

The impact of (counter-)terrorism on public (in)security in Nigeria: A vernacular analysis

Security Dialogue

1–18

© The Author(s) 2022



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/09670106211063796

journals.sagepub.com/home/sdi**Akinyemi Oyawale** 

University of Warwick, UK

Abstract

This article examines the impact of (counter-)terrorism on public (in)security in Nigeria through engaging with non-elite understandings of ongoing conflicts in the northeast. Through 41 in-depth interviews carried out during a four-month fieldwork exercise with internally displaced persons in Nigeria, the article contributes to current (counter-)terrorism research on Nigeria and Africa by examining the lived experiences of non-traditional security ‘practitioners’, thus enriching current debates about ‘deepening’ and ‘broadening’ the security concept within critical security studies. The images of security that emerge show that the public in Nigeria adopt two main discursive devices, that is, a story and an interpretative repertoire, to discursively position themselves in relation to Boko Haram, the state and societal discourses and practices. Two discourses are prominent, namely a ‘(counter-)terrorist people’ discourse and a ‘*kafir*’ or ‘infidel’ discourse, which are constructed around ‘ethnic’ and ‘religious’ identities. This vernacular study of public understandings of (counter-)terrorism in Nigeria achieves three primary objectives: (i) it serves to invigorate debates around the meaning and practice of (in)security in Nigeria, (ii) it expands public (in)security debates on Africa, and (iii) it enriches vernacular research debate through foregrounding the experiences of groups and individuals who experience insecurity in their everyday lives.

Keywords

Boko Haram, counterterrorism, critical security studies, insecurity, terrorism, vernacular

Introduction

This article examines the impact of (counter-)terrorism on public (in)security in the Global South by engaging with non-elite constructions of (in)security within *everyday* settings in Nigeria. The importance of terrorism in Nigeria is recognized in global databases; Nigeria is ranked third on the Global Terrorism Index of countries most impacted by terrorism, behind Afghanistan and Iraq (Global Terrorism Index, 2020). However, aside from their inherent problems, such as those associated with typologies, classification and indexing, these databases do not capture the extent to

Corresponding author:

Akinyemi Oyawale, University of Warwick, Coventry, West Midlands, CV4 7AL, UK.

Email: Akinyemi.oyawale@warwick.ac.uk

which terrorism features in the public consciousness or indeed in the public's experiences or lives. This article draws on interviews and field notes from a four-month fieldwork project working with locals from northeast Nigeria who lived in communities where both (counter-)terrorist discourses and practices have been pervasive and constituted a constant part of their daily lives. The fieldwork combined 41 in-depth interviews, conducted during a field research trip at internally displaced persons (IDP hereafter) camps and 'host communities' in Abuja, Nasarawa and Niger where IDPs lived among other Nigerians. Field notes were taken with the aim of answering two key questions: How do 'lay' Nigerians talk about (in)security and terrorism in their *everyday* life? What tasks do these discursive constructions perform?

This article argues that the Nigerian public adopts two main interpretative devices – story and interpretative repertoire – to discursively advance two broad images of (counter-)terrorism that are constructed around ethnicity and religion. Through these discursive practices, they position themselves in relation to Boko Haram and state discourses and practices. Two discourses are prominent – a '(counter-)terrorist people' discourse and a '*kafir*' or 'infidel' discourse – which are constructed around ethnic and religious identities. Within these discourses, cultural identities, such as ethnic and religious identities, offer various subject positions through which the public are *positioned* and *position* themselves through powerful discourses. Thus, this article expands on (counter-)terrorism research in the African context by producing original material from non-traditional security practitioners and addressing broader security threats, and on current vernacular research by studying public understandings of (counter-)terrorism within the African context.

The following section positions my analysis in relation to the key contemporary literature on identity and (counter-)terrorism. The second section details the conceptual approach I employed to unpack the various in-situ researcher–interviewee identity co-constructions. The third section addresses the methodological approach of this study by detailing the procedures adopted to negotiate the data obtained at the fieldwork sites in Nigeria. The fourth section analyses the two main discourses engaged in by the public. The fifth section concludes by reiterating the main arguments and recommending avenues for further study.

Identity and (counter-)terrorism research in the African context

While it is almost canonical within academic literature on Boko Haram that the group is, to varying degrees, a radical Islamist (Loimeier, 2012) and 'jihadist' (Onuoha, 2014; Zenn, 2020) movement (Loimeier, 2017; Oriola and Akinola, 2017), only a few recent studies have robustly employed identity as an analytical tool to investigate the group and its activities. Nyiayaana (2021: 105) views Boko Haram as one of various 'identity-based struggles' that occur under conditions of weakened 'state legitimacy'. Other studies have addressed the perceived intractability of '[c]onflicts motivated by religious identity' (Agbiboa, 2013b: 1), giving them a somewhat 'exceptional' category or emphasizing how Boko Haram 'manipulates' religious and ethnic identities within a country that has grown more precarious because of 'relative deprivation' (Agbiboa, 2013a: 164). Furthermore, the study addresses how religion serves to motivate 'aggressive' actions towards addressing people's economic 'frustration' (Gurr, 2015: 9), thus giving identity instrumental value.

Another direction that research on (socio)cultural identity in Nigeria has taken is to investigate how public, particularly elite, discourses in the form of 'hate speech', may further alienate 'ethnic and religious' communities from the state, which could further aggravate existing 'ethnic and religious' tensions and foment conflict (Onah and Uroko, 2021: 161). A thread that runs through these arguments is the peculiarity of the social and cultural configurations within the (post)colonial context, which may differ from a 'mutually reinforcing' relationship between the state and civil

society¹ within Western societies, where the latter serves as a bulwark to the former when cases of social and political erosions occur (Gramsci and Buttigieg, 1992). In the absence of this mutual reinforcement, where ‘state-making’ goes *pari passu* with nation-building, the institutional machinery of the state may lack ‘horizontal legitimacy’ (Nyiayaana, 2021: 107) under conditions of a bifurcated public sphere (Ekeh, 1975), which may be conducive to different forms of identity conflict (Nyiayaana, 2021). While Ekeh primarily focused on ethnic identity, the concept of neo-ethnicity (Roy, 2004) may help to highlight the overlapping contours of cultural identity. Loimeier’s argument regarding Boko Haram and other radical Islamist movements, such as the Gumi-inspired ‘Yan Izala’ of the 1960s, as products of enduring socio political ‘and generational dynamics within the larger field of northern Nigerian radical Islam’ (Loimeier, 2012: 138) may be interpreted as emerging within the context of these ‘dialectical tensions’ (Ekeh, 1975: 108).

Other studies on cultural identity and terrorism that have adopted a more transnational perspective have highlighted ethnic and religious underpinnings of ‘jihadist’ groups, such as ‘*Ansar Dine* (Supporters of the Faith), the Movement for Unity and Jihad (MUJAO) and *Al Qaeda* in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)’ (Solomon, 2013: 428). What may be implied is that, since terrorism can be strengthened by cultural identities, it can also differentially impact ethnic and religious communities, which are viewed as a support base either in a narrow sense concerning their interests or as a bulwark for the insurgency. This latter point expands ongoing research beyond terrorism to include how attempts to counter terrorist violence may exploit the interplay between ethnic and religious identities to portray specific – particularly diasporic – communities as threatening (Mwangi, 2017). This aligns with ‘suspect community’ arguments that have highlighted how Muslim and *racialized* minorities are constructed as suspicious within the UK (Breen-Smyth, 2014; Hickman et al., 2011; Ragazzi, 2016). Thus, Somali Muslims who live in Kenya as refugees may be scapegoated and targeted by law enforcement officers based on the ‘securitization’ of their Muslim identities (Hendricks, 2020: 4) as prone to radicalization into Al-Shabaab (Mwangi, 2017: 1048) or subjected to stringent ‘community policing’ that seeks to police identities perceived as dangerous (Biegon and Songa, 2018: 214).

Notwithstanding the focus of these studies on identity, communities and the various roles identity may play concerning both terrorism and counter-terrorism, the inherent complexity of the identity concept, together with its contingent and situated co-production, is insufficiently explored in these studies. Although there were risks of *reifying* (Kertzer, 2017) or *essentializing* (Hall, 2000) identity, it could be argued that a richer engagement with identity could be useful, not only as an analytical tool for researchers, but also as an analytical resource for participants (Widdicombe, 1998). This would suggest that the various ways in which identity is accomplished are foregrounded, allowing for a ‘genuinely inductive’ (Jarvis, 2017: 107) investigation of people’s *lay* understandings of both terrorism and counter-terrorism.

In doing so, the inclinations of mainstream international relations scholarship ‘to speak for, rather than to (or, perhaps better, with) “ordinary” people and the conditions of (in)security they experience, encounter or construct in everyday life’ can be ameliorated (Jarvis and Lister, 2013b: 158). Engaging with *non-elite* understandings and constructions of (in)security can potentially contribute rich empirical material to the ongoing theoretical and metatheoretical expansion of the security concept (Fierke, 2015) and enhance the empirical value of engaging with ‘how non-elite and marginalized actors [particularly in the Global South] experience and articulate (in)security’ (Fisher and Leonardi, 2020: 2). Engagement with substate actors has enormous potential to *deepen* the object of (in)security from the state to individual referents, whereas allowing non-traditional security actors to *speak* security could broaden it from a traditional focus on military threats to a diversity of fears and concerns that are intersubjectively constructed and managed outside official security circles (Jarvis and Lister, 2013b).

Discourse, subjectivity and the construction of identities

This study is situated within broader critical security research and adopts a composite of discursive approaches, particularly discursive psychology and narrative analysis. Discursive psychology is an interdisciplinary approach to discourse analysis that primarily concerns itself with investigating the various versions of the world that people discursively produce with an assumption that what people know and how they act are constructed through discourse (Wiggins and Potter, 2017). While the approach has significant internal diversity and has benefitted from interdisciplinary insights across the social sciences, this study adopts Wetherell and Potter's (1992) elaboration of the approach in their investigation of racist discourse in New Zealand. Their study draws heavily on post-structuralist insights, particularly from Foucault, regarding the constitutive powers of discourse that achieve 'subjectification' through three interrelated processes of 'veridiction', 'governmentality' and individual and collective 'practices of the self' or selves (Foucault, 2008: 9). Wetherell and Potter suggested that this 'post-structuralist account is an outline sketch [of how subjects and objects are produced by discourse] waiting to have the colours filled in' and examined how these 'versions' of reality are produced as 'solid, factual and stable' through discourse (1992: 94–95).

By reworking the Foucauldian conceptualization of discourse by moving away from its 'discursive determinism' (Deppermann, 2013: 2), scholars such as Bamberg (2004), Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) and Wetherell and Potter (1992), to varying degrees, moved towards a genuinely bottom-up approach that interrogated various ideologies and discourses within their realms of practice, such as everyday speech (Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Wiggins and Potter, 2017). Moreover, when conceptualized in this way, 'complex, historically developed organizations of ideas . . . could be identified through research' to illuminate how they are constantly claimed, rejected and 'reworked within the contingencies of different concrete settings' (Wiggins and Potter, 2017: 95). It is important to note that, rather than a tool for describing reality, language here becomes construed as a medium through which people construct their experiences or world and are themselves constructed; namely, it is both 'constructed and constructive' (Wiggins and Potter, 2017: 97). This demonstrably anti-cognitivist and anti-essentialist (Widdicombe, 1998) approach permits investigation of how people 'discursively practice' their identities through positioning; 'who one is and what one is like [. . . are] established through discursive acts' (Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 78).

The two main discursive devices relevant to this study are story and an interpretative repertoire, which offer tools enabling speakers to occupy different subject positions, either through a narrative form (story) or with the use of repertoires (Toth, 2014: 153; Wooffitt, 2005). In narrating, people *position* or place themselves in the world through dialectical processes of *identification* (internally) and *categorization* (externally) via available resources (Jenkins, 2000) and 'social categories such as those of gender, ethnicity and class [among others] at a specific point in time and space' (Anthias, 2002: 498). As Bamberg (2004: 153) noted, a narrative is a 'situated' action that is 'co-constructed in interactive settings' and can reveal how speakers' positioning through discourse should 'be understood'. Similarly, an interpretative repertoire refers to 'broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions, commonplaces . . . and figures of speech often clustered around metaphors of vivid images and using distinct grammatical constructions and styles' (Potter et al., 1990: 212) and is typically 'distinguished by familiar clichés, anecdotes and tropes . . . what everyone knows' (Seymour-Smith et al., 2002: 255).

While similar to discourses, interpretative repertoires emphasize the actual use of discourses or 'discursive instantiation' (Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 90) and how some discourses have become *indigenized* and *codified* to an extent that they may have become *quotidian* or commonplace

(Billig, 1996) and thus serve as *situated* 'building blocks [for] manufacturing versions of actions, self and social structures in talk' (Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 90). Therefore, this study seeks to analyse the discourses and interpretative repertoires through which IDPs position themselves 'actively and agentively . . . [through discursive practices] vis-a-vis normative [and societal] discourses [particularly terrorism and counter-terrorism discourses]' (Bamberg, 2004: 153) and their overall positioning strategies.

Research methodology

This research involved a four-month critical ethnographic fieldwork project that took place at IDP camps and host communities in northern Nigeria; a total of 20 women and 21 men participated. The methods adopted to negotiate the data combined field notes with 41 in-depth interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In total, four different IDP camps and four host communities participated in this study across the Abuja, Nasarawa and Niger states. Host communities are communities to which IDPs have relocated and where they live with family members or friends outside of official government control; these communities offer more security than IDP camps, where abuse has been suspected (Ogbeche, 2016). Purposive sampling methods were used for the case and site selection. Most of the participants were residents of northeast Nigeria at some point during the insurgency between 2011 and 2016; thus, their experiences are vital. Furthermore, their security and that of the researcher could be better assured away from the conflict zones. Statistically, therefore, the study does not make claims about representativeness and acknowledges that, although biases are minimized, they cannot be entirely eradicated, especially from case selection through to analysis and presentation of the data (Jarvis and Lister, 2017).

Concerns could be raised regarding the choice of research participants, particularly when being displaced internally or externally could be evidence of being insecure; namely, IDPs may have biases and a stronger interest in security. Critical research acknowledges the potential biases of both the researcher and the participants by highlighting the *value* of all forms of knowledge production (Jackson et al., 2011). Moreover, as Booth (2007: 98) reflected, '[I]ike health and status, security is a condition that . . . ought to be [investigated through] the experiences, imaginings, analyses, and fears of those living with insecurity, ill-health, or low status', thus making IDP knowledge of (in)security and (counter-)terrorism particularly valuable. In doing so, the 'inherently *political* character of security', namely its significance, how it may be achieved and whether it is desired at all which has been excluded from mainstream (and sometimes critical) security debates, can be recast as an arena for contestation, negotiation and struggle (Jarvis and Lister, 2013b: 173). This could ultimately *deprioritize* privileged knowledge and simultaneously 'prioritize particular populations by virtue of their identity or sociopolitical position' (Jarvis, 2017: 107), for example, as 'IDPs' or 'refugees'.

In this study, prompts were used to enhance the inductiveness of the research by providing interviewees with the opportunity to move the discussions in the directions they preferred; additionally, the researcher endeavoured not to interrupt participants while they were talking (Turner III, 2010). Participants were asked five main questions, which served to provoke self-expression in ways they often found necessary, sometimes digressing from the initial questions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The questions were as follows: What are your concerns [about security]? What were your experiences in the northeast? What were/are your experiences with the military and police? How can security be achieved? What are your current experiences? As Jarvis and Lister (2017: 251) argued, identity should be viewed not as unilateral but as a collaborative accomplishment 'between researchers and [individual or] multiple participants within specific times and spaces', discrediting attempts to reveal the *authentic* self of the participant or construe the accounts

elicited by these questions as a ‘true’ representation or opinion of (counter-)terrorism. Influences due to the researcher’s presence cannot be disregarded. There were special arrangements made for interpretation and translation in Hausa, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Glavda and Pidgin English to manage the ethnic diversity, and over 10 hours of audio recording and field note data were generated from the fieldwork and transcribed and coded with Nvivo.

Although displaced persons are removed from their indigenous communities in the northeast, understanding their communities provides the necessary context to enhance the navigation of the research enterprise and understanding of their lived experiences. Borno, Yobe (a part of Borno until 1991) and Adamawa, the three states most affected by Boko Haram and counter-terrorism, collectively have 65 local government areas out of a total of 774 throughout Nigeria (Awotokun, 2005). Within Borno State, there are primarily three traditional states namely Borno, Dikwa and Biu Emirates - Borno and Dikwa succeeded the old Bornu Empire after it fell to European colonialism in 1901 (Osuntokun, 1975). These overlapping political, social and cultural histories of the region are significant when viewed within national and regional contexts, where national and societal boundaries are not coterminous – particularly when the security project is statist, namely based on ‘sovereignty [and] territorial integrity’ (Blanquart, 2012: 31).

Identity and (in)security

Having situated this study within broader academic literature and navigated its conceptual, methodological and ethical-normative commitments, this section provides a detailed analysis of the various accounts that interviewees provided in the co-construction of their (counter-)terrorism experiences. From the findings, whereas interpretative repertoires such as ‘community’ were used flexibly to construct ‘friends’ and ‘non-friends’ or even actual or potential enemies, ethnic and religious identities were portrayed by many speakers in their accounts of (counter-)terrorism as ‘stable’ across time and space. The discourses that emerged were constructed around two main themes: ‘(counter-)terrorist people’ and ‘*kāfir*’ (infidel).

‘(counter-)terrorist people’ discourse

Although religious and ethnic identities among the northeast Nigerian public are not coterminous, almost all of the interviewees who identified as ethnic minorities such as Glavda, Arboko, Agapalawa, Amuda and Chinene, among others, also identified as Christians, whereas most of the interviewees who identified as Kanuri, Hausa or Fulani, among others, identified as Muslims. Thus, most interviewees who identified as an ethnic minority also identified as a religious minority and vice versa. These self-identifications are perhaps an oversimplification of the ethnic and religious complexities of the northeast; further investigation could illuminate how these identities are used in practice.

In response to questions concerning their experience of (counter-)terrorism in the northeast, a prominent theme that emerged from the interviews was a ‘collective’ story; several interviewees constructed a ‘(counter-)terrorist people’ discourse through which they positioned themselves according to various societal discourses and practices. Within the story, various actors were cast in diverse roles as ‘protagonists’, ‘antagonists’ and ‘villains’, among others, and were positioned by the speaker to accomplish identity work. The prominent characters were ‘counterterrorist people’ (protagonists, including members of Nigeria’s Joint Task Force and individual officers of the Nigerian army’s 7th Infantry Division in Borno State, such as Major Godwin Sule and other soldiers); ‘terrorist people’ (Boko Haram being the primary antagonist) and villains, such as the emir

of Gwoza,² Colonel Rabiū, Sergeant Abdul and some political leaders who emerged as ‘terrorist people’ within the narrative.

What was initially evident in the narratives was the investment of members of the Joint Task Force in cultural identities; rather than ‘Nigerian forces’ or members of the ‘Nigerian army’, officers and soldiers *belonged* to one ethnic group or another:

When Boko Haram fighting started around August 2013 in our village [Chinene], there was an army commander [Godwin Sule] but there was one colonel [and Dr] Rabiū – who was his senior. . . . So, when the soldiers were in Chinene, our brother said that ‘I [came] here because Col. Rabiū was coming here and that is why I have refused to go where I was [originally] posted. How can I? That is why I came to you because you are my people and you are my blood. I came to you to support you and to fight Boko Haram militants that are disturbing you’. Major Godwin Sule said that he is our brother. Col. Rabiū is either a Kanuri or a Hausa person. So, that is how it happened. I am Glavda. We are under Kanuri people. (Interview 1)

Major Sule was established as a person who was connected to his people by blood and there were obligations and duties associated with group membership that the major fulfilled. The speaker identified with the Glavda, establishing his identity as part of an ethnic minority, just as Major Sule did under the ethnic and political hegemony of the Kanuri ethnic group. What is interesting is that, although there was uncertainty regarding Col. Rabiū’s ethnic identity (Kanuri or Hausa), it was not considered important whether or not he was an ethnic minority or ‘brother’. Another interviewee aligned with this position in evaluating the efforts of army officers:

The time that armies were in the village they were trying their best but there was one army officer – an army colonel³ – he was our [brother] and he was living in our place. Because he was fighting Boko Haram seriously, he didn’t want that there was one thing that is disturbing us, if he saw or if he heard that Boko Haram was attacking the village, he would take troops to control that place and kill the Boko Haram [fighters]. The time that he was alive, he will not let Boko Haram to enter to our village. . . . If he were alive these Boko Haram couldn’t do anything. He was fighting for our rights that is why they connived and killed him. (Interview 2)

The speaker made her identity explicit by identifying Major Sule as her ‘brother’ and evaluated counter-terrorism as inadequate, thus emphasizing the ethnic and religious insider, Major (or Colonel, according to some) Sule, as an individual who was empathetic and sympathetic towards their experiences and hurt by Boko Haram’s attacks on his people. Another speaker also concurred: ‘So, the person was from our place, he was Godwin Sule by name. So, when he came to us to fight for us – because he himself was from my village – *it hurt him to see that his people were suffering while he was in the force, the government force*’ (Interview 3). Ethnic and religious identities were central both to understanding or defining and providing security. This was further developed with a collective definition of the enemy:

So . . . [Major Sule] complained to us that ‘if you are hiding those terrorist people, I will go away from you. I will go away from you because I cannot tolerate all the *terrorist people* because they are hiding from you, some are hiding among you and some of them are in the mountains. I am going and won’t have anything to do with you. I cannot say anything to you. I am your brother, *Amuda, Chinene, Arboko and Agapalawa* are the same; we are the same. Why are you not showing me our enemies? You are not my enemy, just show our enemies to me and don’t hide them’. (Interview 1)

This suggests a *responsibility* of individuals to become active, ad-hoc ‘stakeholders’ when ‘targeted calls for public vigilance sought to mobilize an army of willing citizen-siphons’ (Jarvis and

Lister, 2010: 178), although their stake was in the ‘community’ (ethnic and religious), rather than the state. While the ‘terrorist’ label was not consistently used and was mostly referred to when speakers recounted other people’s claims (particularly those of officers), as has been argued, it is pejorative and serves to ‘demonise’ and ‘depoliticise’ (Jackson and Hall, 2016: 303) a certain ‘Other’ as ‘threatening’ to a defined ‘Self’ (in this case, minority ethnic and religious communities). The ‘terrorist people’ category here could be viewed as an expansive category incorporating not only those labelled as terrorists but a diverse group of benefactors and beneficiaries, such as sponsors, apologists, sympathizers, people who are not ‘counterterrorist’ or anyone who is unable to disprove a suspected affiliation with Boko Haram. Another speaker elaborated on this idea:

So, when he [Major Sule] discovered everything, he now came and started searching house by house, so if he found a weapon in your house then you’re automatically a Boko Haram militant. Most especially if you had a gun, or a lot of cutlasses. A cutlass is mainly for farming, it is a farming implement but if it is excessive then you must be interrogated and if your answer is unconvincing then they will now comment on you that you are a Boko Haram militant and they will kill you. So that’s how he was doing. (Interview 3)

While not made salient by the speaker, the extrajudicial acts discussed here have received attention previously as many have argued that the extrajudicial killings of Boko Haram’s founding leader, Mohammad Yusuf, and several other suspected militants in 2009 may have played a key role in the transformation of the group into the formidable insurgency that later emerged (Comolli, 2015; Duodu, 2009; Last, 2009; Ojo, 2010). Another speaker provided a similar account, where Boko Haram suspects who were mostly ‘Muslims’ were executed:

They redeployed him [Sule] but he refused to go to and came to our village saying, if Dr Rabiū is coming to our place, he’ll follow him. That’s how he followed him that if this man (Rabiū) came to our place alone, he was going to kill many of the Christians that are innocent – he decided to follow him. Rabiū is a Muslim . . . and that is how Godwin Sule killed many of *their Muslims*. When he went to the market like this, he had a shortlist with him, he would call Boko Haram suspects out one by one – by their names – and after identifying them, he will pull them aside [and] kill them. He could kill like fifteen and sixteen of them. (Interview 1, emphasis added)

These actions were interpreted as anti-Muslim and, as this speaker suggested, ‘[Major Sule] was a Christian . . . the Muslims – because we are headed by Muslims in that state, it is a Muslim state – . . . when the Muslim ones discovered what he was doing, and they now reported that he was killing Muslims both innocent and those that were guilty because they were of a different religion’ (Interview 3). An assassination plot was thus executed:

So, Amīr⁴ urm . . . [contracted] Col. Rabiū and one Sergeant, Abdul, who was the best shooter and the person who killed Major Sule. He was the best shooter of the soldiers so he was the one who killed Major Sule. So, the Amīr and Colonel Rabiū and the governor met and discussed about how they were going to kill Major Sule because he was disturbing Muslims. (Interview 1)

In this denouement of the story, Major Sule died as a hero who was killed by friendly fire from those who he believed were his comrades but were, in reality, Muslim saboteurs:

That’s how Godwin Sule now started firing at them and he killed many of Boko Haram militants on that day. Some of our people watched as Boko Haram militants were just falling because the militants didn’t have good weapons to return fire; some of them didn’t even have guns. So, that was how Godwin Sule was

shot from behind and now he shouted ‘why’ when he received one bullet here [pointed to his back] . . . ‘why’! When he shouted that . . . ‘why do you do that to me?’ they shot him again here [pointing to his neck] – bulletproof does not protect there. If the killer hadn’t been the best shooter [Sergeant Abdul] he wouldn’t kill him and if not because his [Godwin Sule’s] magazine had finished, he wouldn’t kill him because Godwin Sule was a very dedicated and educated army officer. (Interview 1)

What is also evident is the perceived material superiority of the Nigerian army to Boko Haram, which further supports the argument that the failure of counter-terrorism was a deliberate act by ‘terrorist people’, including army commanders, traditional and political elites, and other Boko Haram members and sympathizers who had genuine interests in the perpetuation of terrorism.

While the binary of ‘terrorist people’ vs ‘counter-terrorist people’ may be viewed as a way in which speakers disrupt the oft-taken-for-granted dichotomization of terrorism (non-state) vs counter-terrorism (state) violence, it is also an ambivalent concept prone to abuse through blanket suspicion, social exclusion and even violence against those deemed ‘suspicious’. For example, being Muslim and unable to justify the possession of significant numbers of dual-use farm implements could leave one vulnerable to immediate extrajudicial execution which, although not theorized as such, echoes arguments regarding the role of religion in violent extremism and radicalization. Although minority ethnic and religious participants in UK studies have engaged with societal discourses such as ‘multiculturalism’ (Jarvis and Lister, 2017: 249), ‘citizenship’ (Jarvis and Lister, 2013a: 659) and rights (Jarvis and Lister, 2013b), among others, there was an absence in these accounts of cultural repertoires that enshrined the rights of difference and sameness and allowed speakers to position themselves against discriminatory state practices; some citizens, therefore, could be in a state of perpetual disconnection from the civic public (Ekeh, 1975). Instead, discourses such as Borno State being a ‘Muslim state’ (Interview 3) seemed to foreclose non-Muslim claims in their accounts where they viewed themselves as perennial outsiders.

Identity construction through this particular story may be discerned at three different levels, according to Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008): the different ways in which the story’s characters were creatively and meaningfully positioned in the stories, the specific ways in which speakers positioned themselves within the interview setting where the stories or accounts were provided (where various identifications and categorizations took place) and how speakers positioned themselves using societal discourses and narratives. In addition to this narrative form, there were various interpretative repertoires that speakers adopted to position themselves and accomplish their identity work within these accounts. For example, when the actions of two different officers were interpreted as a Muslim killing innocent Christians and a Christian killing innocent Muslims, which then served to justify the intervention of officers to protect their people, speakers alluded to culture as kinship, where their association was by blood, ethnicity was equal to brotherhood and it was a duty to defend one’s people. Further interpretative repertoires included a ‘community’ repertoire, a flexible resource that was used to construct either friends or enemies. Members of the Joint Task Force could be constructed as a friend, such as Major Sule, or an enemy, such as Colonel Rabi, despite both having served as members of the Nigerian army. Individuals and communities were either integrated into the community of ethnic and religious minorities or excluded as ethnic and religious majorities, such as Col. Rabi, who was characterized as Kanuri/Hausa and a Muslim. Moreover, besides the ‘epistemological . . . orientation’ (McKenzie, 2005: 2) of discourse, where versions of reality, identities, counter-terrorism and terrorism are produced through discourse, accounts were also action-oriented such that speakers blamed, accused, condemned, supported or excused people and actions within the contingencies of the *situated* context of the co-construction of research knowledge; namely, different contexts could elicit varying accounts (Jackson and Hall, 2016; Wetherell and Potter, 1992).

The '(counter-)terrorist people' discourse deepened the object of security not only because the referents were individuals but because it provided various ways in which individuals seemed to deepen security from its traditional *statist* referent (Jarvis and Holland, 2014), constructing it as contributing to their individual well-being and freedom from the 'disturbance' of their communities – ethnic or religious – by Boko Haram and compromised military officers. This diverges from the objectives of national security and establishing territorial integrity that have been central to Nigerian counter-terrorism. This section addressed the 'threat' to various individuals and communities by addressing the various ways in which individuals positioned themselves in relation to various societal discourses and practices. The following section discusses the various ways in which individuals construct themselves and their communities as 'threatened'.

A 'kafir' or 'infidel' discourse

The '(counter-)terrorist people' discourse presented above constructed a 'threat' by differentiating between 'terrorist people' and 'counter-terrorist people'. This section focuses on the 'threatened': the referent object of security. Whereas religion was made salient in the accounts of those who identified as Christians, it was less so in the accounts of those who identified as Muslims; the vast majority of those who identified as Christians viewed Boko Haram as a jihad (Onuoha, 2014) and an Islamization agenda (Harnischfeger, 2006) concerned with ridding the northeast of minorities.

The '*kafir*' discourse constructed shifting imaginaries of Boko Haram's definition of the 'enemy', especially as a *kafir* (infidel) or *takfir* (apostate); this has been an evolving, ambivalent and sometimes pragmatic enterprise since the group's early proselytization period (Zenn, 2020). Both Mohammed Ali and Muhammad Yusuf, who were influential founding members of Boko Haram,⁵ addressed early issues regarding the 'enemies' of Allah or Islam. The latter argued in one of his writings between 2006 and 2007 titled '*Hādhihi 'Aqīdatunā Wa-Minhāj Da 'watinā*' (This is our creed and the methodology of our preaching) that their doctrine does 'not believe in democracy, which has appeared on the face of the earth at the hands of Allah's enemies, the Jews and the Christians' (Cook, 2018: 28). The statement by the group's subsequent leader, Abubakar Shekau, that 'even if a woman is praying and fasting, once she engages in democracy, I can capture her in a battle' (Zenn and Pieri, 2017: 288) adopts a gendered lens to expand the grounds for enemy construction based on engaging in acts labelled as 'un-' or 'anti-Islamic'.

Another prominent theme that emerged during the interviews was the construction of Boko Haram's violence as an anti-Christian jihad and a product of religious differences and intolerance, suggesting some form of religious extremism in the northeast:

We [repelled attacks on our villages] because some of the Boko Haram members are the people from our place and the people from our community that we know. It was because of the *religious differences*, because most of them were Muslims and we are Christians, that they said their aim is for us to convert back to Islam, for us to be of the same religion with them then to join them so we can go and fight *jihad*. They call it *jihad* to fight and kill, i.e., anybody that is not a Muslim, should be persecuted, killed and everything can be done to him except only if the person can accept Islam, then they will stay peacefully with them. (Interview 3)

The speaker identified with and adopted a Christian position to evaluate Boko Haram's agenda. Here, Boko Haram's violence had an instrumental purpose: to convert non-Muslims, primarily Christians, 'back' to Islam, offering a construction of the northeast as a historically 'Islamic' space. The speaker then aptly temporalizes a transformation of Boko Haram's construction of the enemy from *kafir*⁶ to *takfir*:⁷

When Boko Haram started initially . . . their leader was not Shekau, their first leader was Yusuf Mohammad. So, they started fighting the government and that is why their name was Boko Haram. They were attacking schools, barracks, police headquarters, any government institution or building. So, when that leader was killed by Nigerian security agents, they had another leader to head them that is this Shekau⁸ – maybe he is the current leader now or he has been killed. So, he is the one who started persecuting Christians. He said if you are fighting the government, you are not working for Allah – they call God Allah – that is, you can fight anybody that is not in support of Boko Haram, especially Christians. He said they are working for God and even if they are killed, they will make the kingdom of Allah, according to them, so that is how the thing started. As for my own, the final name for it is ‘Christianity is forbidden’ because they can only attack Muslims only if they do not support them. (Interview 3)

As this extract illustrates, in contrast to earlier constructions of the enemy, Abubakar Shekau seemed to demand what may be understood as violent extremism (Cilliers, 2015; Schmid, 2014; Waldek and Jayasekara, 2011) where being a moderate Muslim was *takfir* (Zenn and Pieri, 2017) and Muslims were expected to actively participate in Boko Haram’s *jihad*. As the following extracts demonstrate, other speakers who identified as Christian appeared to agree with this primarily anti-Christian jihad claim:

As I am a Christian now, those people [Boko Haram], when you tell them that you are a Christian, they will kill you. They are not *tolerant* to other religions and will force you to back them or when they say, ‘what do you choose between being a Christian or following us?’, if you say, ‘no I don’t want to follow you’, they will kill you [instantly]. (Interview 4)

While this account emphasized the group’s religious intolerance, another account indicted the army commanders for their complicity:

Boko Haram said that they don’t want to see *Christians in Borno again* so they will kill us. The commander of the army did not give them permission to fight against them [Boko Haram]. They have already bought the [army] commander and even if they saw Boko Haram, the commander would say ‘don’t shoot’ – and they will not shoot. (Interview 5)

This extract demonstrates the link between this anti-Christian jihad perpetuated by Boko Haram and the role of state agents, suggesting a convergence of the interests – theological or economic – of terrorism and counter-terrorism in the northeast. Accounts of army commanders being compromised appeared in non-religious arguments, something this speaker, who identified as a Muslim, also supported:

The problem with them, all the security there, they are . . . because it was a problem from the commander. So, if you saw the army, Boko Haram would be coming to face the army, but the commander would not give them [army] the permission; the commander will tell the army not to shoot and Boko Haram will kill the soldiers. I think it is the government that is killing innocent [citizens] . . . That time, if a Boko Haram commander was killed, the officer in charge will be sacked. (Interview 6)

As these previous accounts indicate, while alternative accounts were provided as to why commanders acted in specific ways, there was a consensus among interviewees that they had been compromised by an interest-driven higher authority, such as political and/or traditional elites – as the ‘terrorist people’ discourse indicated.

Another speaker expanded on the ongoing treatment of Christians as infidels but furthered the argument by engaging in a ‘culture-as-kinship’ repertoire, asking ‘why the Nigerian army cannot maybe go and arrange *Christians* in the name of [fighting] Boko Haram. After all, the full meaning

of Boko Haram is “Western education is forbidden” but the real meaning is “*Christians are forbidden*” (Interview 3). This speaker suggested that, while Boko Haram appears to forbid a remote enemy – Western education (Comolli, 2015) – lived experience of its discourse and practices fosters an understanding that it [forbids] Christians’ (Interview 3). With commanders or senior officers in the Nigerian army (rather than the institution) being construed as partial, only Christians within its ranks were committed and could be dedicated to fighting the insurgency. What is also important in these accounts is the absence of societal discourses such as ‘multiculturalism’, suggesting that some subject positions may be unavailable to these speakers, in contrast to UK participants (Jarvis and Lister, 2017; Jarvis and Lister, 2016; Jarvis and Lister, 2015). Referring to Borno State as a ‘Muslim state’ may have further foreclosed these possibilities, despite the so-called ‘federal system’ that Nigeria operates which, despite offering constitutional provisions for diversity (Ojie and Ewhrudjakpor, 2009), is entirely absent from speakers’ accounts.

As religion is salient in many of these accounts, there is a notable contrast with those who identified as ‘Muslim’; these participants seldom made religious identity salient in their accounts. They often understated it, ‘But my belief is that it was a *cult group*. I don’t want to attribute so much religion to it, either Mohammad or Christ, or Quran or Bible. No, they could have covered with it to inflict havoc but they were not for God, for Christ or for Mohammad’ (Interview 7), excluded it, ‘We were sitting in our village around 4:30 and by the time Boko Haram had already entered our village. The insurgents ransacked the entire community and started killing everybody without sparing children, old women or anybody. They were already killing everybody at the time’ (Interview 8) or refused to make it salient even when it was reported, ‘[a Boko Haram commander] asked them (his fighters) if they knew me and said that I had saved him [earlier]. He said that when he went to a state to *kill Christians* that the army shot him in his leg and that I was the only one that saved him and bought him a pair of trousers and shoes’ (Interview 6). Nojeem (Interview 6) was a practising nurse in Maiduguri who had become acquainted with an injured Boko Haram commander whom he had unlawfully (Imosemi, 2018)⁹ treated during an earlier encounter. The speaker was surprised to have been spared when several others were killed but, despite claiming to ‘kill Christians’ (Interview 6), to make an exception and convince his fighters to spare the nurse, the commander advanced a pragmatic rather than a religious argument that if the nurse was ‘killed and . . . [the fighters] got shot the next day, who will treat them?’ (Interview 6). The speaker did not make religion *salient* even when it was mentioned. Another speaker who also identified as a Muslim seemed to align with this:

I had direct encounters with the insurgents at different levels. I had acquaintances that I didn’t know were Boko Haram. I later had friends who I didn’t know were Boko Haram because they themselves will not show themselves as Boko Haram until when they go to the areas where they would meet. But until at a stage some of the friends started to mention it, then I frowned at it. They started questioning me, ‘why don’t you like Boko Haram?’ In fact, I had a friend from Maiduguri who I used to escort to the prison yard to buy food for his friends or colleagues. So, at close range, social level, I had actions with them but I knew that we trusted each other or we believed in each other until the things got out of hand and at the battle level, I saw them killing, I escaped. (Interview 7)

Rather than offering a religious explanation, Yusuf (Interview 7) emphasized his social identity, being the ‘friend’, ‘colleague’ and ‘acquaintance’ (Interview 7) of Boko Haram insurgents rather than having any doctrinal or religious affinity, even when he had built ‘mutual trust’ with militants. While previous accounts primarily focused on *kafir*, the phrase ‘things [getting] out of hand’ (Interview 7) suggests a transformation from *kafir* (non-Muslim) to the pragmatic concept of *takfir*, which excommunicates Muslims by ‘declaring [them] a nominal Muslim [and thus] an infidel’ (Akhlaq, 2015: 1; Zenn and Pieri, 2017: 287); this is a more controversial method of enemy

construction. Without actively participating in an ‘offensive jihad’ (Eikmeier, 2007: 89) with his friends, ‘a man that is strong like me, Boko Haram will kill you. They don’t spare any young man or [an] old man that is strong’ (Interview 7). Here, it is gender (Jarvis and Lister, 2017) and age (Oyèwùmí, 1997) that are made salient rather than religion.

Speakers from ethnic and religious minority groups may be more aware or conscious of the specific identities through which they are *positioned* as being ‘threatened’ or, as Jarvis and Lister (2017: 255) showed in their study, ‘threatening’. Conversely, while minority ethnic and religious participants constructed themselves ‘as [being] unfairly targeted by counter-terrorism powers’ (Jarvis and Lister, 2017: 257), these accounts largely emphasized how their ethnic and religious identities exposed them to disproportionate violence from Boko Haram. This could enrich debates on how people feel singled out and disproportionately or unfairly targeted by both terrorism and counter-terrorism. Building on previous arguments on ‘terrorist people’, counter-terrorism could also further complicate this ‘singling out’ through the perceived convergence of the interests of both terrorists and counter-terrorism officials, which may have social and political implications regarding claims that ethnic and/or religious minorities make concerning their ‘trust in the institutional arrangements that are put in place to provide for their security’ (Loader, 2006: 215), their ‘belongingness’ (Spalek, 2012: 35) and their ‘citizenship’ (Jarvis and Lister, 2013a: 656), which all impact the state’s ‘politics of legitimacy’ (Jackson and Hall, 2016: 292).

Conclusion

This article examined the impact of (counter-)terrorism on public (in)security in Nigeria and engaged with two prominent discourses, namely a ‘(counter-)terrorist’ people discourse and a ‘*kafir*’ or infidel discourse, through which people accomplished their identities through the discourse of (counter-)terrorism and other societal discourses and practices. This article contributes valuable original empirical material from the Global South to enrich a burgeoning ‘bottom-up’ research agenda that seeks to engage with the lived experiences of those most impacted or affected by (in)security. The discourses were largely constructed around ethnic and religious identity positions that speakers combined to accomplish various situated tasks, thus blurring the traditional lines between terrorism and counter-terrorism by discussing ‘(counter-)terrorist’ people and ‘*kafir*’ discourses that both (re)constructed targets, threats, friends and enemies around identity, thus constructing both discourses around ‘threatening’ and ‘threatened’ identities.

These discourses and claims are crucial in that they provide details about the various ways in which people engage with societal discourses and the prominent subject positions and positioning strategies they adopt in the process. These discourses, for example, the ‘(counter-)terrorist’ people discourse, further suggest a profound distrust in and suspicion of state institutions and officials whose primary obligation is understood as being to their ethnic and religious communities – as the ‘ethnicity as brotherhood’ and ‘community’ repertoires also suggest. In the absence of alternative discourses and subject positions on ‘tolerance’, that emphasize not only ‘unity in diversity’ (Egharevba and Aghedo, 2016: 42) but also multiculturalism (Jarvis and Lister, 2017) and ‘minority rights’ (Jutila, 2006: 170), identity was sometimes treated as mutually exclusive. This suggests a need for better communication and engagement with communities to fulfil the objectives set out in Nigeria’s National Counter-terrorism Strategy and improve state-community relations (Office of the National Security Adviser [ONSA], 2016). Similarly, the ‘*kafir*’ or ‘infidel’ discourse suggested a feeling of being disproportionately targeted; however, when viewed alongside the ‘(counter-)terrorist’ people discourse, it may be interpreted as ‘being singled out’ (Jarvis and Lister, 2017: 252) by both terrorism and counter-terrorism. These discourse and repertoires are of course not exhaustive and further studies within different contexts are required to examine the discourses,

narratives and repertoires that people adopt and the various strategies they adopt to accomplish their identity tasks.

With the increasing importance of non-kinetic means to the initial kinetic approach adopted against insurgencies in Nigeria, the themes foregrounded in this study may be important in understanding the various ways in which societal discourses are engaged with, rejected, claimed and reformulated within everyday settings.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Professor Lee Jarvis, Dr Alexandria Innes, Professor Jonathan Fisher and Professor Nick Vaughan-Williams for their very detailed feedback and contribution to this manuscript. Their suggestions have been very helpful throughout the project.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Akinyemi Oyawale  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8827-983X>

Notes

1. Gramsci's definition of 'civil society' differs from the current 'narrow' use whereby it refers to sectors within non-governmental organizations and instead refers to the 'public sphere' as a whole.
2. The emir of Gwoza is the traditional ruler of Gwoza community in Borno State.
3. Major Godwin Sule was sometimes referred to as Colonel Godwin Sule or Major B. S. Sama.
4. *Amir* or *emir* (translated: a commander or prince) refers to a military commander, governor of a province or high military official. The reference here was to the emir of Gwoza at the time of the interview.
5. The group was known as the 'Nigerian Taliban' at the time of the interview.
6. A *kafir* refers to an 'unbeliever' or 'infidel', a label often assigned to non-Muslims.
7. A *takfir* refers to the excommunication of a Muslim through constructing them as 'nominal' and thus allowing them to become a *kafir* or *infidel*.
8. Abubakar Shekau is the now deceased former leader of *Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad* (JAS or Boko Haram). He was allegedly killed by members of Boko Haram's splinter faction, Islamic State, West Africa Province on 19 May 2021 in Sambisa Forest.
9. The speaker acknowledged that it was, at the time, illegal to treat gunshot wounds (especially those of suspected Boko Haram members) without police authorization. Prior to the enactment of the Compulsory Treatment and Care for Victims of Gunshot Act in late 2017, victims of gunshot wounds could not be treated in Nigerian hospitals without a police report.

References

- Agbibo DE (2013a) Living in fear: Religious identity, relative deprivation and the Boko Haram terrorism. *African Security* 6(2): 153–170.
- Agbibo DE (2013b) The Nigerian burden: Religious identity, conflict and the current terrorism of Boko Haram. *Conflict, Security & Development* 13(1): 1–29.
- Akhlaq SH (2015) The guise of the Sunni-Shiite use of excommunication (Takfir) in the Middle East. *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 38(4): 1–22.
- Anthias F (2002) Where do I belong? Narrating collective identity and translocational positionality. *Ethnicities* 2(4): 491–514.
- Awotokun K (2005) Local government administration under 1999 constitution in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences* 10(2): 129–134.

- Bamberg M (2004) Positioning with Davie Hogan: Stories, Tellings, and Identities. In: Daiute C and Lightfoot C (eds) *Narrative Analysis: Studying the Development of Individuals in Society*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 136–157.
- Bamberg M and Georgakopoulou A (2008) Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text & Talk: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Language, Discourse & Communication Studies* 28(3): 377–396.
- Biegon J and Songa A (2018) Kenya: The impact of counter-terrorism measures on police reform. In: Alemika E, Ruteere M and Howell S (eds) *Policing Reform in Africa*. Cape Town: African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF), 197.
- Billig M (1996) *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blanquart G (2012) Boko Haram: Terrorist organization, freedom fighters or religious fanatics? An analysis of Boko Haram within Nigeria, an Australian perspective and the need for Counter terrorism responses that involves prescribing them as a terrorist organization. *3rd Australian Counter Terrorism Conference*. Perth, Australia: SRI Security Research Institute.
- Booth K (2007) *Theory of World Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Breen-Smyth M (2014) Theorising the ‘suspect community’: Counter-terrorism, security practices and the public imagination. *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 7(2): 223–240.
- Cilliers J (2015) Violent Islamist extremism and terror in Africa. *ISS Paper*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 32.
- Comolli V (2015) *Boko Haram: Nigeria’s Islamist Insurgency*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Cook D (2018) Translation of selections from Muhammad Yusuf: *Hādhihi ‘Aqīdatunā Wa-Minhāj Da’watinā* (This is our creed and method of proclamation). In: Abdulbasit K and Nwankpa M (eds) *The Boko Haram Reader: From Nigerian Preachers to the Islamic State*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Denzin NK and Lincoln YS (2005) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. California: SAGE.
- Denzin NK and Lincoln YS (2008) Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In: Denzin NK and Lincoln YS (eds) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. California: SAGE.
- Deppermann A (2013) Positioning in narrative interaction. *Narrative Inquiry* 23(1): 1–15.
- Duodu C (2009) Mohammed Yusuf’s final days. *The Guardian* (London), 6 August. Available at: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/aug/06/mohammed-yusuf-boko-haram-nigeria (accessed 24 April 2018).
- Egharevba J and Aghedo I (2016) Promoting unity in diversity: The imperative of social transformation for managing Boko Haram uprising in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 6(2): 41–41.
- Eikmeier DC (2007) Qutbism: An ideology of Islamic-Fascism. *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 37(1).
- Ekeh PP (1975) Colonialism and the two publics in Africa: A theoretical statement. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17(1): 91–112.
- Fierke KM (2015) *Critical Approaches to International Security*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Fisher J and Leonardi C (2020) Insecurity and the invisible: The challenge of spiritual (in) security. *Security Dialogue* 52(5): 1–18.
- Foucault M (2008) *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1983–1984*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Global Terrorism Index (2020) *Global Terrorism Index: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism*. Sydney, Australia: Institute for Economics & Peace, 1–109.
- Gramsci A and Buttigieg JA (1992) *Prison Notebooks*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Gurr TR (2015) *Why Men Rebel*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hall S (2000) Who needs ‘identity’? In: Du Gay P, Evans J and Redman P (eds) *Identity: A Reader*. London: SAGE, 15–30.
- Harnischfeger J (2006) Islamisation and ethnic conversion in Nigeria. *Anthropos* 101(1): 37–53.
- Hendricks MN (2020) *Manufacturing Terrorism in Africa: The Securitisation of South African Muslims*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hickman MJ, Thomas L, Silvestri S and Nickels H (2011) Suspect communities? Counter-terrorism policy, the press, and the impact on Irish and Muslim communities in Britain. *Report of a Research Project: A*

- Comparative Study of the Representations of 'Suspect' Communities in Multi-ethnic Britain and of their Impact on Muslim and Irish Communities 1974–2007*. London: London Metropolitan University 38.
- Imosemi A (2018) Compulsory Treatment for Victims of Gunshot Act (2017): Saving lives in Nigerian hospitals or a contradiction of the provisions of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (2015)? *Nigerian Journal of Medicine* 27(4): 333–341.
- Jackson R, Breen-Smyth M, Gunning J and Jarvis L (2011) *Terrorism: A Critical Introduction*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jackson R and Hall G (2016) Talking about terrorism: A study of vernacular discourse. *Politics* 36(3): 292–307.
- Jarvis L (2017) Toward a vernacular security studies: Origins, interlocutors, contributions, and challenges. *International Studies Review* 21(1): 107–126.
- Jarvis L and Holland J (2014) *Security: A Critical Introduction*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jarvis L and Lister M (2010) Stakeholder security: The new western way of counter-terrorism? *Contemporary Politics* 16(2): 173–188.
- Jarvis L and Lister M (2013a) Disconnected citizenship? The impacts of anti-terrorism policy on citizenship in the UK. *Political Studies* 61(3): 656–675.
- Jarvis L and Lister M (2013b) Vernacular securities and their study: A qualitative analysis and research agenda. *International Relations* 27(2): 158–179.
- Jarvis L and Lister M (2015) 'I read it in the FT': 'Everyday' knowledge of counter-terrorism and its articulation. In: Jarvis L and Lister M (eds) *Critical Perspectives on Counter-terrorism*. Abingdon: Routledge, 109–129.
- Jarvis L and Lister M (2016) What would you do? Everyday conceptions and constructions of counter-terrorism. *Politics* 36(3): 277–291.
- Jarvis L and Lister M (2017) 'As a woman. . .'; 'As a Muslim. . .': Subjects, positions and counter-terrorism powers in the United Kingdom. *Critical Social Policy* 37(2): 245–267.
- Jenkins R (2000) Categorization: Identity, social process and epistemology. *Current Sociology* 48(3): 7–25.
- Jutila M (2006) Desecuritizing minority rights: Against determinism. *Security Dialogue* 37(2): 167–185.
- Kertzer DI (2017) The perils of reification: Identity categories and identity construction in migration research. In: Decimo F and Gribaldo A (eds) *Boundaries Within: Nation, Kinship and Identity among Migrants and Minorities*. Springer, 23–34.
- Last M (2009) The pattern of dissent: Boko Haram in Nigeria 2009. *Annual Review of Islam in Africa* 2008(10): 7–11.
- Loader I (2006) Policing, recognition, and belonging. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 605(1): 201–221.
- Loimeier R (2012) Boko Haram: The development of a militant religious movement in Nigeria. *Africa Spectrum* 47(2–3): 137–155.
- Loimeier R (2017) *Islamic Reform in Twentieth-Century Africa*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- McKenzie PJ (2005) Interpretive repertoires. In: Fisher KE, Erdelez S and McKechnie LEF (eds) *Theories of Information Behavior: A Researcher's Guide*. Medford, NJ: Information Today, 1–6.
- Mwangi OG (2017) Corruption, human rights violation and counter-terrorism policies in Kenya. In: Irrera D, Grice F, Romaniuk SN and Webb S (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Counter-terrorism Policy*. London: Springer, 1041–1054.
- Niyayaana K (2021) State legitimacy and the dynamics of identity-based conflicts in Nigeria. *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies (AJPAS)* 14(1): 105–114.
- Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) (2016) National Counter-terrorism Strategy (NACTEST). Abuja: Federal Republic of Nigeria, 57.
- Ogbeche D (2016) Saraki says sexual abuse, corruption in IDPs camps inexcusable. *Daily Post*, 2 November. Available at: <http://dailypost.ng/2016/11/02/saraki-says-sexual-abuse-corruption-idps-camps-inexcusable/> (accessed 13 April 2017).
- Ojie AE and Ewhrudjakpor C (2009) Ethnic diversity and public policies in Nigeria. *The Anthropologist* 11(1): 7–14.

- Ojo E (2010) Boko Haram: Nigeria's extra-judicial state. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 12(2): 45–62.
- Onah NG and Uroko F (2021) Hate speech and ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria: Implications for political stability. *MAHABBAH: Journal of Religion and Education* 2(2): 161–193.
- Onuoha F (2014) Boko Haram and the evolving Salafi Jihadist threat in Nigeria. In: Pérouse de Montclos M-A (ed.) *Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. Leiden: African Studies Centre, 158–191.
- Oriola TB and Akinola O (2017) Ideational dimensions of the Boko Haram phenomenon. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 41(8): 595–618.
- Osuntokun A (1975) Anglo-French occupation and the provisional partition of the Cameroons 1914–1916. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 7(4): 647–656.
- Oyèwùmí O (1997) *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Potter J, Wetherell M, Gill R and Edwards D (1990) Discourse: Noun, verb or social practice? *Philosophical Psychology* 3(2–3): 205–217.
- Ragazzi F (2016) Suspect community or suspect category? The impact of counter-terrorism as 'policed multiculturalism'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42(5): 724–741.
- Roy O (2004) *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Schmid AP (2014) Violent and non-violent extremism: Two sides of the same coin. *Research Paper*. The Hague: ICCT.
- Seymour-Smith S, Wetherell M and Phoenix A (2002) 'My wife ordered me to come!': A discursive analysis of doctors' and nurses' accounts of men's use of general practitioners. *Journal of Health Psychology* 7(3): 253–267.
- Solomon H (2013) The African state and the failure of US counter-terrorism initiatives in Africa: The cases of Nigeria and Mali. *South African Journal of International Affairs* 20(3): 427–445.
- Spalek B (2012) Community-based approaches to counter-terrorism. In: Spalek B (ed.) *Counter-Terrorism: Community-based Approaches to Preventing Terror Crime*. London: Springer, 27–49.
- Toth C (2014) Identity, small stories and interpretative repertoires in research interviews. An account of market researchers' discursive positioning strategies. *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 5(2): 153–173.
- Turner III DW (2010) Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *The Qualitative Report* 15(3): 754.
- Waldek L and Jayasekara S (2011) Boko Haram: The evolution of Islamist extremism in Nigeria. *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 6(2): 168–178.
- Wetherell M and Potter J (1992) *Mapping the Language of Racism: Discourse and the Legitimation of Exploitation*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Widdicombe S (1998) Identity as an analysts' and a participants' resource. In: Antaki C and Widdicombe S (eds) *Identities in Talk*. London: SAGE Publications, 191–206.
- Wiggins S and Potter J (2017) Discursive psychology. In: Willig C and Rogers WS (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: SAGE, 93–109.
- Wooffitt R (2005) *Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis: A Comparative and Critical Introduction*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Zenn J (2020) *Unmasking Boko Haram: Exploring Global Jihad in Nigeria*. London: Lynne Rienner.
- Zenn J and Pieri Z (2017) How much Takfir is too much Takfir? The evolution of Boko Haram's factionalization. *Journal for Deradicalization* 11(3): 281–308.

Interviews cited

Interview 1: David from Borno State. Interview took place at New Kuchingoro IDP Camp, Abuja in July 2016.

Interview 2: Bilkisu from Borno State. Interview took place at New Kuchingoro IDP Camp, Abuja in July 2016.

Interview 3: Yahaya from Borno State. Interview took place at a host community in Mararaba, Abuja in July 2016.

Interview 4: Joel from Borno State. Interview took place at a host community in Karu, Nasarawa in June 2016.

Interview 5: Elizabeth from Borno. Interview took place at New Kuchingoro IDP Camp, Abuja in June 2016.

Interview 6: Nojeem from Borno State. Interview took place at a host community in Area 1, Abuja in July 2016.

Interview 7: Yusuf from Borno State. Interview took place at Area 1 IDP Camp, Durumi, Abuja in August 2016.

Interview 8: Sadiya from Borno State. Interview took place at Area 1 IDP Camp, Durumi, Abuja in June 2016.

Akinyemi Oyawale is Assistant Professor of International Security in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick and specializes in terrorism and counter-terrorism, extremism and broader aspects of security and insecurity research adopting mostly critical perspectives. He holds a PhD in politics from the University of East Anglia, an MA in international security from the University of Sussex and a Bachelors in psychology with politics from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.