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Nigeria's international cooperation and strategic communications frameworks in the fight against terrorism

BY

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Abstract

The impact of international cooperation could be properly situated with the adoption of collective security by regional blocs and the African Union. This could also be seen in the strategic alliance formed in the Lake Chad Basin among Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameron, in stemming the tides of terrorism. It was against this background that this study examines the effect of international cooperation and strategic communication on the fight against terrorism in Nigeria. This study measures the Strategic communications framework with the target audience and counter-narratives. The study adopts an exploratory research design while content analysis of publicly available archive documents was employed for the analysis. Secondary data were generated via journal publications, the internet, the library, and other documented materials relevant to the study. The review of literature on the effect of international cooperation on the fight against terrorism reveals that international cooperation among countries will help in the fight against terrorism. The fight against terrorism and its causes is now viewed as a collective effort on the part of all members of the international community. The empirical literature also shows that the target audience which constitutes an integral part of strategic communication plays an important role in the fight against terrorism. It can be deduced from the reviewed literature that counter-narratives are effective in the fight against terrorism. It concludes that international cooperation, target audience, and counter-narratives have the potential to improve the fight against terrorism in Nigeria. It recommends that Nigeria should strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation through the sharing of best practices and information on terrorism, evaluating the efforts of other States, and better coordination with other countries in the fight against terrorism. Security agencies should work in collaboration with communities and as well as civil society, religious leaders, and community leaders, using credible messengers and a variety of media to dispel terrorist narratives.

Keywords: Counter Narratives, International Cooperation, Strategic Communications, Target Audience, Terrorism

Introduction

Terrorism is one of the biggest challenges facing the world presently. In particular, afterward the twin towers attack in the United States on September 11, 2001, terrorism has become a bigger challenge for most countries in the world and this has led to international cooperation against terrorism (Tulga, 2020). The expanding reach and destructive consequences of terrorism are among the major challenges to peace faced in today's world (Dieye, 2017).

Report by Green and Proctor (2016) on the new comprehensive strategy for the fight against terrorism, revealed that despite many efforts to extinguish the flames of violence, new and powerful extremist movements have taken root. In their report to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Green and Proctor (2016) further noted that terrorist groups around the world have used technology, the

media, religion, schools and mosques, and word of mouth to sell their twisted ideologies, justify their violence, and convincing too many recruits that glory can be found in the mass murder of innocent civilians.

Terrorist groups radicalize and recruit individuals through online propaganda, social media platforms, networking sites and traditional media. Since the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), concerted efforts have been undertaken to identify good practices in using strategic communications to prevent the appeal of terrorism. The Eight Review of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy stressed the importance of the role of the media, civil society, religious actors, the business community and educational institutions in those efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding, in promoting pluralism, respect for diversity, tolerance and coexistence, and in fostering an environment which is not conducive to incitement of terrorism, as well as in countering terrorist narratives. This further reaffirms the need for Member States to engage local communities and non-governmental actors in developing tailored strategies to counter terrorism narratives (United Nations General Assembly, 2023).

Global initiatives to counter terrorist narratives are carried out by a number of different actors on the supranational, international, regional, national and sub-national levels (Mawlood, 2020). The United Nations (UN) has established itself as a key player in the field of counter-narratives, inspiring related institutions, such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) to assist States in building concrete plans of action in this field. Other international organisations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), have implemented initiatives that focus on strategic communications and counter-narratives. States have also increased efforts in the fight against terrorism by countering terrorist narratives through cooperation with other States or non-state institutional partners. Finally, technology companies have taken steps to prevent abuse of their platforms by terrorist actors (Fisherman, 2023).

Communication among human beings is literally as old as humanity, but hypothesizing about strategic communication is rather new. Paul (2011) argued that strategic communication should not be limited to formal messages, yet actions of the communicator convey meaning hence should, be part of strategic communication. In Nigeria, the various acts of violence experienced after independence took a new dimension in 2009 with the emergence of terrorist activities in the Northern part of the country. This act of domestic terrorism which is attributed to an Islamic sect popularly called “Boko Haram” has drawn the attention of Nigerian government and the International Community towards curbing the menace of terrorism.

Boko Haram which translates into “western education is forbidden” has an ideology that is based on a fundamentalist Sunni Islam, and their intent is to establish an Islamic State in Nigeria and cleanse the country of any and all Western influence (Uzochukwu, 2014). In an effort to concretize Islamic State in Nigeria, Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for series of bombing, massacres, shooting, abduction and kidnapping in different parts of the country. Notable among these is the car bomb blast at a crowded bus park in Nyanya, Abuja, killing 71 people and injuring 124 others, the abduction and kidnapping of over 250 Chibok school girls (Abubakar, 2017), not less than 44 rice farmers were gruesomely killed while harvesting their crops in Zabarmari as they were working on a rice field at Garin Kwashebe (Haruna, 2020), and the June 15 2023 decapitation of seven farmers on farms in Molai, a village, approximately 5 kilometres from Maiduguri on , when the terrorists attacked them (Aruna, 2023).

Strategic communications play a vital role in the fight against terrorist groups; strategic communications are at the heart of any successful, long-term counterterrorism campaign (Paul, 2011). Strategic communication is an important asset when fighting against terrorism, whereas its objective is to give emphasis to internal communication models that function within given organizations and institutions. Internet is one of the main communication frameworks used by violent extremist groups nowadays. Social media networks, such as YouTube for example, are among the most used communication forms used to recruit youngsters and other persons to join the conflict zones in the Middle East (Mimoza, 2021).

The value of strategic communications in the fight against terrorism appears to be widely accepted. In some governments, it is explicitly recognised as a preferred approach: both the US and the UK, for example, have invested in institutions devoted to counter-terrorism strategic communications. Academics have long recognised that terrorism is not simply violence but communication and research has increasingly focused not only on how terrorists communicate but also on what works in response (Bolt et al., 2008).

Moreover, counter-terrorism strategic communications needs to pay attention to all forms of communication used directly and indirectly by terrorists. Furthermore, it is not simply a question of recognising that terrorist attacks and terrorist propaganda are different forms of communication: terrorists have many things to say to many different groups of people: Mistakenly, terrorist acts are widely assumed, at best, to be a “one message fits all” form of address’. Terrorists communicate using a wide variety of mediums including video games, poetry, songs, murals, oral narratives and more (Awosusi & Ogbuleke, 2019).

The Nigerian Government is firmly committed to the fight against terrorism within its borders, neighboring States and across the globe. To this end, Nigeria enacted the National Counter Terrorism Strategy

(NACTEST) in 2016 and the Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in 2017. These instruments have improved the capacity to respond to and counter the threat of terrorism.

Nigeria continues to spear-head the funding for the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which is the first regional formation for countering terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin. Through the closer cooperation with our neighbours, especially Cameroun, Chad, Niger and Benin Republic, within the framework of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the MNJTF continues to provide greater tactical cooperation on the ground in the fight against Boko Haram and ISWAP (Abubakar, 2017).

Nigeria has a national legislation against terrorism, Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act 2013, which provides measures for the prevention, prohibition and combating of acts of terrorism, and the financing of terrorism. In this context, Nigeria continues to count on the strong cooperation with UN Counter-Terrorism bodies and neighbouring countries to overcome the terrorists in the Lake Chad Basin and the wider Sahel Region.

The rising insecurity have inclined the Nigerian government (military) to involved in internal security operations, primarily because of several security threats across the country, such as Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, Cattle rustling and armed bandits in the North West, secessionist agitation and armed robbery in the South East and militancy and oil bunkering in the South-South, that have overwhelm the Police and other security agencies (Awosusi & Ogbuleke, 2019). On numerous occasions the military would issue half-truths or untruths that were easily punctured by the militants or simply detected by the public. The repeated claims of Shekau‘s death, for instance, were effectively countered by the insurgents with simple releases of their leader‘s video and audio recordings to prove that he was still alive and unharmed in many occasions before he was finally killed by the military. Each successful rebuttal of such claims erodes the credibility of the Army and enhances that of the jihadists (Abubakar, 2017).

Therefore, the use of international cooperation and strategic communications by government to protect its interests and citizens becomes a key weapon of defence, thus requiring that a nation evolves her strategic communications framework to enhance the security and resilience of her citizens. The overarching objective of Nigeria‘s strategic communications is to provide the framework for organization, processing and dissemination of information to influence the citizens and change their behaviour positively towards unity, cohesion and development.

With the support of technology in the new era, the terrorism activities present many new characteristics. An increasing number of terrorist organizations use new media to promote extreme ideas, release terrorism

information, recruit group participants and plot terrorist activities. Besides the hard power, nations should also use soft power to disorganize the terrorism's foundation in terms of thoughts and public opinions. Therefore, introducing strategic communications and international cooperation have great significance to counter-terrorism. National counter-terrorism strategic communication mechanism can be fused with politics, diploma, national-defense, religion and so on. Therefore, the information resource and other resource can be deeply reorganized and the counter-terrorism efficiency can be enhanced (Carthy & Sarma, 2021).

Despite the rise in the frequency and deadliness of terrorist attacks, international cooperation for counter-terrorism is still limited. In fact, it is rather ironic that terrorists are often more united against a single government, than governments are united against a single terrorist threat (Sandler, 2005; Sandler & Enders, 2004). To add further to the complexity, governments around the world do not have a consensus regarding what constitutes as terrorism and who are the terrorists. Some governments may even shy away from international cooperation for counter-terrorism based on the belief that it may be perceived as an inherent weakness of the government. Because of these pitfalls, international cooperation for counter-terrorism is often stunted from its infancy. Meanwhile, terrorist groups and organisations continue to cooperate within themselves and become stronger. Thus, there is a need for research that can provide evidence that international cooperation for counter-terrorism can indeed be beneficial for all countries involved.

This research, in addition to addressing some of these research gaps, underscores the need for counterinsurgency practitioners in Nigeria and beyond to systematically examine the changing character of intrastate insurgent movements. It is imperative for civilian and Defence leaders and practitioners to understand the kind of war they are embarking (D'Souza, 2017).

In recent years, numerous articles such as Adedire et al. (2016); Ogbuleke and Erameh (2020); Bélanger et al. (2020); Syed (2020); Mimoza (2021); Carthy and Sarma (2021); Mohamed (2021) in the literature related to terrorism have been published, discussing its relation with social media- mass media. These articles contain various opinions, despite numerous articles and opinions, still, there is no common idea written about all aspects of terrorism and how to employ international collaboration and strategic communications in the fight against these aspects of terror. Unfortunately, there is a gap in the literature. The most important reason for this gap is the lack of understanding the relationship between physical terrorism, media, and psychology.

There have been various studies on the subject of Nigeria's on combating terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria, employing international collaborations against Boko Haram, among them; studies by Adedire et al.

(2016), Abubakar (2017); Ogbuleke and Erameh (2020) that have been carried. However, of these studies none has endeavored to determine the combined role of international cooperation and strategic communications framework in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria.

The main objective of this study is to examine the effects of Nigeria's international cooperation and strategic communications frameworks in the fight against terrorism. The specific objectives of this study are to:

a. Examine the effect of international cooperation on the fight against terrorism in Nigeria.
b. Determine the effect of target audience on the fight against terrorism in Nigeria.
c. Assess the effect of counter narratives on the fight against terrorism in Nigeria.

This study focuses on Nigeria's international cooperation and strategic communications frameworks in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria. Strategic communications framework is measured with constructs such as target audience and counter narratives.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

International Cooperation

International cooperation is the strategic alliances with regional and international stakeholders to ensuring a comprehensive approach to countering terrorism. The fight against terrorism and its causes is now viewed as a collective effort on the part of all members of the international community. Nigeria, too, is actively involved in international cooperation in this field. The fight against terrorism strategy is based on the knowledge that terrorist threat can most effectively be countered through international collaboration, cooperation and partnerships. This includes partnerships among countries. Partnerships with other countries are particularly crucial. It also means engaging with industry stakeholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), citizens and foreign governments.

It also means working with partners with which Nigeria has less history of dealing. Sometimes these efforts will be bilateral. At other times they will require working through multilateral fora, such as the United Nations (UN), the G8 and the Global Counter-terrorism Forum. It may mean working to stabilize countries that provide a permissive threat environment. Foreign policy planning is more relevant to Nigeria's national security than ever before.

Strategic Communications

Strategic communication is a systematic series of sustained and coherent activities, conducted across the strategic, operational and tactical levels; that enable the understanding of target audiences, identify effective conduits, and develop and promote ideas and opinions through those conduits to promote and sustain particular forms of behavior (Tatham, 2010).

According to Laity (2010), strategic communication requires the proper use of information by way of unifying result-oriented actions and synchronization between relevant institutions; socio-cultural structure, history and customs of the target audience as well as technologic factors should be taken into account in the use and transfer of information. It does not mean producing policies and making decisions followed by declaring these decisions taken or activities performed and legitimization thereof before the public. Strategic communication is intended to integrate the information to each and every element of policy, planning and execution; the information is not a trivial concept to be released to the public after decisions are made.

Target Audience

Target audience entails studying a social group of people by examining a range of psycho-social parameters with the aim of identifying the best to influence behaviour change in different groups (Tatham, 2015). Audience targeting is inspired by the need to understand all the factors that influence terrorism in order to devise effective strategies to fight against terrorism. Audience targeting is a complex process with the potential to reveal counterintuitive results.

Target audience is a comprehensive process that focuses on identifying the priorities and influential audience of a specific intervention program (Barnett, 2011). Audience targeting provides the information needed to trace the roots of both individual and collective narratives with the aim of coming up with effective counter narratives.

Counter Narratives

Counter narratives are actions to directly deconstruct, discredit and demystify violent extremist messages. The application of strategic communication approaches in the fight against terrorism facilitates the formulation of narratives that target key issues that power the messages from radical groups (Tretheway et al., 2009).

Counter narratives refer to the messages that provide a positive alternative to extremist propaganda, with the ultimate aim of deconstructing extremist views within a population (Silverman et al., 2016). Counter-narratives become essential because of the existing volumes of extremist propaganda already in circulation over the Internet and other media outlets.

Fight against Terrorism

Terrorism is defined as the systematic use of violence and intimidation to coerce a government or community into acceding to specific political demands (Pearsall & Trumble, 2006). Terrorism presents itself in deliberate incidents and acts of sabotage, criminal bombings, arsons, vandalism; assassination; kidnapping; armed robbery, militancy, trafficking in illegal small arms and light weapons, transnational organised crimes, subversion and propaganda, espionage, cyber-terror, echo-terror, bio terror and the attendant criminal acts and consequences

The fight against terrorism, also known as counter-terrorism and anti-terrorism, incorporates the practice, military tactics, techniques, and strategy that government, military, law enforcement, business, and intelligence agencies use to combat or prevent terrorism. The fight against terrorism is a government's plan to use the instruments of national power to neutralize terrorists, their organizations, and their networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instill fear and to coerce the government or its citizens to react in accordance with the terrorists' goals (Stigall et al., 2019).

Empirical Review

International Cooperation and the Fight against Terrorism

Adedire et al. (2016) conducted a study on combating terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria, employing international collaborations against Boko Haram. The study argued that poverty, unemployment, weak institutional structure, corruption, proliferation of weapons of war and religious factor are the major causes of terrorism and insurgency. The study examined the attempts made by Nigerian government as well as international actors towards curbing the menace of terrorism and insurgency. Such domestic measures include the deployment of troops to the affected areas, joint task force by the neighbouring countries, declaration of state of emergency and encouragement of public and media to provide intelligence support.

Syed (2020) conducted a study on the strategic perspective to international cooperation for counter-terrorism. The study advocates that there exists a strategic rationale for international cooperation for counter-terrorism. The study concluded that with the increase in the incidence and impact of terrorist attacks globally, the time has come for countries around the world to set aside their differences and cooperate within themselves on issues pertinent to counter-terrorism. Such cooperation is particularly required among countries of the less developed regions of the world, which are disproportionately affected by terrorism. It argued that there exists a strategic rationale for international cooperation for counter-terrorism in ancient Chinese wisdom.

Target Audience and the Fight against Terrorism

Mustaqeem et al. (2019) examined the roles of strategic communication in the countering of violent extremism and its influence on Pakistani society. It argued that strategic communication through target

audience can be assimilated into policies and actions of the major stakeholders as a strategic measure to handle radicalized and violent extremism. Moreover, with the help of few judicious strategies, a balance and a moderate society can be established. Further to this are the ideal practices being recommended in line with the theory of strategic communication planning format that will not only help in tackling extremism but also bring peace.

Naman (2019) determined the impact of strategic communications in preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism by National Counter Terrorism Center in Pumwani area within Nairobi County in Kenya. The target population comprised of five youth groups with a total membership of 250 youths that have continuously been living in Pumwani area within Nairobi County. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data for frequencies and percentages, while inferential statistics were used to analyze data for correlations and regressions. The data was collected using questionnaires which comprised of both open and closed ended questions. The data was analyzed in the form of tables, frequencies and percentages. The results of the study indicated that there is a significant correlation between countering violent extremism and both audience targeting. The results from the study showed that there is no significant relationship between countering violent extremism and counter narratives. The results have shown that there is no significant relationship between countering violent extremism and choice of communication content. The study therefore concludes that audience targeting and choice of communication channels are important components of strategic communication in countering violent extremism that makes the variation in countering violent extremism in Pumwani area of Nairobi County in Kenya. The study also concludes that in Pumwani area, communication content and counter narratives do not have significant impact on countering violent extremism.

Mimoza (2021) conducted a study on strategic communication and prevention of violent extremism through education in Kosovo. It employed qualitative research method. The study analyzed the documents of the state related to the fight against extremism, which have been approved by the Government and published on the official websites. The study concludes that target audience through strategic communication is considered an important action for the state and extremist groups.

Counter Narratives and the Fight against Terrorism

Schouten (2016) analyzed the United States' policies and strategic communications in the post- September 11, 2001 war against Islamic fundamentalists to determine if U.S. strategic communication policies have been effective in countering extremism. From the findings, it is evident that U.S. strategic communications have failed in countering radicalization and moderating the minds of Muslim populations overseas or among Diaspora populations in Western countries. Reinstatement of a central agency for strategic communications, modeling of solutions for specific groups, and analysis of historical war successes and

failures are important in ensuring the effectiveness of strategic communications in the fight against terrorist groups.

Abubakar (2017) did a comparative study of the use of strategic communications by both the Nigerian Armed Forces and Boko Haram. It also assessed their impact on the media coverage of their activities. The jihadists deployed both their communications skills and their infamies to put their insurgency onto the global scene. The Army employed a range of tools, some effective, some less so to counter them. The media's obsession with jihadi stories gave the insurgents an edge, but the Army managed to disrupt most of their strategies. Extraneous factors do influence strategic communications campaigns, but honesty or the perception of it is a necessary condition for their long-term efficacy.

Ogbuleke and Erameh (2020) investigated the place of leadership and strategic communication in the actualization of overall national security in Nigeria. The support the security services received from the media might have come from the need to address this for lasting solution in the nearest future. Therefore, there is need for leaders to integrate a new culture of communication among agencies which can lead to greater efficiency in information and intelligence sharing under the established strategic communication inter-agency policy coordination committee in overseeing strategic communication for national security.

Bélanger et al. (2020) tested whether counter-narratives are effective to reduce people's support and willingness to join Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Results showed an overall small positive effect of counter-narratives, but also evidence for greater support for ISIS in individuals at greater risk of radicalization. Results also showed that the content was more important than the source. A political narrative was the most effective, and this result is consistent across different sources although an ISIS defector is the most effective messenger.

Carthy and Sarma (2021) conducted a study on countering terrorist narratives, assessing the efficacy and mechanisms of change in counter narrative strategies. Two counter-narrative strategies were evaluated against a dominant terrorist narrative. Returning autonomy to the target by having them actively counter terrorist rhetoric themselves was found to be more effective than offering generic counter-narratives. Notwithstanding the challenges and limitations associated with measuring violent radicalization-related constructs, the findings of the experiment demonstrate the extent to which individuals vary in their susceptibility to violent, terrorist narratives, as well as attempts to counter them.

Mohamed (2021) conducted a study on the use of counter narratives as prevention and countering violent extremism communications-based measure using Muslim-American undergraduate students in Universities

and Colleges in California as the case study. The target sample group for the study was drawn from Muslim-American undergraduate students from a university and community college within the state. The study findings showed that the participants had little knowledge of terror organizations, appreciated the dangers of radicalization, and saw the necessity of counter narratives in countering radicalization. The findings demonstrate use of counter narratives could be effective in combating radicalization and sensitizing young people against violent extremism involvement.

Theoretical Framework

Relational Human Theory

The relational human theory was developed by Ruesch and Bateson (1951). The beginning of Bateson's communication theory dates to 1951. Bateson initiated the beginnings of a modern and today widely absorbed communication theory which until today still remains often unconnected with his name. The relational communication body of knowledge is the most promising theory to advance the effective practice of strategic communication. The theory proposes an intricate framework for the practice of strategic communication. The theory prioritizes building and maintaining mutually beneficial connections with key stakeholders and the public. The stakeholders involved in the network of relationship influence each other and facilitate communication.

The quality of the relationships between an organization and its strategic publics will determine organizational success in the contemporary milieu. Publics include those with whom the organization must establish and maintain enduring and mutually beneficial relationships. An organization-public relationship begins when there are consequences created by an organization that affect publics, or when the behaviours of publics have consequences on an organization. Organization-public relationships is the state which exists between an organization and its key publics, in which the actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural, or political well being of the other.

The relational theory of human communication provides a useful intellectual framework for strategic communication practice. Relational theory espouses the importance of developing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and key publics. Both the organization and publics influence the other, and communication activities link the parties.

Methodology

This study adopts exploratory research design while making use of secondary data generated via journal publications, internet, library, and other documented materials relevant to the study; the study tries to examine the effect of international cooperation and strategic communications framework on the fight

against terrorism in Nigeria using content analysis of publicly available archive documents. The research is conducted by examining literature concerning international cooperation and strategic communications in the fight against terrorism. The literature was obtained through searches in publicly available material. Literature from non-serial publications, official reports, and conferences has been included particularly if they have been cited by other references.

Discussion of Findings

The review of literature on the effect of international cooperation on the fight against terrorism reveals that international cooperation, collaboration and information sharing among countries will help in the fight against terrorism. The fight against terrorism and its causes is now viewed as a collective effort on the part of all members of the international community. A vital component to prevent and counter terrorism is cooperation between countries across borders. To ensure effective and efficient international and regional cooperation in criminal matters related to terrorism, there is the need to facilitate cooperation among countries worldwide. These are some of the views held by Adedire et al. (2016); Syed (2020).

The result gotten from empirical literature is that target audience which constitutes an integral part of strategic communication plays an important role in the fight against terrorism. This can be attained by understanding and analyzing the target audience through determining the expectations, attitudes and behaviour, as well as analyzing characteristics and culture of the target audience. Strategic communication ensures that the language, culture, symbolic values of the words, body language, beliefs and expectations of the target audience are well understood. Therefore, target audience is one of the most suitable methods to fight against terrorism. This is the submission of Mustaqeem et al. (2019); Mimoza (2016).

It can be deduced from the reviewed literature that counter narratives are effective in the fight against terrorism. The appeal of terrorism among vulnerable individuals will decrease if they are exposed to counter narratives intended to break the jihadi brand. Consequently, the fundamental practical implication of this finding is that practitioners, NGOs, and governments should deploy counter narrative strategies to counter violent extremism. Furthermore, the finding suggests that policy makers and practitioners should choose their target audience carefully and disseminate their counter narratives through narrowcasting (as opposed to broadcasting) or perhaps even one-to-one conversation to avoid exposing segments of the population susceptible or sympathetic to narratives of violent extremism. This supports the finding of previous studies of Abubakar (2017); Ogbuleke and Erameh (2020); Bélanger et al. (2020); Carthy and Sarma (2021); Mohamed (2021). It contradicts the finding of Schouten (2016).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that international cooperation and collaboration among countries has the potential to improve the fight against terrorism in Nigeria. Terrorism pose a threat to international peace, prosperity and stability, hence, countries of the world must unite in the fight against terrorism. Information sharing among countries on the threat of terrorism will go a long way to enhance the fight against terrorism, also, and offering of assistance in terms of capacity-building, technical aids and supplies of war equipment to States that are battling terrorism will assist in the fight against terrorism.

The study also concludes that target audience is vital to effective strategic communications in the fight against terrorism, taking into account a spectrum of potential consumers of the message (intended, unintended, supporters, adversaries and neutrals). A nuanced behavioural and attitudinal understanding of that audience is needed to persuasively shape attitudes and behaviours.

The study concludes that the threat from terrorist propaganda is real, and counter-narratives are cornerstone short-term intervention in the fight against terrorism. Counter narratives aim at exposing extremist discourse and dissipating illusions of terrorism. It confronts; challenges and contradicts the themes intrinsic to the terrorist narrative through ideology, logic, fact or humour.

The study recommends that Nigeria should strengthen bilateral and multilateral international cooperation through the sharing of best practices and information exchange on terrorism, evaluating the efforts of other States and better co-ordinating approaches with other countries in the fight against terrorism. Nigeria should speedily sign and ratify the Conventions on the Prevention of Terrorism, along with other relevant legal instruments, if they have not already done so.

Security agencies should work in collaboration with communities and members of priority audiences, as well as civil society, religious leaders and community leaders, using credible messengers and a variety of media (including SMS, television, radio, print media, the internet) to dispel the terrorist narrative.

The study recommends that different types of messaging and media, articulated around local issues and narratives is required in the creation of effective counter narratives communication strategy against terrorism. Government should prioritise the creation of tailored, flexible positive alternative narratives to terrorist propaganda and violent extremism, to undermine and detract from the authority of terrorist leadership and expose the hypocrisy of the violent extremist narrative and the reality of life as a terrorist.

Compliance with ethical standards

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