesian state of nature.²¹² The Weberian account, for instance, pays attention to its modes of operation especially using force or coercion. As Buhari stated, ‘Nigerians voted us in to do things differently, hence we must change our strategy in a way that prioritises the mobilisation of maximum capacity of our military to defeat terrorism.’²¹³ This realist idea of strong or militarised state is typically presented as the appropriate model for any political community striving towards stability and progress.²¹⁴

Mohammed Ayoob’s idea of subaltern realism reflects this perspective, too. He argues that the ‘state’ in the global South are ‘late’ arrivals to the international society and should be allowed to grow up and become ‘strong’ to guarantee (global) stability.²¹⁵ As the PCNI writes: ‘once stability is achieved, the security forces must shift their attention towards integrating the

²¹⁰ For studies around the theory of ‘African state,’ see: M.W Muiu and G. Martin. *A new paradigm of the African State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); E. Pierre, “The contemporary African state: neither African nor state.” *Third World Quarterly*. 18, 4 (1997), 767-75; R.H Jackson, ‘Juridical statehood in Sub-Saharan Africa.’ *Journal of International Affairs*. 46, 1 (1992), 1-16

²¹¹ C. Hay and M. Lister, In C. Hay et al. *The state theories and issues*, pp.1-3.

²¹² See, N. Pourmokhtari, “A postcolonial critique of state sovereignty in ir: the contradictory legacy of a ‘West-centric’ discipline.” *Third World Quarterly*. 34, 10 (2013), 1767-1793; D. Chandler, “New rights for old? Cosmopolitan citizenship and the critique of state sovereignty.” *Political Studies*. 51, 2 (2003), 332-349

²¹³ Nigeria: A conversation with President Muhammadu Buhari, 2015

²¹⁴ Ibid

²¹⁵ M. Ayoob, “Defining Security: a subaltern realist perspective.” *Critical Security Studies*. (1997), 121-46;

local community, and other long-term plans for sustainable development must be prioritised.²¹⁶ Such unresolved and deeply problematic assumptions about the usefulness of militarism and the militarization of counter-terrorism, has been questioned by a significant number of work on Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach.²¹⁷ D'Amato, for example, show how repressive military measures in Nigeria facilitates Boko Haram's transnational activities and expansion, forcing the group to seek refuge in neighbouring countries (see Chapter 1 for more discussion on this).²¹⁸

Also, as Grovogui observes, such conceptualisations of state(hood) often translate into a normative lack, and deviations, in postcolonial Africa instead of treating the 'African condition'²¹⁹ as evidence that undermines this universalised Westphalian common-sense. For Bhabra, the historical and connected sociologies of statehood in postcolonial societies, which highlights the effects of colonialism and neo-colonial forms of imaginary and power difference, is significant especially in understanding how the state is organised and reproduced in these societies.²²⁰ Acknowledging the socio-historical context of Nigeria, as Barkawi and Laffey suggests,²²¹ undermine this binary of strong/weak, or progressive/regressive. Moreover, counter-terrorism in Nigeria (and elsewhere) often involve different non-state actors, including vigilante groups.²²² For example, the PCNI refers to 'a framework which integrates non-state

²¹⁶ PCNI, p.21

²¹⁷ See, Coggins B.L., "Does state failure cause terrorism? An empirical analysis (1999-2008)." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 59, 3 (2015), 455-483

²¹⁸ See, Silvia D'Amato, "Terrorists going transnational: rethinking the role of states in the case of AQIM and Boko Haram;" Suranjan Weeraratne, "Theorizing the expansion of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria."

²¹⁹ The 'African condition' for Grovogui refer to the multiple practices of sovereignty in Africa by different actors, including local actors, international regimes, corporations, NGOs, among others. S.N Grovogui, "Regimes of sovereignty: international morality and the African condition." *European Journal of International Relations*. 8, 3 (2002), 315-38

²²⁰ G. Bhabra "Comparative historical sociology and the state: problems of method."

²²¹ See, T. Barkawi and M. Laffey, "The imperial peace: democracy, force and globalisation." *European Journal of International Relations*. 5 (1999), 403-434

²²² The state has increasingly been viewed as discursive product. Foucault, for example, observed that the state as a sovereign authority is part of a myth that constitute modernity, a repressive instrument emanating from a single coherent source. Finlayson and Martin further simplified this as follows: "the state is not a single institution or even a number of institutions tied together but, rather, a series of practices, actions and reactions Lars Buur and

actors like local vigilantes into the provision of security.’²²³ The NACTEST also emphasise the various collaborations between state security agencies and religious leaders, faith organisation, and other non-state actors (see Section 5.1).²²⁴ The scholarship around counter-terrorism and private security offer other examples, showing the limitation of this state-centric discourse.²²⁵

In sum, the foregoing examination of temporality and identity in Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse further illustrates the reproduction of the Nigerian self, highlighting the political endeavour involved in countering terrorism which often serve as tools for promoting and setting different agendas by different government administrations in Nigeria. This way, Nigeria’s counter-terrorism policy is linked to other political projects and policy concerns, such as anti-corruption, poverty eradication, economic regeneration which ultimately expands its focus and aims. The consistent emphasis on what the Nigerian state should look like or do, contributes to entrenching state power and military intervention.

5.3.3. Summary: subject-positioning

Two important subject-positions can be identified in this construction of time and identity. First, is that ideas about regression or progression positions Nigeria in relation to the threats posed by terrorist groups as inferior or overwhelmed by the threats it faces. This situates the

S. Jansen, “Introduction: vigilantism and the policing of everyday life in South Africa,” *African Studies*. 63, 2 (2004), 139-152; Foucault as quoted in A. Finlayson and J. Martin “Poststructuralism;” L. Jarvis and M. Lister, “State terrorism research and critical terrorism studies: an assessment;” D.E Agbibo, “Vigilante youths and counterinsurgency in Northeastern Nigeria: the civilian joint task force.” *Oxford Development Studies*. 48, 4 (2020), 360-72

²²³ PCNI, p.21

²²⁴ Similarly, Heath-Kelly explored the role of professional such as health workers in the implementation of the PREVENT strategy in Britain. C. Heath-Kelly, “Algorithmic autoimmunity in the NHS: radicalisation and the clinic.” *Security Dialogue*. 48, 1 (2016), 29-45, see also, Akinola Ejodame Olojo, “Resistance through Islamic cleric against Boko Haram.” *African Security Review*. 26, 3 (2017), 308-24.

²²⁵ See, for example: C. Varin “Turning the tides of war: the impact of private military and security companies on Nigeria’s counterinsurgency against Boko Haram;” R. Abrahamsen and M.C. Williams, “Introduction: the privatisation and globalisation of security in Africa.” *International Relations*. 21, (2007), 131-141

Nigerian state as the primary condition for social and political well-being and, in so doing, legitimises the use of military force as a major component of security in Nigeria.²²⁶ Second, is that these temporal forms are underpinned by various limiting assumptions about state (and society) which effectively position Nigeria as problematically deviant, in relation to certain ‘others’ especially Euro-America societies and states. This positioning does not only reinforce dominant ways of thinking about Nigeria and Africa more widely, but it also encourages the intervention of external actors in Nigeria’s affairs.²²⁷

Conclusion

This chapter argued that Nigeria’s counter-terrorism strategy fundamentally entails a political endeavour of constructing the Nigerian self, in relation to specific terrorist other. This produces a highly restrictive identity underpinned by notions of liberal democracy and progress. My focus in this chapter builds on the commitments detailed in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, and answers an important question regarding the construction of the Nigerian self, posed in the introductory Chapter. To restate briefly here, in Chapter 2, I outlined a set of theoretical assumptions regarding the construction of threat and identity, following my engagement with the work of Jutta Weldes. Chapter 3 discussed the relevance and compatibility of discourse analysis for my problematising of constructions of threats, the Nigerian self, and the terrorist other. Chapter 4 examined specific constructions of threats as ‘new terrorism’ to justify counter-terrorism intervention in Nigeria. Thus, the analysis in this current chapter demonstrates – and contributes to scholarship on – the politics of counter-terrorism and (national) identity. I

²²⁶ P. Bilgin and D. Morton “Historicising the representation of “failed states”: beyond the Cold War annexation of the social sciences.”

²²⁷ J. Bachmann “The danger of ‘under-governed’ spaces: the ‘war on terror’ and its effects on the Sahel region.”

continue in Chapter 6 by examining constructions of the terrorist other within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse.

Chapter 6

Constructing the terrorist other

6.0. Introduction

Having explored constructions of the Nigerian self in Chapter 5, I continue in this chapter by examining constructions of the terrorist other in Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. This is underscored by the assumption that discourses of counter-terrorism ultimately creates and perpetuates the very thing they abominate –terrorists.¹ To this end, my preoccupation here is to demonstrate and interrogate specific assumptions underpinning constructions of the terrorist other, especially in relation to the Nigerian self. What, put otherwise, are the categories, signifiers, and assumptions that constitutes the terrorist other?

This chapter is organised in three parts. Section 6.1 explores constructions of terrorist groups as religious fundamentalists through engagement with three themes, including designating them as “religious extremists and irrational”; as “jihadist-fighters”; and as “victims” of the wider structural problem of poverty in Nigeria. Section 6.2 examines constructions of “foreign terrorists” which conjures a binary of insider/outsider through various efforts to fix terrorist groups in certain geographical spaces or nationalities. Section 6.3 explores the writing of terrorist groups as “opportunists”, in the context of socio-economic inequalities that purportedly constitute north-east Nigeria.

¹ The search for a specific terrorist personality has mostly preoccupied scholarly discussions in terrorism studies, with a few notable exceptions. Psychological perspectives on terrorism, for example, have explored questions around psychological aspect of individuals or groups involved in terrorist violence, to understand the motivation behind such violent actions. Wardlaw, for instance, noted that the most commonly asked questions about terrorism include, ‘why do people become terrorists? Why would/did they do it?.’ Horgan, however, observed that such essentialist endeavour ‘is built around presuppositions as well as unstable empirical, theoretical, and conceptual foundations.’ See, J. Zulaika, *Terrorism: the self-fulfilling prophecy*, p.1; G. Wardlaw. *Political Terrorism: theory, tactics and counter-measures*. 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); J. Horgan, “The search for the terrorist personality,” In Andrew Silke, *Terrorists, victims and society: psychological perspectives on terrorism and its consequences*. (San Francisco: Wiley, 2003), p.3

Table 3

	Discursive claims	Responses
Constructing terrorists as religious fundamentalists	The terrorists are usually fanatical, given their orientation and belief in their cause. The terrorists are becoming more daring, ruthless and willing to go to violent extremes to accomplish their goals...Boko Haram's ideology, much like other al Qaeda affiliates, is based on complete denouncement of western culture and civilisation. (NACTEST 2016)	Terrorists are afraid of critical thinking which a sound education can guarantee. It is our failure to entrench critical thinking as the core of our education that leaves our young ones vulnerable to misguided interpretation of religious texts and this is a challenge to governance. Without an informed citizenry able to ask the right kind of questions, our society's quest for peace and security will remain elusive. (NSS 2014)
Constructing foreign terrorists	The terrorist insurgencies we face are partly fuelled by local factors and dynamic, but now increasingly by the international jihadi movement, runaway fighters from Iraq and Syria and arms from the disintegration of Libya (Buhari, UNGA 2018).	Where a person connected with terrorism activities in Nigeria is a foreign national, deportation and reporting his/her terrorist activities to the home State and other States will usually be an appropriate means of disrupting his activities. This is important in ensuring public safety, as well as sending a strong signal that foreign nationals who threaten the security of the nation will not be allowed to remain in Nigeria (NACTEST 2016).
Constructing terrorists as opportunists	Although the group manipulates Islam to craft convincing arguments based on religious claims, religion is not the foundation of its recruitment. Instead, these extremists target social grievances and present themselves as problem solvers and providers in areas where the government has not been able to deliver or improve its strategic approach....Boko Haram's communication strategy is to exploit and coerce vulnerable individuals, especially young people, through different media channels and online platforms (PVCE Country Report 2015).	To tackle terrorism and violent extremism, including its root causes...the government provides a clear legal and policy environment that connect peace, security and development (CTC Report 2018).

6.1. Constructing terrorists as “religious fundamentalists”

As described above, the following section looks at constructions of the terrorist other as religious fundamentalists reproduced implicitly or otherwise in three ways: first, terrorists are represented as religious extremists and irrational beings. This portrays them as individuals or groups with a pathologized psyche, holding certain radical beliefs which drives them to commit violent acts. Second, terrorist groups are described as “jihadist fighters” which essentially depict them as non-state groups engaged in a struggle against the Nigerian state, driven by – and for purposes of – religion. The third motif of “victimhood” represent them as marginalized groups pushed toward violent extremism and terrorist behaviours by structural problems of poverty, illiteracy, and other forms of marginalization in north-east Nigeria. These three themes constitute a highly questionable discourse of religious fundamentalism, reflecting ideas about liberal democracy and progress underpinning the Nigerian self. Using the textual technique of predication, presupposition, and subject-position,² I discuss this composition in what follows.

6.1.1. Predication

I start with the NACTEST here as it provides a clear reference to the designation of terrorist groups as fundamentalists: “people involved in these attacks are driven by passionate violent and blinded by extremist beliefs either as religious bigots or in an attempt to express their views, which they perceive as being discounted.”³ References to terrorist groups as ‘religious bigots’, or ‘people blinded by extremist beliefs’ clearly portrays them as irrational and fundamentalists. This view was expanded upon in the NACTEST:

The terrorists are usually fanatical, given their orientation and belief in their cause. The terrorists are becoming more daring, ruthless and willing to go to violent extremes to accomplish their goals...**Boko Haram's ideology, much like other al Qaeda affiliates, is**

² Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters*.

³ NACTEST 2016, p.15

based on complete denouncement of western culture and civilisation. Their ultimate goal is to overthrow the existing political order and replace it with a strict Islamic system.⁴

The ‘fanatical’ label in the above text, implies that they are driven by passionate ideological or theological beliefs, ‘willing to use extreme violence’ in pursuit of certain goals. Importantly, their ideological belief is defined in relation to other Islamic terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, reinforcing common pathological assumptions that underpin much of the discourse surrounding the Global War on Terror as discussed in Chapter 5. In one sense, the above construction of terrorists/terrorism as goal-driven, unsettles this implied notion of irrationality. Though such goals are, more or less, pathologized through the linkage of religious radicalism and violence. As the NACTEST indicates: “the actions of the terrorists cannot be justified with regard to race, religion, or political inclinations...the killing of people and the destruction of properties will never be excused under any guise.”⁵ This ethical denouncement of terrorists, in this context, seeks to empty them of any moral or rational goal.

Similar themes of extremism and irrationality can be found in the NSS: “the insurgency waged by the Boko Haram is characterised by ‘mindless violence,’ which undermines our freedom, way of life, and sovereignty.”⁶ Once more, this reference to ‘mindless violence’ signify the irrational and extremist components of the terrorist other, as opposed to a rational – democratic and progressive – Nigerian self. Jonathan’s speech at the 69th UNGA in 2014, perpetuates this construction of terrorists as religious fundamentalists. He noted that:

Through a wave of terror, assassinations, bombing, and now abductions predominantly in the North-East, Boko Haram is attempting to truncate development...In April, our innocent daughters were abducted...this callous and criminal act has attracted empathy and support for Nigeria across the globe.⁷

⁴ Ibid, p.10; see also, p.23

⁵ Ibid

⁶ NSS 2014, p.14

⁷ Address by President Jonathan at the 69th UNGA, 2014

Such references to ‘innocent victims,’ and ‘callous acts,’ construct terrorists as guiltless and fanatical. A press release by the Defence HQ puts this rather succinctly: “those perpetrating these heinous crimes are callous, barbaric, and monsters, whose activities will soon become a thing of the past.”⁸ The Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Country Report provides further illustrations of this construction:

Undeniably, the most recent and widespread **extremist group in Nigeria, Boko Haram**, continues to grow and commit various terror acts, posing one of the main threats to national security. **A self-declared ally of the Islamic State**, this terrorist organization has been responsible for immense damage and suffering in Nigeria and surrounding countries, including Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. **Using an “us vs. them” narrative, they have spread the fundamentalist ideology of jihad** in its effort to override the Nigerian state and turn it into a Taliban-like Sharia state.⁹

In the above text, they are linked to other Islamist terrorist groups to fix their threatening, and essentially fundamentalist, image. At the same time, defining their ‘narrative’ as ‘fundamentalist ideology of jihad’ in pursuit of certain goals, including the establishment of a ‘Taliban-like Sharia state,’ reflect the above-discussed delegitimization of their goals as religiously-inspired and, as such, irrational violence. Furthermore, the reference to an ‘us vs them narrative’ clearly construct oppositional subject-positions: a democratic Nigerian self (us) against a religious fundamentalist other (them). In 2018, the National Security Advisor, Babagana Munguno, speaking at a workshop on strategic communication for national security, stated that ‘terrorist groups like Boko Haram, ISIS, and al Qaeda, leverage on modern communication to propagate and sustain their violent ideologies.’¹⁰ In a more recent statement in 2019, following Boko Haram attacks in Borno, Maiduguri, Buhari referred to a similar theme of religious extremism, bestiality, and irrationality in construction their identity:

⁸ Boko Haram now gives loans to youth as bait for membership. *DefenceHq.*; Terrorists lay land mines on farmland. *DefenceHq.*; August 16, 2015; Boko Haram lures people together to bomb. *DefenceHq.*

⁹ PCVE Country Report 2017, pp.5-6

¹⁰ CTC Report 2018, pp.43-44; The term “Islamic terrorists” was explicitly used in the NACTEST (2016) to describe the terrorist groups in Nigeria. See, for example, NACTEST 2016, p.14

I am profoundly saddened and shocked by the death of innocent hostages in **the hands of remorseless, godless, callous gangs of mass murderers that have given Islam a bad name through their atrocities**. We should, under no circumstance, let the terrorists divide us by turning Christians against Muslims because **these barbaric killers don't represent Islam and millions of other law-abiding Muslims around the world**. No true Muslim would be shouting Allahu Akbar while killing innocent people, an evil frequently condemned by the Holy Qur'an. **These agents of darkness are enemies of our common humanity** and they don't spare any victim, whether they are Muslims or Christians, and therefore, we shouldn't let them divide us and turn us against one another. **The goal of these psychopaths is to cause confusion and spread distrust between Muslims and Christians**, despite the fact that they aren't representing the interest of Muslims. **We will continue to intensify our efforts towards strengthening international cooperation and collaboration to break the backbone of these evil doers.**¹¹

Such descriptors used here – including remorseless, godless, evil-doers, and callous gangs of mass murderers – cast them as irrational and anti-social subjects who derive enjoyment in the mass killing of innocent people.¹² This construction also seeks to distinguish between ‘godless’ or ‘radical’ terrorists from ‘law-abiding’ or ‘moderate’ Muslims in Nigeria, and beyond. A similar distinction between ‘radical’ and ‘moderate’ Muslims is further outlined in the NACTEST: “the terrorists are a tiny minority within the Muslim community, using distorted and unrepresentative interpretation of the Islamic faith to justify violence...against mass casualties...they are prepared to commit suicide to kill others.”¹³ Paradoxically, this idea of terrorist groups as an ‘enemy within Islam’ contrasts considerably with Buhari’s above-depiction of terrorists as ‘godless’. These, nonetheless, broadly reinforce this discourse of fundamentalism, despite its apparently flexible composition.

¹¹ ISWAP execution: don't let terrorists divide us, Buhari tells Nigerians. *The Guardian*. See also, Address by President Goodluck Jonathan, at the 66th UNGA session, 2011. Available online from: <https://gadebate.un.org/en/66/nigeria> [Accessed 10 April 2020]; Address by President Jonathan at the 68th UNGA session, 2013; Address by President Jonathan at the 69th UNGA session, 2014

¹² For similar references to “innocent” victims, see: Boko Haram now gives loans to youth as bait for membership. *DefenceHq*

¹³ NACTEST 2016, p.2

This narrative of religious fundamentalism explored thus far, which constructs specific terrorist groups as irrational, evil, and extremists, is reproduced through – and enables – the Terrorism Proscription Order in the following way:

...as an order proscribing the activities of Boko Haram and An-saru as terrorism and illegal, proscribing their existence and restraining any person or group of persons from participating in any manner whatsoever in any form of activities or concerning the prosecution of the collective intentions or otherwise of the said groups.¹⁴

Through this writing, their ‘existence’ is tabooed and condemned, fixing them outside the realm of the Nigerian society (or self). The NSS outlines the following strategies which also reinforce this discourse:

Further to this, the threat that we face has drawn our attention to the need to overhaul our educational system. Why is Boko Haram so violently against education? **Terrorists are afraid of critical thinking which a sound education can guarantee.** It is our failure to entrench critical thinking as the core of our education that leaves our young ones vulnerable to misguided interpretation of religious texts and this is a challenge to governance. Without an informed citizenry able to ask the right kind of questions, our society’s quest for peace and security will remain elusive. It is thus a prerequisite of good governance that we fix our educational system.¹⁵

In this case, references to ‘critical thinking’, ‘informed citizenry’, or ‘good governance’ reflect – and reproduce – this idea of terrorists as irrational and religious extremists.¹⁶ The PCVE Policy Framework, again, states that:

Central to extremists’ ideology, especially Boko Haram’s, is to deny access to education. Attack on schools is a threat to Education for all. Sound education is essential...as a well and informed citizen are better to resist recruitment; thus, schools should support character, unity and diversity while creating religious and cultural awareness.¹⁷

¹⁴ Terrorism Proscription Order, 2013

¹⁵ NSS 2014 pp.33-34

¹⁶ See also, NSS 2019 p.41

¹⁷ PCVE Policy Framework, p.19

As we can see, ‘Education’, or ‘diversity and unity’ in this context alludes to notions of freedom, tolerance, and rational thinking, as opposed to the fanatical and irrational beliefs held by terrorist groups.

A second, contrasting, construction of terrorist groups as jihadists (re-)constitutes them as political actors, although driven largely by an extremist ideology (identifiably religious or Islamic). This contrasts significantly with the above-discussed theme of extremism and irrationality which primarily constructs them as pathological and religious ideologues. Contra this, constructions of terrorists as jihadists or combatants pertinently highlights certain aims and political goals pursued by terrorist groups, including through armed conflict, posing a direct challenge to political authority in Nigeria.

The PCVE Country Report writes that, ‘the use of religious texts to justify mass atrocities is troubling, they [the terrorists] believe they are waging jihad.’¹⁸ Here, they are constructed as groups fighting for a (religio-political) cause, instead of simply holding certain internalised radical beliefs. The NACTEST writes that, terrorism in Nigeria is due to the actions of ‘persons or non-state groups who choose to advance their cause by committing acts of extreme violence against members of the society.’ The intensity of the actions of such groups, it adds, ‘clearly points to an intention to create fear among the people and undermine the government.’¹⁹ In general, this trope of ‘jihadists,’ or ‘non-state combatant’ reflects the ‘war on terror’ rhetoric which commonly suggests a ‘just war’ against terrorists,²⁰ including through state/military engagement, or through countering extremist ideology.

Constructed thus, the Buhari Plan outlines the following responses which invariably contributes to reinforcing this idea: “the military, paramilitary and other security agencies’ project is designed to demobilise all ‘non-state combatants’ in the north east and provide them

¹⁸ PCVE Country Report 2017, pp.5-6

¹⁹ NACTEST 2016, P.6

²⁰ For more references to “combatant” or “jihad” see, NSS 2014, p.20; NACTEST 2016, p.14; NSS 2019, p.32

with the mentorship and skills required for a successful re-integration into productive society.”²¹ Similarly, the PCNI notes that ‘the decisive defeat of the terrorists will be a deterrent against Boko Haram combatants regrouping to strike back and will give confidence to millions to return to their homes and livelihoods.’²² These statements and responses, on the one hand, constructs them as groups driven by particular (politico-religious) goals and, on the other, denounce them as illegitimate groups seeking to overthrow the Nigerian state through armed conflicts, or by spreading extremist ideas. The PCVE Country Report notes that ‘30% of the videos produced by the ‘jihadists,’ the leader of Boko Haram, are old-fashioned, monotonous and egocentric; young people may not be attracted to such a hierarchical organization...taking this into account, counter-narratives will be filled with positive and attractive messages and will include young people.’²³ This suggests an ideological struggle for political authority, alongside the above-identified military intervention.

The third theme reinforcing this discourse of fundamentalism involves constructions of terrorists as “victims”. In this case, individuals or groups who hold radical views and go on to carry out violent acts are driven by problems of poverty, illiteracy, and poor governance in Nigeria. According to the PCVE Policy Framework, ‘structural conditions create conducive environment for the growth of violent extremism, such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, social exclusion, the role of governance, and other socio-economic factors.’²⁴ The predication of ‘conducive environment for the growth of violent extremism’ identifies environmental conditions as responsible for producing terrorists instead of certain internalised radical beliefs itself. This invokes the idea of “victimhood”, constructing terrorists as victims of socio-economic problems in Nigeria. As the PCVE writes: ‘our understanding of the root causes of

²¹ The Buhari Plan 2016, p.22

²² PCNI 2015, p.51

²³ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, p.22

²⁴ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, pp.15-16

violent extremism reveals that kinetic measure alone cannot address the threat. Thus, this policy framework provides for a non-military National Action Plan.²⁵ This includes promoting good governance, social inclusion, among other development-focused approaches identified in Chapter 5.²⁶

The NACTEST, in agreement, explains that a major area of action towards preventing terrorism is by ‘changing the environment in which the extremists and those radicalizing others can operate as well as deterring those who facilitate terrorist activities and those who encourage others to become terrorists.’²⁷ As the NSS narrates, “Our objective is to reform, rehabilitate and prepare violent extremist offenders for a possible re-entry into society.”²⁸ Thus, it adds, “we are preparing families of offenders, victims and communities to accept, forgive, provide care and support to perpetrators of terrorist acts who have laid down their arms.”²⁹ In general, these responses and statements clearly show how particular terrorist groups are constructed as victims of socio-economic (and socio-political) problems in Nigeria especially the north-east, reinforcing the notion of a democratic and progressive Nigerian self.

6.1.2. Presupposition

The preceding section explored constructions of the terrorist other as religious fundamentalists, broadly constituted by three themes: terrorists as irrational and extremists, as jihadists fighters, and as victims. In what follows, I identify specific functions of each of these especially in relation to the Nigerian self, along with certain contradiction and implications of this construction of terrorist other.

²⁵ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, pp.15-16

²⁶ For more references to this notion of victimhood, see: NSS 2014, p.22-23; PCVE Country Report 2017, p.35; NACTEST 2016, 6-7, 19, 20, 21; Ministry of Interior, Journey so far, p.18; PVCE Policy Framework 2017, p.18;

²⁷ NACTEST 2016, p.14

²⁸ NSS 2014, p.30

²⁹ NSS 2014, p.33

The first presupposition is the representation of terrorist groups as irrational and religious ideologues to enforce a pathological identity. According to the NACTEST, ‘the terrorists are driven by passionate violent and blinded extremist beliefs as religious bigots.’³⁰ In addition, they are described as ‘fanatics...and Boko Haram’s ideology is based on the denouncement of western culture and civilization’.³¹ Buhari described them as ‘remorseless, godless, and gangs of mass murderers who seek to divide us along religious lines...they threaten our common humanity.’³² Religious fundamentalism, however, is a broad category which cannot be reduced to Islamist groups or Islam. Yet, specific references to Boko Haram as a form of ‘Islamic terrorism’ and the linkage to global Islamic terrorist groups³³ effectively gives solidity to this narrative of religious extremism. Indeed, similar connections, slipperiness, and (mis)use of labels such as extremists or fundamentalists to describe Islamist groups runs through much work on counter-terrorism,³⁴ often traced to Rapport’s work on ‘religious terrorism’,³⁵ although reproduced variously.

This demonological discourse of religious fundamentalism, as Jackson notes, individually and collectively represents terrorist groups and, often, the Muslim ‘community’ as cruel, irrational, and intolerant.³⁶ Thus, it is assumed that no compromise can be made with such terrorist groups perceived as a threat to ‘our [rational] way of life’, or democratic values.³⁷ For example, Buhari’s speech referred to ‘our common humanity’, which is juxtaposed against ‘remorseless terrorists’ to conjure a certain image of terrorists as inherently inhuman and intolerant, making them potentially threatening to certain democratic values upheld in Nigeria.

³⁰ NACTEST 2016, p.15

³¹ Ibid, p.10

³² President Buhari, *The Guardian* 28, 2019

³³ See, for example, NACTEST, p.26

³⁴ See, J. Gunning and R. Jackson, “What’s so ‘religious’ about ‘religious terrorism’?”; M. Stohl, “Don’t confuse me with the facts: knowledge claims and terrorism.”

³⁵ D. Rapoport, “Fear and trembling: terrorism in three religious traditions.” *America Political Science Review*. 28, 6 (1984), 658-677

³⁶ R. Jackson, “Security, democracy, and the rhetoric of counter-terrorism.”

³⁷ President Buhari, *The Guardian* 28, 2019

Represented thus, their actions or behaviours cannot be judged on any moral or logical grounds. As the NACTEST puts it, ‘such terrorist acts of violence cannot be justified by race, religion, or political inclinations, and will not be excused under any guise.’³⁸ In other words, the objectives of ‘Islamic’ terrorist groups ‘can neither be rationalised or negotiated, they offer no terms and can be given none in exchange’.³⁹

Themes about the psychological and theological features of a particular terrorist identity saturates policy, academic, and public discourse before, and increasingly, after 9/11.⁴⁰ Cooper, writing in 1976, notes that ‘the terrorist must steel himself/herself through a fierce faith in his/her credo or retreat into madness.’⁴¹ For Laqueur, ‘madness, especially paranoia, plays a role in contemporary terrorism. Terrorists believe in conspiracies by the powerful, hostile forces and suffer from some form of delusion and mania’, which serves to explain the reason for such irrational and inhuman acts.⁴² Adding that, ‘it is not so much a matter of a specific religion but of fanaticism and a psychological disposition.’⁴³ Also, Mendelsohn argues that ‘while religious extremists who seek to impose their religious order exist in all religions, it is larger in Muslim societies’;⁴⁴ thus, particularising fundamentalism to Islam or Muslims.

More relatedly, Onuoha argues that Boko Haram is a manifestation of Salafi-Islamism which draws on similar fundamentalist views and motivation as groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS.⁴⁵ Akinola notes that ‘Nigeria has several Islamic fundamentalist groups, including Boko

³⁸ NACTEST, p.35

³⁹ B. Barber, “Democracy and terror in the era of jihad vs. McWorld,” In K. Booth and T. Dunne (eds), *Worlds in collision: terror and the future of global order*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.247

⁴⁰ See, J. Horgan, “The search for the terrorist personality.”

⁴¹ H.H.A Cooper, “The terrorist and the victim.” *Victimology: An International Journal*. 1, 2 (1976), 229-39

⁴² Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977)

⁴³ Walter Laqueur, “Reflections on terrorism,” *Foreign Affairs*. 65, 1 (1986), 86-100

⁴⁴ B. Mendelsohn, “Sovereignty Under Attack: The International Society Meets the Al Qaeda Network,” *Review of International Studies*, 31 (2005), p. 55.

⁴⁵ F.C Onuoha, “The Isamist Challenge: Nigeria’s Boko Haram crisis explained.” See also: O. Akinola, “Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: Between Islamic fundamentalism, politics, and poverty;” T.B Oriola and O. Akinola, “Ideational dimensions of the Boko Haram phenomenon.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. (2017), 1-24; L. Waldek and S. Jayasekara, “Boko Haram: the evolution of Islamist extremism in Nigeria.” *Journal of*

Haram, the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN), the Izala movement, among others, and governing Nigeria according to Islamic tenets is a common demand by these groups.⁴⁶ However, he adds, ‘Islamic fundamentalism and its adherents in Nigeria represent a minority, compared to ‘moderate’ Muslims whose understandings of Islam do not reflect the Manichean ideological views of the fundamentalists.’⁴⁷

The above representation is indeed flexible and open to interrogation. For example, the terrorist groups are described as a ‘tiny minority within the Muslim community who misinterpret religious texts in pursuit of certain cause,’ in the NACTEST. This contrasts significantly with Buhari’s depiction of terrorists as ‘godless’, which denounces their piety or religious identity and seeks to exclude them from the Muslim ‘community’ altogether. Such moves to distinguish between ‘moderate’ and ‘radical’ Muslims are deeply political. To give another example here: there are many Muslim groups in Nigeria, as Akinola referred to above, making such a generalisation or use of simplistic qualifiers greatly unhelpful. While Akiola includes the Muslim Student Society of Nigeria (MSSN) as an extremist group, along with other groups which supposedly share a common religious identity,⁴⁸ this student group is not listed among proscribed terrorist organisations by the Nigerian state.⁴⁹ Moreover, as Halliday observes, ‘all religions can be read in pacifist and radical forms.’⁵⁰ Even more revealing is the fact that the third presupposition of “victimhood” discussed below, points to the problem of poverty or marginalization – instead of psychological or theological beliefs – as constitutive of certain terrorist identity, showing the changeability of this discourse.

Policing, intelligence and Counter Terrorism. 6, 2 (2011), 168-78; J. Azumah, “Boko Haram in retrospect.” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*. 26, 1 (2015), 33-52

⁴⁶ O. Akinola, “Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: Between Islamic fundamentalism, politics, and poverty.”

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ See, for example, E.U. Ejeh, A.I. Bappah, and Y. Dankofa, “Proscription of terrorism in Nigeria: a comparative legal study.” *Commonwealth Law Bulletin*. 46, 3 (2020), 367-390

⁵⁰ F. Halliday. *Two hours that shook the world: September 11, 2001: causes and consequences* (London: Saqi Books, 2002), pp.88-131

Also, in a study carried out by Botha and Abdile they found that, while peacebuilders consider religion to be the most prominent reason (82 percent) for joining, only 9.24 percent of Boko Haram respondents identified religion as a reason for joining the group.⁵¹ Their finding corroborates that presented by Silke: “the religious backgrounds of the people who join terrorist groups is not as clear-cut, neither are psychological factors responsible for terrorist behaviour or actions.”⁵² Horgan, among other psychological studies on terrorism,⁵³ note that ‘claims about terrorists as crazy, deviant, or fanatics, are not supported by findings from four decades of scientific research.’⁵⁴ These claims regarding psychological and theological features of a specific terrorist identity ultimately serves to reproduce the Nigerian self through reinforcing the distinction between democracy/Islamic-theocracy, rational/irrational, or radical/moderate.

The foregoing poses several problems for policy and communities in Nigeria, including for legitimising combative strategies and foreclosing the possibility for other alternative course of action such as dialogue. The breakdown in the negotiation process between the Nigerian government and members of Boko Haram in 2014, has been attributed to the lack of clarity – or inclusion – in the state’s counter-terrorism policy around dialogue and negotiating with terrorist groups.⁵⁵ The main argument often used to reject negotiation with terrorists is that such course of action would legitimize terrorist groups and terrorism more widely,⁵⁶ which in turn weakens the democratic image of the state. However, as Toros argue, the labelling of terrorists (as religious fundamentalist, for example) by the state contributes to the production

⁵¹ A. Botha and M. Abdile, “Reality versus perception: toward understanding Boko Haram in Nigeria.” A similar finding emerged from Sageman’s much cited study which compiled biographical data on 172 participants of ‘Islamic terrorist’ groups. See, M. Sageman, *Understanding terror networks*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) pp.93, 97, 110, 115

⁵² A. Silke, “Holy warriors: exploring the psychological processes of Jihadi radicalisation.” *European Journal of Criminology*. 5, 1 (2008), 105-130

⁵³ See, R.R Corrado, “A critique of the mental disorder perspective of political terrorism.” *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*. 4 (1981), 293-309

⁵⁴ J. Horgan, “The search for the terrorist personality.”

⁵⁵ See, Eugene Eji, “rethinking Nigeria’s counterterrorism strategy,”

⁵⁶ H. Toros, “We don’t negotiate with terrorists!’: legitimacy and complexity in terrorist conflicts.” p.6

of the image of ‘external adversary’ thus foreclosing the possibility for dialogue.⁵⁷ This, in turn, establishes the ideational conditions of possibility for action and ‘normalises a restricted set of coercive and punitive strategies, consolidating state power.’⁵⁸ This representation is generally counter-productive in that the stereotypes of fanatical, murderous, barbaric, or ‘Islamic’ terrorists amplifies ethno-religious division within Nigeria, rather than mitigate fears.

The second presupposition is the idea of terrorist groups as “jihadists”, or “non-state combatants” in pursuit of certain (religio-political) goals. This moves beyond the above-discussed theme of fanaticism and irrationality and, instead, looks to the actions and/or goals of terrorist groups. According to the NACTEST, terrorism in Nigeria is ‘because of individuals and non-state groups who wish to advance their cause through committing extreme violence.’⁵⁹ The PCVE country report indicates that such ‘people believe they are waging jihad’⁶⁰ ostensibly to establish an Islamic Caliphate in certain parts of Nigeria. This ‘jihadists’ rhetoric serves to justify the de-mobilization of terrorist groups in north-eastern Nigeria using coercive approaches, alongside other measures to counter extremist ideology.⁶¹ This reinforces specific binaries including between state and non-state actors/violence, good and evil, just and holy war, among others.

Such representations saturates existing scholarship on counter-terrorism in Nigeria (and beyond).⁶² Onuoha argues that ‘although their [terrorists] philosophical worldview is uncertain, their ideological mission is quite obvious, namely, to overthrow the Nigerian state

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ R. Jackson, “Constructing enemies: ‘Islamic terrorism’ in political and academic discourse.” *Government and Opposition*. 42, 3 (2007), 394-426

⁵⁹ NACTEST 2016, p.10

⁶⁰ PCVE Country Report 2017, pp.5-6

⁶¹ PCNI 2015, p.51

⁶² See, M. Crenshaw, “How terrorists think: what psychology can contribute to understanding terrorism,” In L. Howard (Ed.), *Terrorism: roots, impact, responses*. (London: Praeger, 1992), pp.71-80; O. Akinola, “Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: Between Islamic fundamentalism, politics, and poverty.”

and then impose strict Islamic Sharia law in the entire country.’⁶³ Similarly, Akinola notes that while other Islamic fundamentalist groups in Nigeria seek to reform the existing state structures perceived as corrupt and ineffective, terrorist groups such as Boko Haram attempts to overthrow the existing system in northern Nigeria.⁶⁴ While this seeks to delineate certain goals as fundamental to a specific terrorist’s identity, it often lacks coherence. The linkage between radical beliefs, terrorist acts and their objectives are not always adequately specified or explained. It is not clear if they want to establish a theocratic, political order in Nigeria or across certain parts of north-east Nigeria, or beyond Nigeria’s territorial boundaries including West Africa, the Lake Chad Basin, and areas around the Sahel-Sahara.

Moreover, the above implicitly suggests that terrorist groups are rational actors in pursuit of specific goals, including to create political structures underpinned by religious ideas, which contradicts the above-identified claim of irrationality.⁶⁵ Notably, rational choice approach to terrorism usually identify particular goals as responsible for terrorist behaviour or violence. Crenshaw’s work, for example, examines the organisational structure and objectives of terrorist groups,⁶⁶ noting that terrorist groups are essentially political actors who make certain rationalised choices, including the use of violence to achieve certain goals.⁶⁷ Though this perpetuate claims about terrorism as a political strategy used by certain kind of actors – mostly (weak) non-state actors – which often ignores state violence.⁶⁸ This also runs the risk of reducing the victims of terrorist attacks or state violence to objects or tools. In other words, vulnerable targets are depersonalised and constituted as means of strategic communication

⁶³ F.C Onuoha, “The Isamist Challenge: Nigeria’s Boko Haram crisis explained.”

⁶⁴ O. Akinola, “Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: Between Islamic fundamentalism, politics, and poverty.”

⁶⁵ See, for example, M. Crenshaw, “How terrorists think: what psychology can contribute to understanding terrorism.” In L. Howard (Ed.), *Terrorism: roots, impact, responses*, pp.71-80

⁶⁶ M. Crenshaw, “The causes of terrorism,” *Comparative Politics*. 13, 4 (1981), 379-99

⁶⁷ See also, B. Caplan, “Terrorism: the relevance of rational choice model.” *Public Choice*. 128 (2006), 91-107

⁶⁸ See, Richard Jackson, “The ghost of state terror: knowledge, politics and terrorism studies.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 1, 3 (2008), 377-392; Ruth Blakeley, “Bringing the state back into terrorism studies.” *European Political Science*. 6, 3 (2007), 228-235; Melissa Finn and Bessma Momani, “Building foundations for the comparative study of state and non-state terrorism.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 10, 3 (2017), 379-403

between non-state terrorist actors and state actors. Terrorist objectives, however, are mostly ambiguous and constantly evolving, which makes it extremely difficult to reduce them to a particular set of goals.⁶⁹

The recurring theme of ‘innocence’ in relation to the victims of terrorism and the aim of terrorists to project ‘fear’ among the Nigerian population, contrasts significantly with the above-mentioned goal of establishing a theocratic-political order.⁷⁰ The flexibility around the goals pursued by terrorist groups partly reveal the changeability and contestability of this discourse. Moreover, ‘children, women and girls are often described as bearers of innocence which gives the terrorist other its frightening image’.⁷¹ Jonathan, for example, stated that ‘our innocent daughters were abducted by the criminal and evil terrorists.’⁷² Yet concern for children or women and girls, as Semati argues, is a sign that the adults are genuinely frightened.⁷³ That is, put otherwise, ‘innocence’ and ‘fear’ portrays Nigeria as a fearful child⁷⁴ to justify various counter-terrorism measures against the so-called jihadists.

That said, the uncritical use of the term ‘Jihad’ in constructing the terrorist other,⁷⁵ portrays a form of Islam – and Muslims – as inherently violent. Jihad is commonly (and problematically) defined as the use of, or the justification to use, violence in pursuit of religious goals, including the establishment of a theocratic Islamic community.⁷⁶ This understanding of Jihad – or those who carry out Jihad – has been consistently questioned in academic and public

⁶⁹ A. Botha and M. Abdile, “Reality versus perception: toward understanding Boko haram in Nigeria.”

⁷⁰ See, for example, Ministry of Interior: The journey so far, p.14; PCVE Policy Framework, p.9; Defence HQ May 12, 2016; Address by President Buhari, 70th UNGA 2015; President Buhari, The Guardian 28, 2019

⁷¹ M. M Semati, “Terrorists, Moslems, fundamentalists and other bad objects in the midst of ‘us’.” *Journal of International Communication*. 4, 1 (1997), 30-49

⁷² Address by President Jonathan at the 69th UNGA, 2017

⁷³ M. M Semati, “Terrorists, Moslems, fundamentalists and other bad objects in the midst of ‘us’.”

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ In Chapter 5, I discussed certain contestable assumptions around discussions on (counter-)radicalisation, which commonly points to the internalisation and instrumentalization of radical beliefs. See, J. Monaghan and A. Molnar, “Radicalisation theories, policing practices, and “the future of terrorism?” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 9, 3 (2016), 393-413

⁷⁶ Ibid. See also, T. Bjørge and J. Horgan. *Leaving Terrorism Behind*. (Eds). (New York: Routledge, 2009)

discourse.⁷⁷ This essentially allows for the prioritization of state military force, alongside other measures to promote education and democratic values to counter extremist ideology. As the PCNI clearly indicates: ‘decisive military defeat is the first pre-requisite for the return to normality and progress, and equally serves as deterrence to the non-state terrorist groups.’⁷⁸

The third presupposition portrays terrorist groups as “victims” of marginalization which supposedly encourages violent extremism and terrorism. This moves beyond psychological, theological or ideological, and behavioural elements in constructing the terrorist other. The NACTEST registers that ‘to prevent terrorism, it is necessary to change the environment in which extremists and those radicalizing others operate in.’⁷⁹ Similarly, the PCVE Policy Framework writes: ‘structural conditions create conducive environment for the growth of violent extremism such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, social exclusion, while the role of governance, and other socio-economic factors.’⁸⁰ This includes rehabilitating de-radicalized terrorists ‘to ensure their possible re-entry into progressive society, as well as promoting good governance, social and political inclusion.’⁸¹ All of this mainly serve to represent terrorists as victims, or as passive subjects, whose actions are largely determined by other structural forces especially poverty and inequality.

This narrative of victimhood is often reproduced, in one way or another, in academic scholarship on Nigeria’s counter-terrorism approach.⁸² Agbiboa, for instance, explores religious fundamentalism and terrorism in Nigeria through the framework of deprivation.⁸³ Hansen and Musa describe terrorist groups in Nigeria (in a Fanonian sense) as the ‘wretched

⁷⁷ See, Kepel G., *Jihad: the trail of political Islam*. Revised ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009)

⁷⁸ PCNI 2015, p.51

⁷⁹ NACTEST 2016, p.14

⁸⁰ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, pp.15-16

⁸¹ NSS 2014, pp.32-33

⁸² See, D.E Agbiboa, “Why Boko Haram exists: the relative deprivation perspective.” Also see, R. Jackson, L. Jarvis, J. Gunning, and M. Breen-Smyth, *Terrorism: a critical introduction*, pp.200-205

⁸³ D.E Agbiboa, “Why Boko Haram exists: the relative deprivation perspective.”

of the Nigerian society’.⁸⁴ The figure of the Koranic school pupils also known as al-majirais, is central to this narrative, primarily described as ‘foot soldiers’ of terrorist groups,⁸⁵ or misfits, beggars, street urchins, and residues for terrorist’s recruitment.⁸⁶ As described in the NACTEST: ‘addressing structural problems of extreme poverty and deprivation to counter terrorism, in particular, includes issues like area boys, street urchins, and the Almajirai educational systems.’⁸⁷

Hoechner, however, observes that this link between the almajirai or Koranic students and terrorist violence is not supported by empirical evidence.⁸⁸ This link, she adds, ‘is often made with reference to the conditions of their upbringing or the context in which they live and thrive in.’⁸⁹ Similarly, Botha and Abdile in their study found that, in contrast to the perceptions of peacebuilders and the academic literature, only 15.13 percent of Boko Haram respondents joined the groups because of poverty, whereas 5.88 percent of former members referred to unemployment as a reason for joining.⁹⁰

The above portrayal of terrorists as victims, or the narratives around the almajirai pupils, further depicts them as vulnerable children in need of protection by the state. At the same time, this situates the Nigerian state as a responsible parent seeking to improve the conditions in which its offspring or citizens dwell in. This, however, is steeped in – and reinforces – problematic assumptions especially around state weakness and ungoverned spaces in north-east Nigeria, discussed in Chapter 5. As noted in Chapter 5, this permits the othering and targeting of specific groups and communities – particularly in north-eastern Nigeria and

⁸⁴ W.W Hansen and U.A Musa, “Fanon, the wretched and Boko Haram.” *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. 48, 3 (2013), 281-296

⁸⁵ D.E Agbiboa, “Why Boko Haram exists: the relative deprivation perspective.”

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ NACTEST, p.19

⁸⁸ H. Hoechner, “Traditional Quranic students (Almajirai) in Nigeria: fair game for unfair accusations?” In Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos. *Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security and the state in Nigeria*. (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2014), pp.63-85

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.63

⁹⁰ A. Botha and M. Abdile, “Reality versus perception: toward understanding Boko haram in Nigeria.”

around the LCB – such as the Koranic students for example, portrayed as vulnerable and at risk of becoming terrorists (supporting terrorist activities).⁹¹

6.1.3. Summary: subject-positioning

The above-discussed representation of terrorists as religious fundamentalists, including through portraying them as irrational, jihadists, or victims of socio-economic inequality in Nigeria, produces different subject-positions. First, terrorists are positioned in relation to other subjects, including peaceful or rational citizens, moderate Muslims and, most importantly, a democratic and progressive Nigerian self.

Second, representations of terrorists as jihadists or non-state combatants inadvertently position them as a threat to state sovereignty, as well as to national values, lives, and properties. Such subject-positioning permits the use of military force by the state to defend Nigeria's territorial, political, and cultural integrity, as well as employ other means – including education – to promote mainstream (democratic) values. The third assumption of victimhood position them as vulnerable subjects, deserving of protection from the Nigerian state. In contrast, this situates the Nigerian state as the main provider of social and political life, further entrenching and extending state influence in Nigeria.

6.2. Constructing “foreign terrorists”

Following on from Section 6.1, I explore constructions of foreign terrorists in Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. This portrays terrorist groups as foreigners through various attempts to fix them within certain geographical spaces or nationalities. This representation reflects the above-

⁹¹ See also, H. Hoechner, “Traditional Quranic students (Almajirai) in Nigeria: fair game for unfair accusations?”

discussed notions regarding the global threats posed by Islamic terrorist networks, as well as state failure in the Lake Chad Basin. It legitimises a range of responses, including the deportation of foreign nationals suspected of committing or supporting terrorism in Nigeria, as well as extensive border security targeting foreigners from countries around and beyond the LCB. I examine these below, using the textual mechanism of predication, presupposition, and subject-positioning.

6.2.1. Predication

I begin with presidential speeches and pronouncements as they repeatedly refer to this idea of foreign terrorists. In 2014, President Jonathan declared at the 69th United Nation General Assembly that “the involvement of foreign fighters has remained a common feature of terrorist groups in Nigeria, and elsewhere.”⁹² A similar narrative about ‘foreign fighters’ recurs in Buhari’s speech at the 73rd UNGA in 2018: “the terrorist insurgencies we face are partly fuelled by local factors and dynamic, but now increasingly by the international jihadi movement, runaway fighters from Iraq and Syria and arms from the disintegration of Libya.”⁹³ Also, according to the Nigerian Army, “those terrorists, especially ISWAP, are very deadly and confident and they now use foreign mercenaries, who are foreign terrorists.”⁹⁴

This notion of foreign terrorist is, however, flexible. On the one hand, it broadly defines the foreign-ness of terrorist groups in relation to global Islamic terrorist networks. On the other, it defines foreign terrorists, narrowly, in relation to Nigeria’s neighbours or ungoverned spaces in the Lake Chad Basin. According to the NSS:

⁹² Address by President Jonathan at 69th UNGA, 2014

⁹³ Address by Buhari at the 73rd UNGA, 2018. Available online from: <https://gadebate.un.org/en/73/nigeria> [Accessed 10 April 2020]

⁹⁴ Insecurity: FG raises the alarm over chemical, nuclear attacks, others. *The Punch*. December 22, 2019. Available online from: <https://punchng.com/insecurity-fg-raises-the-alarm-over-chemical-nuclear-attacks-others/>. [Accessed 10 April 2020]

the defeat of ISIS in Syria has the potential to strengthen linkages between foreign based terror cells and terror groups in the north-east, which has created additional concerns to the ongoing efforts to rid Nigeria of terrorists, requiring collaboration with our contiguous neighbours and international partners.⁹⁵

Similarly, Buhari, at the 72nd UNGA, declared that: “We must devise strategies and mobilise the required responses to stop fleeing ISIS fighters from infiltrating into the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, where there are insufficient resources and response capacity is weak.”⁹⁶ This reinforces claims about ungoverned spaces in the Sahel and the LCB, while pointing to the global threats posed by Islamist terrorist groups mainly located in the Middle East and East Africa. This idea of foreign terrorist takes its meaning from ideological, national, and geographical markers, though, raise several questions identified subsequently. As the NACTEST writes:

The greatest threat to Nigeria currently has come from the Boko Haram terrorist group based in the North-eastern part of the Country, and more prevalent in Borno, and Yobe States. Nigerians among other nationals have travelled to training grounds in Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Mali and Somalia to mention but a few. This has increased the threat levels in Nigeria.⁹⁷

This throws up certain analytic and political confusion worth stating. On the one hand, it assumes that Nigerians, as well as other nationals in Nigeria, travel to certain countries to possibly acquire training, among other things, and this poses significant threats to Nigeria regardless of whether these individuals return to Nigeria. In other words, foreign terrorists include individuals or groups from Nigeria who engage in, or support, terrorist acts elsewhere. On the other hand, it also defines foreign terrorists to include those who travel from Nigeria to other places to acquire experience and training which they utilise upon their return to Nigeria. This may also suggest that terrorism is an imported or non-native problem. This construction,

⁹⁵ NSS 2019, p.9

⁹⁶ Address by Buhari at the 72nd UNGA, 2017. Available online from: <https://gadebate.un.org/en/72/nigeria> [Accessed 10 April 2020]

⁹⁷ NACTEST 2016, p.9

however, blurs an important distinction between terrorist attacks carried out in Nigeria and those carried out externally, producing a fluid meaning of territoriality and nationality. That said, underlying this idea of foreign terrorists is the threats from global Islamic terrorist networks, as the reference to specific countries described as terrorist's training ground suggests.

That said, a much narrower construction of foreign terrorist points specifically to the Lake Chad Basin and the countries in this region. In 2015, Rear Admiral Okoi, Nigeria's Chief of defence intelligence, stated: "our neighbours initially defined Boko Haram as a Nigerian problem. However, with the further spread of the violence, these neighbours were forced to engage Nigeria in various ways."⁹⁸ Also, a press release by the Defence Headquarters in 2016 declared that in their desperation to unleash terror on the people, 'the fleeing remnant terrorists have laid land mines on farmlands...however, the security forces will continue to be on their trail until they are completely flushed out of our country.'⁹⁹ More recently, in 2019, the Defence HQ explained in a press release that Boko haram is not in control of any inch of Nigeria's territory, 'having been pushed to the Tumbus, the islands within the neighbouring countries of Chad and Niger Republics where they are hibernating and from where they launch attacks.'¹⁰⁰ Such references to 'fleeing remnant terrorist', or 'flushed out of our country,' or 'pushed to neighbouring countries,' constructs terrorist groups in Nigeria as emanating from (foreign) spaces in the LCB, or as foreign terrorists.

Another significant point to note here is that the above construction of foreign terrorists, which defines foreign-ness in relation to ungoverned spaces in the LCB, typically integrates

⁹⁸ Update on security in Nigeria and the campaign against Boko Haram, Atlantic Council, 2015

⁹⁹ Terrorists lay land mines on farmland. *DefenceHq*

¹⁰⁰ Boko Haram: president Buhari to prosecute terrorists' sponsors. *Daily Post*.

terrorism with criminality. This terror-crime nexus was clearly expressed in a press release by the Defence Headquarters:

The military is intensifying efforts to continue to break the bones of the terrorists and wish to re-state and re-assure Nigerians that it is not relenting in its efforts **to rid the country of terrorism and any act of criminalities**. Every step is being taken to neutralize the capability of terrorists whose activities still continue to constitute danger to civil populace as they are in disarray while **running away from their former safe haven** and no longer capable of confronting the troops. Defence Headquarters is therefore appealing to the general public to be extra vigilant and be wary of strange faces and objects in their localities.¹⁰¹

From the above, the predication of ‘ridding the country of terrorism and criminalities,’ or ‘former safe haven,’ constitute terrorist groups in Nigeria as foreigners and criminals. The NACTEST provides further illustrations:

A major security concern within Nigeria is the ease with which persons and goods enter and leave the country through borders, which are inadequately protected. Notwithstanding the provisions of the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement between member states, it is expected that persons entering the country must be duly documented and accounted for. **The porous nature of the borders has been responsible for the influx of illegal aliens**, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, smuggling, trafficking in persons, illegal cross-border trading and other trans-border crimes. Irrespective of the strength in cross-border cultural affinity, **the effect of criminally minded individuals entering the country to perpetrate acts of terrorism is high**. This will require establishing joint border patrols with contiguous neighbours and enhancing traditional border security systems.¹⁰²

Similarly, the CTC report indicates that ‘the dexterity with which Boko haram carries out their attacks could be attributed to use of hard drugs...smuggled into the country through its porous borders.’¹⁰³ In 2019, Femi Adesina, the president’s special adviser on media and publicity, stated that:

The frequency of attacks, the determination and resilience of the terrorist groups as well as the ease with which they raise funds and acquire sophisticated weapons are matters of serious

¹⁰¹ Defence Headquarters condemns spate of suicide attacks in the north east. *DefenceHq*

¹⁰² Ibid, p.22; see also, NSS 2019, p.32

¹⁰³ CTC Report 2018, pp.43-44

concern, which we should engage our attention as a Community (ECOWAS). **Equally worrisome is the continuous spread of the menace of terrorism in the region and the growing link between terrorism and organised crime.** This is why we must not relent in our efforts until we defeat the monster completely.¹⁰⁴

Such references to ‘fund raising and weapon acquisition,’ or to ‘the link between terrorism and crime,’ or ‘regional actions and responses,’ constructs the terrorist other as foreigners who engage in criminal activities across national borders to facilitate violence. This corroborates the NACTEST: ‘the cost of carrying out bombing incidents is relatively low, but the terrorists need significant funding to support the rest of their activities which is often achieved through ordinary criminal activities.’¹⁰⁵ In other words, the terrorist other come to embody a complex identity as terrorists, criminals and, more importantly, as foreigners (reinforcing binaries of insiders/outside, and foreigners/locals).

Given this construction, a set of narrow and broad strategies are outlined in various texts which ultimately reinvigorates this notion of foreign terrorists. The NACTEST states that ‘the government will establish structures to address situations that permit criminal elements and terrorist groups to operate in Nigeria. Security at the borders, it adds, ‘will be strengthened through intensification of patrols, cooperation with security agencies of neighbouring countries to minimise illegitimate traffic.’¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, it states that:

Where a person connected with terrorism activities in Nigeria is a foreign national, deportation and reporting his/her terrorist activities to the home State and other States will usually be an appropriate means of disrupting his activities. This is important in ensuring public safety, as well as sending a strong signal that foreign nationals who threaten the security of the nation will not be allowed to remain in Nigeria. The enactments of the Terrorism Prevention Act 2011

¹⁰⁴ Insecurity: FG raises the alarm over chemical, nuclear attacks, others. *The Punch*. December 22, 2019. Available online from: <https://punchng.com/insecurity-fg-raises-the-alarm-over-chemical-nuclear-attacks-others/>. [Accessed 10 April 2020]

¹⁰⁵ NACTEST 2016, p.28-29

¹⁰⁶ NACTEST 2016, p.23, 38

and Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2013 have provided sufficient legal tools to **deport and exclude persons who have participated in terrorism.**¹⁰⁷

References to strengthening ‘border security,’ or ‘deportation of foreign nationals’ ultimately reinvigorate this notion of foreign terrorists discussed thus far. The president’s spokesperson, Femi Adesina, declared that the best way to counter this threat, is through coordinated regional actions and responses against terrorism, insurgency, banditry and inter-communal disputes, while we also put in place policies and measures that will address their root causes, including the re- establishment and protection of livelihoods.¹⁰⁸ The CTC Report explains that, ‘Nigeria is partnering with the EU and UN to strengthen the criminal justice response to terrorism and violent extremism in Nigeria.’¹⁰⁹ Other broad and narrow strategies are further outlined in the NACTEST:

...the preferred way of disrupting terrorism activities is by apprehending those involved in planning acts of terrorism before they are able to execute their intentions and prosecuting them in a court of law; where prosecution is not possible, effective use of other security measures designed to make Nigeria a more hostile environment for terrorists will be used.¹¹⁰

The predication of ‘making Nigeria a more hostile environment for terrorists,’ implicitly reflect the view of terrorists and terrorism as alien or foreign to Nigeria, constructing Nigeria as intolerant and unreceptive to these kinds of (terrorist) subjects. In sum, these statements and responses reinforce the idea of foreign terrorists whether in relation to global Islamic terrorist networks, or to ungoverned spaces in the LCB, reproducing a specific Nigerian identity (as democratic and progressive).

¹⁰⁷ NACTEST 2016, p.28

¹⁰⁸ Insecurity: FG raises the alarm over chemical, nuclear attacks, others. *The Punch*.

¹⁰⁹ CTC Report 2018, p.60. For more on criminal justice and prosecution, see NACTEST, 2016, p.42

¹¹⁰ NACTEST 2016, p.28

6.2.2. Presupposition

The preceding section further demonstrates constructions of the terrorist other in Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse, through representations of foreign terrorist. To be sure, ideas about ‘foreign terrorists’ or ‘foreign terrorist fighters’, as well as the terror-crime nexus, has been discussed at length in counter-terrorism, criminology, radicalisation studies, policing, among other related fields.¹¹¹ In this sub-section, I assess two important discursive claims underpinning this representation in this Nigerian case.

The first presupposition is the reference to global Islamic terrorist networks as constituting a foreign identity of terrorist groups in Nigeria. This designation refers to certain countries, especially those located in the Middle East and East Africa, as havens or sites for recruitment, training, and launching of terrorist attacks in different parts of the world, including Nigeria. As Jonathan stated at the 69th UNGA in 2014, ‘the involvement of foreign fighters has remained a common feature of the terrorist groups in Nigeria.’¹¹² Even more explicitly, the NSS writes that ‘the defeat of ISIS in Syria could potentially strengthen the terrorist groups in the north east of Nigeria, through the recruitment of foreign fighters.’¹¹³ Thus, In 2017 Buhari called on the international community at the 72nd UNGA to collectively devise strategies and mobilise the required responses ‘to stop fleeing ISIS fighters from infiltrating into the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, where there are insufficient resources and response capacity is

¹¹¹ See, E. Crenshaw, “American and foreign terrorists: an analysis of divergent portrayals in US newspaper coverage.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 7, 3 (2014), 363-78; B. Mendelsohn, “Foreign fighters—recent trends.” *Orbis*. 55, 2 (2011), 189-202; R.D Silva and R. Crilley, ““Talk about terror in our back gardens”: an analysis of online comments about British foreign fighters in Syria.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. 10, 1 (2017), 162-86; K. Baxter and R. Davidson, “Foreign terrorist fighters: managing a twenty-first century threat.” *Third World Quarterly*. 37, 8 (2016), 1299-1313; K. Babanoski, “The threats of returning foreign terrorist fighters for the European security.” *Journal of Applied Security Research*. 15, 1 (2020), 10-27; F. Ragazzi, & Walmsley, J. ‘Member States’ approach to tackling the return of foreign fighters, external study.” In A. Scherrer (Ed.). The return of foreign fighters to EU soil, Ex-post evaluation. Brussels, Belgium: European Parliamentary Research Service, 2018; United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute. (2019). Addressing the threats related to returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters. http://www.unicri.it/topics/counter_terrorism/foreign_fighters/

¹¹² Address by President Jonathan, at 69th UNGA 2014

¹¹³ NSS 2019, p.9

weak.’¹¹⁴ This notion of foreign terrorists reflect claims about the threats posed by global Islamic terrorism to liberal democracy, as well as claims about ungoverned spaces in north-east Nigeria and the LCB (see Chapters 4 and 5).

It is worth emphasising that this concept of foreign terrorists re-emerged in policy and academic debates especially after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.¹¹⁵ The United Nations, for example, notes that ‘Afghanistan is often thought of as the original zone of FTFs.’¹¹⁶ Baxter and Davidson observes that common accepted knowledge claims around this concept mostly refer to ‘those ideologically or religiously motivated individuals who have travelled to join conflicts in elsewhere, other than their own home country.’¹¹⁷ And, according to Babanoski, ‘the fear they create ranges from the possibility that they will get involved in terrorist acts outside of their home country’,¹¹⁸ or lead to a ‘bleed out’,¹¹⁹ where these individuals or groups return to their home countries, or move elsewhere, to utilize the knowledge and experience they have received in planning and carrying out terrorist acts. Moreover, historical precedents and examples of foreign mercenaries has been continuously highlighted to debunk its religious/anti-western/or Islamic connotations which gained traction since 9/11.¹²⁰ Recent conflicts in Syria and Iraq against ISIS, however, have rekindled the religious and cultural connotations of this concept¹²¹ as Buhari’s speech illustrate for example.

This narrative of foreign terrorists and the threats they pose to democratic and progressive values (and societies), provide justification for global counter-terrorism

¹¹⁴ Address by President Buhari, at the 72nd UNGA, 2017

¹¹⁵ B. Mendelsohn, ‘Foreign fighters–recent trends.’

¹¹⁶ United Nations Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team. ‘Analysis and recommendations with regard to the global threat from foreign terrorist fighters’, (2015).

¹¹⁷ K. Baxter and R. Davidson, “Foreign terrorist fighters: managing a twenty-first century threat.”

¹¹⁸ K. Babanoski, “The threats of returning foreign terrorist fighters for the European security.”

¹¹⁹ See, T. Hegghammer, “The rise of Muslim foreign fighters: Islam and the globalisation of Jihad.” *International Security*. 35, 3 (2010), 53

¹²⁰ See, B. Mendelsohn, “Foreign fighters–recent trends.”

¹²¹ R.D Silva and R. Crilley, ““Talk about terror in our back gardens”: an analysis of online comments about British foreign fighters in Syria.”

interventions. In 2018, Buhari noted in a speech at the 73rd UNGA that the insurgency in Nigeria and LCB is partly ‘fuelled by international Jihadi movement, runaway fighters from Syria and Iraq’¹²² and, as such, called for ‘a collective response against such global threats.’ The UNSC resolution 2178 understandably provides for this: “FTFs pose a serious threat to their states of origin, the states they transit, and the state to which they travel, using their extremist ideology to promote terrorism.”¹²³ Furthermore, it adds, ‘nations are expected to prevent and disrupt the recruiting, organising, transporting, and equipping of FTFs, as well as the financing of their travel or activities.’¹²⁴ Many studies on counter-terrorism efforts in Nigeria frequently reinforce this perspective. Onapajo, Uzodike, and Whetho, for example, posit that Boko Haram’s increased dexterity is because of its foreign membership, international linkages with global Islamist terrorist groups, among other elements.¹²⁵ Thus, they argue for increased international and transnational responses given the global dimension of terrorism in Nigeria.¹²⁶

As discussed in section 6.2.1, the deportation of foreigners involved in terrorist activities in Nigeria, collaborating with international partners such as the EU and UN to strengthen criminal justice procedures, strengthening border security, and disrupting terrorist financing, are some of the responses introduced.¹²⁷ For example, the NACTEST instructs ‘the police to collect the information of all foreigners including construction workers, casual

¹²² Address by President Buhari at the 73rd UNGA 2018

¹²³ See, United Nations Security Council. (2014b). Resolution 2178 S/RES/2014 adopted on 24.09.2014.

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ H. Onapajo, U.O Uzodike, and A. Whetho, “Boko haram terrorism in Nigeria: the international dimension.”

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ Similar responses were elaborated by the EU, which requires EU member states to strength border security, share information, develop watch lists and databases of suspected persons, and modify criminal justice systems. See, for example, EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator. Foreign terrorist fighter returnees: Policy options for the criminal justice response (Document 7294/17). Brussels, Belgium: EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator (2017); EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator. Foreign terrorist fighter returnees: Policy options (Document 14799/16). Brussels, Belgium: EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator (2016); F. Ragazzi, & Walmsley, J. “Member States’ approach to tackling the return of foreign fighters, external study.”

workers, house-helpers, irrespective of the provision of ECOWAS treaties.’¹²⁸ In 2016, the Nigerian federal government deported six foreign nationals (including from Chad, Jamaica, and Cameroon) even though they were (eventually) cleared of any association with terrorist groups in Nigeria.¹²⁹ Their ‘illegal entry’ into Nigeria – after no substantial link to terrorism was established – was given as reason for their eviction from Nigeria. Thus, this representation essentially serves to reinforce dichotomies of foreigners/nationals, insider/outsider, liberal democracy/Islamic fundamentalism, encouraging the targeting of foreign nationals in Nigeria.

The second presupposition underpinning this idea refer explicitly, and narrowly, to Nigeria’s neighbours in the Lake Chad Basin. In 2015, the Defence Headquarters stated that, ‘the security forces will continue to be on their [terrorists] trail until they are completely flushed out of our country.’¹³⁰ Also, in a subsequent press release in 2019, the Defence Headquarters indicate that Boko haram is not in control of any inch of Nigeria’s territory, they have been pushed to the Tumbus, the islands within the neighbouring countries of Chad and Niger Republics from where they launch attacks.¹³¹ This notion of foreign terrorists, in relation to the threats posed by Nigeria’s neighbours, permeates scholarly debates too. Onapajo et al. argues that ‘a number of Boko Haram’s members are from Nigeria’s neighbouring states, facilitated by ECOWAS protocol on free movement as well as state weakness in this region.’¹³²

What is more, the above presupposition integrates terrorism with trans-border criminal activities in constructing the terrorist other. As the NACTEST indicates, ‘the porous nature of Nigeria’s borders has been responsible for the influx of illegal aliens...illegal cross-border

¹²⁸ NACTEST, p.35

¹²⁹ Premium Times, Nigeria to deport Jamaican, four Cameroonians. Premium Times. Available online from: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/211801-nigeria-deport-jamaican-four-cameroonians.html>. [Accessed 10/09/2020]

¹³⁰ Defence Headquarters condemns spate of suicide attacks in the north east. *DefenceHq*. August 16, 2015. Available online from: <https://defenceinfo.mil.ng> [Accessed 24 June 2020]

¹³¹ Boko Haram: president Buhari to prosecute terrorists’ sponsors. *Daily Post*. December 24, 2019. Available online from: <https://dailypost.ng/2019/12/24/boko-haram-president-buhari-told-to-prosecute-terrorists-sponsors/>. [Accessed 11 April 2020]

¹³² H. Onapajo, U.O Uzodike, and A. Whetho, “Boko haram terrorism in Nigeria: the international dimension.”

trading and other trans-border crimes.’ The effect of, it adds, ‘criminally minded individuals entering the country to perpetrate acts of terrorism is high.’¹³³ The CTC Report equally notes that the ‘dexterity of Boko haram attacks could be attributed to use of hard drugs...smuggled into the country through its porous borders [in the North-east].’¹³⁴ This terror-crime linkage is indeed among the enduring claims about terrorism,¹³⁵ prominently emphasised by policymakers and terrorism scholars.¹³⁶ This, however, enables various state intervention including the prosecution and incarceration of terrorists, as well as the control of Nigeria’s territorial borders through increased surveillance and other border control mechanism.¹³⁷

Nevertheless, this representation of foreign terrorists – whether defined broadly or narrowly – presents several problems. On the one hand, it is broadly shaped by ideas of the nation-state and Eurocentrism, producing limiting binaries of national/foreigner, and liberal democracy/Islamic fundamentalism respectively. As Mendelson show, this ignores the different meanings of ‘foreignness’, as different identity markers – regional, gender, class, among others – can (and do) constitute one’s idea of ‘foreignness’.¹³⁸ There are communities in north-east Nigeria, including in Adamawa, Yobe, and Borno state, sharing ethnic and

¹³³ NACTEST 2016, p.22

¹³⁴ CTC Report 2018, pp.43-44

¹³⁵ M. Stohl, “Old myths, new fantasies and the enduring realities of terrorism.”

¹³⁶ Much of the scholarship around the linkage between terror and crime, is often linked to discussions about “narco-terrorism” in the 1980s, where insurgent groups in the Andes supported their armed operations through ties with coca growers. The term “narco-terrorism”, however, has been seriously interrogated in the academic literature. More generally, this discussion about terrorism and criminality, as Arias and Hussain noted, largely centre on the strategic concern surrounding the pecuniary criminal activities that violent extremist groups employ to support their ideological or political goals. Also, within this formulation, “failed states” are believed to provide the necessary space for such terror-crime activities; although, several scholars –Makaranko and Mesquito for example– argue that this linkage extends beyond the notion of failed states. And, Similar linkages has been identified in western European democracies, central Asia, among others. Schmid, A., “The response problem as a definitional problem.” In A. Schmid and R. Crelinsten, (eds.) *Western responses to terrorism*. (London: Routledge, 1993), 7–13. See also: E. D Arias and N. Hussain, “Organised crime and terrorism” In G. Lafree and J.D Freilich. *The Handbook of the criminology of terrorism*. (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), pp.375; A. Hübschle, “From theory to practice: exploring the organised crime-terror nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *Perspectives on Terrorism*. 5, 3-4 (2011); G. Wardlaw. “Linkages between the illegal drugs traffic and terrorism.” *Conflict Quarterly*. 6, 3 (1988), 5-26; T. Makarenko and M. Mesquita. “Categorising the crime-terror nexus in the European Union.” *Global Crime*. 15, 3-4 (2014), 259-274

¹³⁷ NACTEST 2016, p.28

¹³⁸ B. Mendelsohn, “Foreign fighters–recent trends.”

cultural connections with communities in Cameroon, Niger republic, and Chad which often lead to movement across state borders (for different reasons including to visit relatives, for employment, or due to insecurity).¹³⁹

On the other hand, it conflates two notable ideas of foreign terrorists. The first idea relates to those who travel from another country to Nigeria to carry out – or support – terrorist activities. The second refers to Nigerians or other national who travel from Nigeria to other countries to receive training or participate in terrorism elsewhere. According to the NACTEST, the greatest threat comes from Boko Haram based in north-eastern Nigeria. Yet, Nigerians and other nationals travelling to training grounds in Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Mali, and Somalia, indirectly increases the threat level in Nigeria.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the NSS states that ‘the defeat of ISIS in Syria has the potential to strengthen linkages between foreign based terror cells and terror groups in the north-east, and creates additional concerns for ongoing counter-terrorism in Nigeria.’¹⁴¹ In other words, terrorism and terrorists pose significant threats to Nigeria whether they operate domestically or globally.

This flexibility indeed suggests the political activity of identity construction through counter-terrorism discourse. Specifically, representations of foreign terrorists ultimately aids to portray them as outsiders, depicting terrorists/terrorism as something completely outside of the Nigerian self.¹⁴² As Jackson notes, ‘such a designation of alien terrorists is designed to clearly mark the boundaries between the inside and the outside, between those who belong to the community and those outside of it.’¹⁴³ In addition to the afore-mentioned implications of this representation, including the strengthening of border security and disrupting existing social

¹³⁹ See, for example, “North-East Nigeria: situation update.” *ReliefWeb*. Available online from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/north-east-nigeria-situation-update-may-2021> [Accessed 10 August 2021]

¹⁴⁰ NACTEST 2016, p.9

¹⁴¹ NSS 2019, p.9

¹⁴² E. Crenshaw, “American and foreign terrorists: an analysis of divergent portrayals in US newspaper coverage.”

¹⁴³ See, Richard Jackson, “Security, Democracy, and the rhetoric of counter-terrorism.”

and cultural relationships across state borders,¹⁴⁴ tracking and monitoring of foreign national is an expensive undertaking with huge budgetary ramifications.¹⁴⁵ Also, this securitized approach may lead to the erosion of human rights, especially the right to personal privacy.’¹⁴⁶

6.2.3. Summary: subject-positioning

The preceding discussion regarding representations of foreign terrorists creates at least two subject positions, outlined in turn. First, the idea of foreign terrorists in relation to global Islamic terrorism, position terrorist groups in Nigeria – and terrorism – as outsiders posing significant threats to the democratic and progressive values underpinning the Nigerian self. Some of the implications of this subject-positioning has been identified above (also see Chapter 6). Second, this representation of foreign terrorists in relation to the Lake Chad Basin essentially seeks to fix them within this geographical space. This reinforces dominant ways of thinking about the LCB, as well as assumptions about the threats posed by Nigeria’s neighbours which offers coherence to the Nigerian self.

6.3. Constructing terrorists as “opportunists”

This final section explores constructions of the terrorist other as “opportunists”, in the context of existing problems of poverty and marginalization. This portrays terrorist groups as exploiters, seeking to capitalise on weak state structures and problems of poverty in Nigeria’s north-east. This relates somewhat to the discussion in section 6.1, regarding constructions of terrorist groups as ‘jihadists’ who seek to replace existing state structures with a theocratic, and perhaps a better, one. However, this notion of opportunists refers specifically to the exploitation

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, K. Babanoski, “The threats of returning foreign terrorist fighters for the European security;” “Interpol Global Role against Foreign Terrorist Fighters recognized in UN Resolution.” *Interpol News*, September 25, 2014. <http://www.interpol.int/News-and-media/News/2014/N2014-183>.

¹⁴⁵ K. Baxter and R. Davidson, “Foreign terrorist fighters: managing a twenty-first century threat.”

¹⁴⁶ Ibid

of socio-economic problems by terrorist groups in pursuit of various goals, depicting them as cowardly and self-serving. While this aids to delegitimise terrorist groups in Nigeria, it designates peoples and communities in north-east Nigeria as highly vulnerable to terrorism given the problems of inequality and poverty in this region.

6.3.1. Predication

A useful text to begin with here is the PCVE Country Report, due to its explicit reference to terrorist groups in Nigeria as presenting themselves as ‘problem solvers’ in the face of existing challenges of poverty and inequalities in north-eastern Nigeria:

Although the group manipulates Islam to craft convincing arguments based on religious claims, religion is not the foundation of its recruitment. Instead, these extremists target social grievances and present themselves as problem solvers and providers in areas where the government has not been able to deliver or improve its strategic approach....Boko Haram’s communication strategy is to exploit and coerce vulnerable individuals, especially young people, through different media channels and online platforms. This strategy has evolved over time in response to changing conditions on the ground. Although videos and other propaganda initially focused on presenting the group as a defender of Islam, they now prioritize the depiction of the build-up of the Islamic State in North East Nigeria. **The current strategy is complemented by the spread of messages that promote Boko Haram’s sense of justice and good governance and feature the implementation of Sharia law.** This shift in strategy resulted in a change in the content of the messages, which now focus on justice and governance and feature the implementation of Sharia law. This shift is in line with Daesh’s communications strategy and its effort to present itself as a grassroots movement.¹⁴⁷

This predication of ‘targeting social grievances and presenting themselves as problem solvers and providers in areas where the government falls short,’ constructs terrorist groups as opportunists. This implies that they exploit prevailing social, economic, and political problems in north-east Nigeria, by presenting themselves as an alternative to the state. Also, references to ‘Islamic state in north-east’, or ‘good governance’, ‘their sense of justice’, or by describing terrorist groups as ‘grassroot movements’ pertinently positions them as the political envy of the Nigerian state, seeking to usurp its powers and privileges. At the same time, this

¹⁴⁷ PCVE Country Report, p.20

reinvigorates narratives of ungoverned spaces which renders communities in north-east Nigeria as target of terrorism and counter-terrorism. The PCVE Policy Framework offers further illustrations:

While poverty may create vulnerabilities, poverty in itself is not a sole reason for radicalisation and violent extremism in Nigeria. The pull factors are factors that facilitate mobilization of individuals and groups to extreme positions/ideologies. These factors relate to the existence of grievance (a vulnerability that has to be mobilised), a fact of belonging to a group or having an ego or status, emergence of a charismatic leader (online or offline who mobilises) and tendency for simplified answers to complex issues. **In the case of Boko Haram, these included even the promise of financial or material benefit, marriage or unresolved conflicts.**¹⁴⁸

Here too, terrorist groups are defined as those exploiting structural problems through presenting themselves as problem solvers, seeking to fill the vacuum created by state weakness in north-east Nigeria. In 2016, the Defence Headquarters affirmed in a press release that ‘having been degraded, the remnant terrorist groups are desperate to recruit more people; thus, the general public is advised to careful and conscious of various tactics of the desperate Boko Haram, including the offering of loan or financial assistance.’¹⁴⁹ This idea was rehearsed in a subsequent press statement by the Defence Headquarters:

It has come to the knowledge of the Defence Headquarters that Boko Haram terrorists have now **devised another means of recruiting unsuspecting youths into their fold.** In this clandestine dispensation, **Boko Haram terrorists have resorted to providing loans** to young entrepreneurs and artisans in the North East as a way of inducing them for recruitment. The **major targets of the unholy business engagement are youths in the North East**, especially the butchers, traders, tailors, beauticians and other vocational entrepreneurs who could be easily enticed with such loan without paying attention to sundry inherent dangers associated with the acceptance of such goodies from this satanic group or unfamiliar source. After such loans, the beneficiaries are given the option of either joining the group or risk being killed if they fail to pay the loan as at when due, whereas the payment has been surreptitiously programmed to fail by the benefactor, the Boko Haram.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, pp.15-16

¹⁴⁹ Boko Haram now gives loans to youth as bait for membership. *DefenceHq*

¹⁵⁰ Boko Haram now gives loans to youth as bait for membership. *DefenceHq*.

References to the granting of ‘loans’ and other ‘financial benefits’ to vulnerable youths, considerably shift the discourse around terrorist recruitment (or grooming) from religious or ideological concerns to socio-economic, reproducing this idea of opportunism or opportunists.

As the PCVE Country Report writes:

Boko Haram was born out of an environment of disillusion in which Nigerians felt historically, socially, politically, and economically marginalised...the general situation of poverty and the corruption of national security forces were never fully addressed, and terrorist groups undoubtedly “took advantage of this situation.”¹⁵¹

Similar ideas about terrorist groups profiteering from state weakness, or references to various forms of marginalization as aiding terrorism, can be found in the NACTEST:

Boko Haram’s insurgency is an organised armed struggle aimed at weakening the authority of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in order to force a political change through the propagation of extremist ideology, under the guise of politico-economic marginalization...under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, the profile of Boko Haram has continued to assume martyrdom status, giving its revolutionary claims.¹⁵²

The Buhari Plan for the North-East notes that ‘social and economic relations prior to the insurgency were already characterised by various forms of exclusion, inequality, and violence, which are increasingly exploited by the terrorist groups.’¹⁵³

In light of this, a range of responses are outlined in different texts which perpetuates this notion of terrorists as opportunists, and of course reproduce the Nigerian self. The Buhari Plan for the North-east points to ‘initiatives to address short and longer-term impacts of the resulting crises, to ensure the participation of men and women in shaping the trajectories of change.’¹⁵⁴ The CTC Report writes that ‘to tackle terrorism and violent extremism, including its root causes...the government provides a clear legal and policy environment that connect

¹⁵¹ PCVE Report 2017, p.6

¹⁵² NACTEST 2016, p.1

¹⁵³ The Buhari Plan 2016, p.23

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

peace, security and development.’¹⁵⁵ Similarly, the National Security Advisor, Sambo Dasuki, stated that ‘any address to terrorism must be long-term, and robust enough to address its root causes.’¹⁵⁶ These measures developed ostensibly to address socio-economic problems exploited by terrorist groups, effectively reinforces this idea of terrorists as opportunists, while designating the communities in north-east Nigeria as target of terrorism and counter-terrorism.¹⁵⁷

6.3.2. Presupposition

The predication above presents two important presuppositions underpinning constructions of terrorists as opportunists. This involves claims about the root causes of terrorism especially socio-economic problems, moving beyond common psychological, theological or ideological reasons, as well as assumptions about the intentions of terrorist groups (to exploit existing problems in north-east Nigeria). I examine these presuppositions in what follows, highlighting certain contradiction and implications of this construction of otherness.

The first presupposition entails assumptions about socio-economic drivers of terrorism as contributing to the production of the terrorist other. In Chapter 4, I examined constructions of causes of terrorism in Nigeria, including socio-economic causes, here I focus on how these are (supposedly) exploited by terrorist groups. This implicitly constructs the vulnerability of different groups especially youths and communities in the north-east to terrorism, or support for terrorist activities given their marginalized status (see Chapter 4 for more). The PCVE Policy Framework refers to poverty and other grievances in the north east as ‘pull factors’ for

¹⁵⁵ CTC Report, p.5

¹⁵⁶ Nigeria’s security: insurgency, elections and coordinating responses to multiple threats, *Chatham House*, 22 January 2015

¹⁵⁷ For more on the narrative around “root causes”, see: NSS 2019, p.24; PCNI 2015, p.21; PINE 2015-2020, p.6; NACTEST 2016, p.19

terrorism, capitalised upon by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups.¹⁵⁸ As such, developing long- and short- term measures which integrates peace, security, and development, essentially bolster this narrative.¹⁵⁹ This representation, however, contradicts the above-discussed notion of ‘foreign terrorists’ in which terrorism/terrorists are often externalised to other spaces or countries around the LCB deemed to be relatively under-governed.

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, this linkage between terrorism/terrorists and wider structural factors, including poverty and marginalization, is well-documented in scholarly discussion. Aghedo describes the emergence of terrorist groups in Nigeria since 2009, as “old wine in new bottle”.¹⁶⁰ This refers in part to the debilitating socio-economic conditions in Nigeria – especially the north-east – as providing ground for the grooming of terrorists, rather than extremist views or beliefs. Such claims regarding the exploitation of socio-economic problems by terrorist groups, acting seemingly on behalf of their poor and deprived communities, is not supported by sufficient evidence. A significant number of studies have found no statistically relevant correlation between a country’s poverty level, the level of terrorism, or the number of terrorist groups.¹⁶¹ As Botha and Abdile found in their study, for example, economic concerns do not figure greatly among the reasons why individuals join Boko Haram as is often assumed.¹⁶² This, of course, does not suggest that poverty or other problems of inequality do not indirectly contribute to violence or terrorism, nor should not be addressed in their own right. Yet this linkage, as Laqueur notes, ‘stems from a limiting idea of

¹⁵⁸ PCVE Policy Framework 2017, pp.15-16

¹⁵⁹ CTC Report, p.5

¹⁶⁰ I. Aghedo, “Old wine in a new bottle: ideological and operational linkages between Maitatsine and Boko Haram revolts in Nigeria.”

¹⁶¹ See, J. Piazza, “Rooted in poverty? Terrorism, poor economic development, and social cleavages.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 18, 1 (2006), 159-77

¹⁶² Botha and M. Abdile, “Reality versus perception: toward understanding Boko haram in Nigeria.”

terrorists as revolutionaries, reacting against social and national injustice, hence the seemingly obvious conclusion: remove the underlying causes and terrorists will wither away.’¹⁶³

The second related presupposition points to the exploitation of socio-economic problems by terrorist groups, in pursuit of other broader goals. That is, on the one hand, they (intentionally) ‘target existing problems of inequality in north-east Nigerian to present themselves as problem-solvers’ and to fill the gap created by state weakness. On the other, this primarily serves other goals, including for recruiting socio-economically marginalized groups which potentially leads to increased violence. The PCVE Country Report indicates that, although the terrorist groups manipulate Islam to craft convincing arguments, religion is not the foundation of their recruitment; instead, they seek to exploit social grievances and present themselves as problem solvers, or a grassroot movement.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, in 2016, the Defence Headquarters declared in a press release that ‘having been degraded, the terrorists seek to recruit more people through offering loans and financial assistance.’¹⁶⁵

Narratives about weak state structures and terrorist intentions to exploit this, again, is not new in academic debates.¹⁶⁶ Tella, for instance, argues that Boko Haram largely deploys ‘soft power’ by ‘providing welfare services including organising cheap marriages, which appeals to the poor and in some quarters the movement is regarded as the poor’s social movement.’¹⁶⁷ This, somewhat, comes close to Laqueur’s quote of ‘one man’s/woman’s terrorist as another man’s/woman’s freedom fighter.’¹⁶⁸ And as Weinberg indicates, terrorist

¹⁶³ W. Laqueur, ‘Reflections on terrorism’

¹⁶⁴ PCVE Country Report 2017, p.20

¹⁶⁵ Boko Haram now gives loans to youth as bait for membership. *DefenceHq*

¹⁶⁶ See, O. Tella, “Boko Haram terrorism and counter-terrorism: the soft power context;” I. Aghedo, “Old wine in a new bottle: ideological and operational linkages between Maitatsine and Boko Haram revolts in Nigeria;” S. Gray and I. Adeakin, “The evolution of Boko Haram: from missionary activism to transnational Jihad and the failure of the Nigerian security intelligence agencies;” B. Ganor, “Defining terrorism: is one man’s terrorist another man’s freedom fighter?” *Police Practice and Research*. 3, 4 (2002), 287-304

¹⁶⁷ O. Tella, “Boko Haram terrorism and counter-terrorism: the soft power context.”

¹⁶⁸ Walter Laqueur. *The age of terrorism*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), p.7, 302

groups emerge in situations where alienated and highly motivated individuals/groups confront the indifference of the population they hope to lead in challenging those in positions of power.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, Crenshaw explains that ‘if terrorists perceive the state as unjust, morally corrupt, and violent, terrorism may seem legitimate and justified, and many terrorists are activists with prior political experience in nonviolent opposition to the state.’¹⁷⁰

Despite the reproduction of this idea of terrorists as opportunists (in policy and academic discourse), it entails a range of questionable claims and contradiction including regarding the causes of terrorism (as discussed in Chapter 4), as well as about the intention and goals pursued by terrorist groups. First, assumptions about the root causes of terrorism specifically points to socio-economic problems, as opposed to other ideological or theological drivers. This highlights the flexibility and volatility of this counter-terrorism discourse. A second conundrum here is that, while poverty and marginalization in north-east Nigeria may indirectly facilitate violence and, therefore, present terrorist groups as (legitimately) concerned about these issues (as much as the Nigerian state), they are delegitimised due to perceptions about their intentions and goals (including to establish an alternative theocratic, political order).

As identified in Chapter 4, assumptions about the goals or objectives of terrorist groups are intensely contested and vaguely represented, including by members of terrorist

¹⁶⁹ L. Weinberg, “Turning to terror: the conditions under which political parties turn to terrorist activities.” *Comparative Politics*. 23, 4 (1991), 427

¹⁷⁰ Debate on the label of ‘freedom fighter’ has been greatly discussed in international law and humanitarian norms. For example, the Arab league, African Union, and other Islamic conventions, generally point to struggles for self-determination and opposition to foreign occupation or policies in order to exempt such movement for the label of ‘terrorist/terrorism’. Indeed, other nationalist movements in Chechnya, South Africa, the Basque region of Spain, the Tamil Liberation movement in northeastern Sri Lanka, among others, raise similar questions. Cassese notes, however, that this controversy regarding the multifaceted criminal notion of terrorism/terrorist in international law, reveals the politics around labelling and, more importantly, counter-terrorism practice. These interventions typically emphasise the attack on “innocent” civilians or populations, as a distinctive feature of terrorist violence which pathologizes other noble goals for which the attack was carried out. According to Ganor, by carrying out terrorist attacks the perpetrators make themselves the enemies of all mankind. A. Cassese, “The multifaceted criminal notion of terrorism in International Law.” *Journal of International Criminal Justice*. 4 (2006), 933-58. Also see, C. Shinar, “Chechens: freedom fighters or terrorists?.” *European Review*. 27, 1 (2018), 131-42; R. Kennedy, “Is one person’s terrorist another’s freedom fighter? Western and Islamic approaches to ‘just war’ compared”; M. Crenshaw, “The causes of terrorism”; B. Ganor, “Defining terrorism: is one man’s terrorist another man’s freedom fighter?”

organisations. For example, Botha and Abdile found that while peacebuilders identified political reasons as the second most prominent reason – after religion – for joining Boko Haram, only 2.52 percent of Boko Haram respondents recalled political or economic reasons as motivating their decision to join the terrorist group.¹⁷¹ This does not suggest that terrorist groups do not have specific goals which they pursue, including solving important problems in their communities. However, as Cassese notes, these goals vary considerably from one group to another, as well as at different times and across different contexts.¹⁷²

These problems associated with the representation of terrorists as “opportunists”, further shed light on the deeply political activity involved in constructing identity through counter-terrorism discourse. It invariably seeks to portray them as the ‘political envy’¹⁷³ of the Nigerian state, reinforcing oppositional binary of state/non-state actors. Put simply, the state is naturally positioned as the legitimate provider of socio-economic needs in the north-east, including addressing issues of poverty and inequality, as opposed to the self-serving terrorist groups seeking to usurp these privileges. In 2016, the Defence Headquarters for instance advised ‘Nigerians to avoid taking such financial assistance or goodies from the satanic [terrorist] groups, as this largely exposes such persons to joining the terrorist groups, or been targeted, in the event of non-compliance with the demands of the terrorists.’¹⁷⁴

In sum, the preceding paragraphs reflect earlier discussions including about constructions of ungoverned spaces in Chapter 5, as well as constructions of causes of terrorism in Chapter 4. These constructions consistently depict the north-east (and the Lake Chad Basin) as relatively deprived areas and as hotspots for terrorist activities, or for grooming terrorists. Besides the othering of peoples and communities in north-eastern Nigeria, including youths or

¹⁷¹ A. Botha and M. Abdile, “Reality versus perception: toward understanding Boko haram in Nigeria.”

¹⁷² A. Cassese, “The multifaceted criminal notion of terrorism in International Law.”

¹⁷³ D. Bandow, *The politics of envy: statism as theology* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994)

¹⁷⁴ Boko Haram now gives loans to youth as bait for membership. *DefenceHq*.

young persons, this discourse allows for increased state intervention in this region purportedly for creating conditions necessary for development and progress. In this current chapter, though, representations of terrorist groups as exploiters or opportunists, taking advantage of the socio-economic problems in north-east Nigeria, primarily produce and underpin a specific terrorist identity as illustrated above.

6.3.3. Summary: Subject-positioning

This representation of terrorist groups as “opportunists” positions them as relatively significant non-state actors, and points to the struggle over political authority in Nigeria or the north-east. On the other hand, it serves to delegitimise their goals not least because they are denounced as self-serving, and exploiters of susceptible individuals and groups in north-east Nigeria (to achieve other ends). According to the press release by the Defence Headquarters, the provision of loans and financial resources by terrorist groups is a way of recruiting – or luring – vulnerable groups to carry out, or support terrorist activities.¹⁷⁵ This construction of vulnerability, of course, takes for granted the agency of these groups and communities (see Chapter 5 for more). On the other hand, this representation positions the Nigerian state as the primary provider of social and political life, pursued through various state interventions in governing so-called under-governed spaces and addressing the socio-economic root causes of violence in north-east Nigeria. This reinforces a specific Nigerian identity constituted by democratic and progressive ideas, as argued throughout this PhD thesis.

Conclusion

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

This chapter explored constructions of the terrorist other within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse, in opposition to the Nigerian self, discussed in Chapter 5. I identified and problematised three limiting constructions and representations of terrorist groups in Nigeria: as ‘religious fundamentalists,’ ‘foreigners’, and ‘opportunists.’ Each of these representations essentially perpetuate the binary of insider/outsider, or self/other distinction to mark the outlines of Nigeria’s identity as democratic and progressive. This indeed corroborates my focus in Chapter 5 and underscores one of the key arguments developed in this thesis, regarding constructions and representation of identity through counter-terrorism policy in Nigeria. Having completed this chapter, I move to the conclusion in which I restate the core aims, argument and the overall contribution of this thesis to knowledge.

Conclusion

Introduction

The preceding empirical chapters of this thesis have attempted to demonstrate how specific threats, the Nigerian self, and the terrorist other, are constructed and represented within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse. Thus, this concluding chapter restates the key research focus, findings, and arguments of my thesis, before identifying potential future research paths.

Thesis Summary

This PhD thesis has developed an account of the emerging (official) discourse of counter-terrorism in Nigeria through illustrating – and problematising – specific constructions of threats, the Nigerian self, and the terrorist other. In doing so, it drew attention to an important aspect often ignored in existing work on counter-terrorism in Nigeria through highlighting the interpretive (and political) activity at the heart of Nigeria's counter-terrorism policy, and what this means for security in Nigeria. Counter-terrorism occupies a significant, perhaps dominant, place in security considerations and actions of the state which often leaves an unperturbed silence around its underpinning logic, assumptions, and implications. Accordingly, several unquestioned claims commonly overshadow most analyses of counter-terrorism – or security – in Nigeria, Africa, and beyond. These include claims about the predominance of insecurity primarily attributed to state failure/weakness, poverty, marginalization, growing levels of radicalisation, among many other common-sense prognostications. Such assumptions often shape the context, concern, and priorities of security research on Africa, ignoring other important questions including those about identity construction and the implications it entails.

This thesis sought to move away from familiar mainstream questions such as these and instead ask different (how) questions: how does specific constructions of threats make counter-

terrorism responses in Nigeria possible? How does Nigeria's counter-terrorism policy contribute to producing representations of a specific Nigerian Identity, in opposition to the threats posed by certain terrorist other? Accordingly, the thesis argues that particular constructions of threats such as designations of 'new' forms of terrorism enable state counter-terrorism intervention in Nigeria. At the same time, Nigeria's counter-terrorism policy contributes to producing a distinct Nigerian self, hinged upon democratic and progressive ideas. This construction of self is reinforced through, or enabled by, constructions of the terrorist other.¹ These arguments and findings draw attention to a range of ramifications, including for policy directions, for social and political identities of various groups and communities, and for security in Nigeria and the LCB. To demonstrate these findings, the theoretical framework employed in this thesis offered a useful and compelling approach to security vis-à-vis counter-terrorism, approached as contingent constructions rather than an objective designation of, and responses to, terrorist threats. Specifically, the thesis drew upon a critical constructivist approach as articulated in the work of Jutta Weldes, along with other constructivist scholarship on counter-terrorism, and postcolonial work on security/terrorism.

While being sensitive to the implications of the representations offered by state officials about counter-terrorism, which often serve to reinforce existing state structures and privileges, official accounts nonetheless present a useful site of articulation for understanding and critiquing emerging counter-terrorism policies in Nigeria. Thus, this thesis explored 56 primary texts produced by Nigeria's federal executive directly involved in developing and discussing Nigeria's counter-terrorism policy. This includes important government ministries, departments, and agencies, providing an adequately significant and diverse pool of data for mapping this evolving discourse of counter-terrorism, as described in Chapter 3. Though much

¹ David Campbell. *Writing Security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity*.

of this discourse reflect wider discourses of the Global War on Terror, there are evidently some notable distinctions, as well as certain crucial implications in the Nigerian context.

For one, Nigeria's counter-terrorism policy often takes its meaning from other related political activities or proximate issues described as relevant in the Nigerian context, including questions of social or national cohesion, issues of development and social progress, and the problem of corruption. This contextual justification is indeed relevant and typically serves as 'warranting conditions' for constructing particular threats, as well as for constructing self and other. Chapter 4 examined constructions of certain causes of harm, represented as new terrorism given a range of features, including its blurred boundary with violent extremism and insurgency, as well as the lack of territorial immutability of new terrorist groups. As demonstrated in Section 4.2, this framing is further entrenched through constructions of causes of new terrorism including regarding its religious or ideological drivers, socio-psychological factors, and marginalization. However, the presence of this framing, I argued, is vitally important for making state counter-terrorism intervention possible, allowing for expanding or entrenching the aims and target of counter-terrorism. This, however, poses relevant questions about the key objectives and directions of Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach, as well as for (human) security in Nigeria.

Building on the above finding, Chapter 5 examined constructions of the Nigerian self within this evolving discourse – grounded upon ideas of democracy and progress – which is diametrically positioned against the threats posed by specific terrorist other (constituted as religious fundamentalists, foreigners, and opportunists). Specifically, this posits a Nigerian identity that is being threatened by religious extremists/extremism but also threatened by socio-economic and socio-political problems linked to terrorism and terrorists. Representations of the Nigerian self are specifically reproduced through constructions of a diverse and marginalized Nigerian society, ungoverned spaces in north-east Nigeria and the LCB, and

through temporal markers anchored around 2015. The Nigerian identity reproduced through different discursive resources, including societal, geographical, and temporal, is illustrative of the flexibility and changeability of this discourse. Yet this representation of Nigeria, I argued, is problematic for several reasons.

The first reason is that constructing Nigeria's identity according to ideas of liberal democracy and progress reflects limiting Eurocentric premises including about the desirability and universality of secularism, and about the organisation and development of human society, privileging western ideas (and societies). This Eurocentric discourse, though, overlaps with and reinforces other discourses including statist, colonial, and imperialistic ones. It invariably positions the Nigerian state as primarily responsible for facilitating and enabling national cohesion, socio-economic development, and other issues deemed relevant to the Nigerian society. Second, is that such a representation is a-historical and contributes to entrenching the existing postcolonial state structures and privileges. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, this representation takes for granted important pre/post-colonial realities especially concerning the ways in which particular groups and communities define themselves, including across national frontiers. This poses significant challenges for indigenous beliefs and practices, including religious ones, as well as for communities in north-east Nigeria.

In addition to the above, constructions of the Nigerian self through designating ungoverned spaces in north-eastern Nigeria and the LCB invigorates a particular hegemonic or imperialistic discourse, raising crucial questions about Nigeria's territorial boundary along the Lake Chad Basin and ongoing cooperation among countries in this region. As argued in Chapter 5, this could potentially impinge upon other collaborative projects between countries in the LCB, including sub-regional counter-terrorism efforts, not least due to Nigeria's interest in monitoring situations in the countries within this region.

Chapter 6, finally, explored constructions of the terrorist other within Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse by examining representations of particular terrorist groups as religious fundamentalists, foreign terrorists, and opportunists. Each of these representations are steeped in various discursive claims and contribute to reinforcing the above-stated Nigeria's identity as democratic and progressive. These representations inevitably enable various counter-terrorism policies and practices, including the targeting of foreign nationals from countries deemed dangerous, as well as from so-called marginalized communities in north-east Nigeria and the LCB.

In all, through approaching Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy as discourse, this thesis has demonstrated how it constructs specific threats and contributes to producing a specific image of Nigeria. Such questions around threats and identity construction have mostly been neglected in existing literature on counter-terrorism approach in Nigeria. However, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, such a focus is highly significant not least because it highlights the formation and representation of national identity, as well as the implications of this in the Nigerian context. While this concern is widely discussed within critical scholarship on terrorism and security, the aim of this thesis was to explore how this plays out in the Nigerian context showing similarities, nuances, and complexity of the Nigerian case.

Contribution to knowledge

This thesis offers an important contribution to knowledge on security and counter-terrorism approach in Nigeria, and Africa more broadly. Specifically, it makes three notable contributions, outlined in turn.

First, *empirically*, the thesis drew on a range of primary data encompassing relevant official texts, including those yet to receive adequate engagement in academic research, collected through fieldwork in Nigeria and from online sources. This pool of data provided a

useful repository for developing key arguments and findings about counter-terrorism discourse in Nigeria. Such an engagement with key official texts, including underexplored ones, is significant for the following reason. It allows for a sustained focus on how policymakers or state officials describe – or justify – state counter-terrorism policy. Counter-terrorism or security analyses on Nigeria and Africa more generally, are frequently approached *a priori* based on a set of rationalised assumptions with little, if any, direct focus on the articulations of policymakers. As such through analysing these primary texts, this thesis provides a richer understanding of Nigeria’s counter-terrorism policy, contributing to existing work in this area by focusing specifically on the interpretations offered by the Nigerian federal executive.

Second, *analytically*, this thesis offers a relevant substantive work on counter-terrorism discourse in Nigeria which contributes to decolonising and shifting academic focus from prominent examples, such as the Prevent strategy in the UK and the Patriot Act in the US. This contribution is relevant for two related reasons. First, the sustained examination of Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse allows for identifying and understanding important similarities, distinctions, and nuances of emerging discourses of counter-terrorism (including across global and national frontiers). Second, this study of Nigeria offers a broader understanding of earlier, recent, and continuing discourses of counter-terrorism, moving beyond the post-9/11 discourse and counter-discourse through identifying the lasting impacts of colonialism, as well as the expression of state power and other hegemonic interests.

Third, *conceptually*, this thesis provides a theoretical alternative to the dominant streams of mainstream approaches commonly used in analysing counter-terrorism policy – and practices – in Nigeria. In particular, it drew inspiration from critical constructivism as described in the work of Weldes, as well as from other constructivist and postcolonial work on security and counter-terrorism. Central to the framework presented in this thesis, is the assumption that Nigeria’s counter-terrorism policy involves a political project of identity construction. This

constructivist framework was especially useful for engaging *directly* with how the Nigerian federal government describes and justifies its counter-terrorism approach. This offers a potentially useful opening to illustrate the type of critical work possible on Nigeria which allows for posing different set of questions, including around identity, commonly overlooked by mainstream approaches.

Future research

As with any piece of research, this account of Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse is by no means complete. Rather, it should be read as a modest contribution to understandings of Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach; and perhaps, provides a departure point for other analysis of counter-terrorism policy and practice on Nigeria, and Africa too. Thus, it is worth acknowledging here that there are other sites and ways of articulating counter-terrorism knowledges and practices, beyond official discourse. In this final section, I suggest two potentially worthy avenues for future work which possibly further enrich our knowledge of counter-terrorism and security practices in Nigeria. In keeping with the approach adopted in this thesis, the following suggestions focus specifically on future research attentive to the relational and productive aspects of (state) security practices, including counter-terrorism approaches, in postcolonial contexts.

A first important area for future research involves addressing the limitations often encountered in official representations of security, given the power/knowledge dynamic that this mostly entail. As noted in Chapter 3, official discourse of counter-terrorism in Nigeria may potentially provide an inadequate account of the social, political and cultural landscape, ignoring other discourses, including those emanating from every-day or 'vernacular' accounts

for example.² Another related issue with official representation, one discussed throughout this thesis, is the problem of state-centrism which mainly serves to entrench state power and other associated privileges. While recognising the contribution of official discourse, future research could begin engaging with how peoples and communities in Nigeria understand and discuss state counter-terrorism practices and their implications for (human) security.

Indeed, this has been the subject of an ongoing conversation and a growing approach to security,³ however, very little work has been undertaken in this area with regard to Nigeria.⁴ Much work on everyday security, whether on Nigeria or Africa, often focus primarily on problematising security intervention and not such much on local meanings and understandings of security. The problem with such an approach, specifically, is the that it reproduces a state-centred idea of security, instead of identifying important alternative meanings and possibilities. Thus, attending to, and questioning, security practices including counter-terrorism efforts, from everyday perspectives would go some way to providing a more nuanced, and an in-depth, account of security and counter-terrorism. All this, of course, may entail expanding the conceptual approach adopted in this dissertation, which only provides for discursive modes of articulation, to include other modalities including iterative, quotidian practices, arts, paintings, and other performances.

The second area for future work is concerning the complexity of counter-terrorism approaches in the Lake Chad Basin, involving Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. This is of course a much broader focus, however, applying a critical lens to this case presents an enormous possibility for understanding various ongoing collaboration, contestation, or

² See, Lee Jarvis, "Towards a Vernacular Security Studies: origins, interlocutors, contributions, and challenges." *International Studies Review*. 21, 1 (2018), 107-126; Nick Vaughan-Williams and Daniel Stevens, "Vernacular theories of everyday (in)security: The disruptive potential of non-elite knowledge." *Security Dialogue*. 47, 1 (2015), 40-58

³ Nils Bubandt, "Vernacular Security: the politics of feeling safe in global, national and local worlds." *Security Dialogue*. 36, 3 (2005), 275-296

⁴ See, for example, Akin Oyawale, "The conflict in northeast Nigeria." *NokokoPod*. 1 (2020), 1-15

complexity. As discussed in Chapter 5, regarding constructions of ungoverned spaces, Nigerian counter-terrorism discourse designates the LCB (and the countries within it) as ungoverned spaces, posing significant threats to Nigeria. This raises important questions concerning the following: how do these countries, nationally and regionally, understand and communicate counter-terrorism efforts in this region? what are the implications of this for ongoing and future collaborations, as well as for communities in and around the LCB? There is indeed an important body of work on counter-terrorism efforts in the LCB, especially regarding military operation and collaboration through the Multinational Joint Task Force.⁵

A notable pitfall here is that much of this work draw upon mainstream frameworks and ideas of regional security complexes, which assumes homogeneity of security threats and interests in the LCB, taking for granted the contested meanings and implications thereof. Approach through a critical lens, future work could interrogate emerging discourses surrounding counter-terrorism in the LCB, comparing different representations produced by different state and non-state actors in Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon. This would invariably expand our knowledge on terrorism and counter-terrorism in this region. Such a focus may include exploring local and everyday conceptions and expressions of security, looking at historical contextualisation, interviews with policymakers and elites, and exploring other forms of language, such as metaphors.

⁵ See, for instance, U.A Tar and M. Mustapha, “The emerging architecture of a regional security complex in the Lake Chad Basin.”; E.M Atangana, “The underlying reasons for the emerging dynamic of regional security cooperation against Boko Haram.”

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