

Patrick Gutierrez

Pius X High School

Lincoln, NE, USA

Nigeria, Countering Terrorism

### **The Defense Organization of Western Africa (DOWA)**

“Unless Nigeria addresses and puts an end to its security challenges, more people will go hungry in years to come” (Adebowale -Tambe 2022). According to Nigerian journalist Nike Adebowale- Tambe (2022), security issues are Nigeria’s primary threat. Over the past 20 years, Nigeria has faced an onslaught of violence from terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State’s West Africa Province (ISWAP). Agricultural production has decreased dramatically, and the rural states of Nigeria have been affected the most. As agricultural production decreases, hunger has increased with 31.5 % of children under five left stunted. In 2015, a new president was elected to put an end to terrorism in Nigeria, but the government failed to do so, and as a result, political violence by Islamic militias increased by 50% in 2021. Nigeria has become a battleground between Islamic terrorist groups and the Nigerian government. Civilians have been caught in the crossfire with kidnappings taking place and millions of people being displaced from their homes. The very livelihoods of these people are being changed. The goal is to stop the violence at the root through the defeat of these terrorist organizations, thereby defeating hunger for the safety of all Nigerians. (Adebowale-Tambe, 8/16/22; Kazemi, 2023)

Nigeria is located in Sub-Saharan Africa bordering the countries of Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin. The country of Nigeria is home to about 216 million people and 52.75% of Nigerians live in urban areas. The other half of the Nigerian population live in the rural areas comprising most of the land area of Nigeria. The land area of Nigeria is 910,770 km. squared with an arid climate in the north, an equatorial climate in the south, and a tropical climate in the center of the country. Nigeria’s economy is made up of mostly subsistence farming. Nigeria has about 71 million hectares of agricultural land area that produces major crops such as rice, cassava, maize, and millet. The country has a president that is elected every four years. Nigeria has been under military rule instead of civilian rule for most of its history. This has severely weakened Nigeria with civil wars and has allowed terrorist organizations to infiltrate the country easily. Nigeria is striving to become a stronger nation through agriculture and politics but still faces many struggles and challenges to this day. (O’Neill, 4/1/2021; “Key Data,” 2/27/23; Hoffmann, 6/29/22)

Political struggle in Nigeria has been a challenge for the past 20 years to the present. Terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram and ISWAP have wreaked havoc across the country trying to spread their Islamic views. Nigeria is 49.3% Christian and 48.8% Muslim as of 2018. They are split almost equally, but the number is subject to change because of the number of Christian refugees leaving to escape Boko Haram or ISWAP. This year in January, a Catholic priest named Fr. Isaac Achi was burned to death in the village of Kafin Koro. He served as the chairman of his local branch in the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). His death was one of many that has happened in the past two years. On November 28, 2020, Boko Haram killed more than 100 people in the Borno State of Nigeria who were farmers. Nigeria recovered from the pandemic, but a significant number of people are living in extreme poverty which is projected to increase through at least 2024. According to the World Bank in Nigeria (9/14/22), “The country continues to face massive development challenges including to...address insufficient infrastructure, build strong and effective institutions, as well as address government issues.” Twenty-five million people are expected to face hunger in the summer months of 2023. Six million of the seventeen million children that suffer from hunger are in the northeastern parts of Nigeria where terrorism

is most active. Many kidnappings have taken place and the average family cannot protect itself from terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram. (“2018 Report on International Religious Freedom,” 2018; World Bank 9/14/2022; Madhok, 1/16/23)

When terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram or ISWAP seek to control a country, they attack the most vulnerable people: families. Children in the northern areas of Nigeria are at high risk of abduction by these extremist groups who put them up for ransom or force the children to join the insurgency. Over 780 children were abducted in 2021 which caused schools to shut down because of the insecurity. These attacks happen the most at schools and religious institutions. School is officially free in Nigeria, but it is very poorly funded. Only 7% of the national budget goes to education. Globally, one in five out-of-school children is in Nigeria and more than half of girls in the northern states are not in school for fear of Boko Haram. In 2014, 276 girls were abducted from their dorm rooms and married off to Boko Haram terrorists. Most of the victims have been located but some are still unaccounted for. (Okunola, 9/11/20; “Nigeria: Escalating Attacks,” 12/2/21; Sesay, 7/9/19)

Many families also lack proper healthcare. Nigeria has one of the fastest growing populations in Africa. The country lacks proper medical equipment and medical professionals are overwhelmed. Rural families many times must travel a long way to find health care. Nigerian families can barely make a living off 774.75 U.S. dollars a month as an average and \$69 a month for minimum wage. The majority of jobs in Nigeria are in agriculture that earn the lowest wages. Families usually get the food they eat from their own farms and have very little sanitation and clean drinking water. Families are struggling to feed their children in Nigeria and cannot live sufficiently with Boko Haram and ISWAP in their country. (“The Average Salary in Nigeria: Detailed Comparison,” 11/1/22; “Nigeria – Healthcare,” 10/13/21)

One solution to end terrorism in Nigeria could be a strong, centralized coalition called the Defense Organization of Western Africa (DOWA). This organization would be modeled off the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO was founded in 1949 and currently has 30 member states including the United States and United Kingdom. The goal of NATO is to protect the other states’ freedoms and maintain security through military or economic means. DOWA would be based off Article 5 of the Washington Treaty when an attack on one ally would be an attack against all. Article 5 has only been used once: for the 9/11 terrorist attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon. NATO troops were deployed in Afghanistan to help build up their army and tighten the Afghans’ security within the country against Al-Qaeda. NATO would be able to help Nigeria form DOWA. NATO has always had close ties with the African Union and has helped provide extensive military training for soldiers in Africa. Once NATO helps form the military and enhances the security for the Western African countries, they can form a unified military to help the other African nations with terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram or ISWAP. Nigeria will not be able to fight this war by itself. Africa is made up of Christians and Muslims almost split equally among each other. The African Union was also created in May of 1963 to promote unity among African States, intensify cooperation internationally, and defend territorial integrity and independence. The countries of Africa are already unified, but the Western African states need to create an organization to specifically stop terrorism in their countries. Military exercises would include air strikes and ground operations, such as scouting, infiltrating, and immobilizing the enemy. DOWA would also provide study sessions, seminars, and education on terrorist groups. The soldiers would learn where they operate, how they operate, and what their beliefs are. DOWA would be able to provide several resources to each allied country in this organization such as weapons, training, and education. NATO would be able to provide a substantial amount of training, but many of the countries in Western Africa have a limited budget and would need to get a substantial amount of funding to make this

project work. ("About NATO," 2023; "Countering Terrorism," 8/3/22; "NATO and Afghanistan," 8/31/22)

In NATO, each member is responsible for giving 2% of their GDP to help fund the organization. Some countries in NATO cannot afford to spend that much money on defense, because they are small or have other issues within their country. Many times, the spending of countries will increase because of countries at war such as the war in Ukraine. From 2014-2022 the spending rate was expected to increase by \$140 billion. Western Africa is not even close to spending this amount of money on defenses and is not able to spend 2% of their GDP over a time span of a few years. My solution is to start at a very low percent of their GDP such as 0.1% and start increasing the number every few years as the country becomes more developed. Once each country pools in all their money, they would be able to ask for funds elsewhere such as the United States. The United States is one of the highest defense spending NATO members. The United States would be more than capable of helping fund this project and have already made recent plans to help establish funding for security assistance and provide training programs for Western African soldiers. According to the "Fact Sheet: U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa," (8/8/22) "We will help Africa deliver democratic and security dividends, including by... Reducing the threat from terrorist groups to the U.S. Homeland, persons and military facilities." African funding can be achieved through the involvement of each countries' GDP and the involvement of the U.S. to establish military facilities and training. Cooperation with the U.S. is essential to the funding of DOWA. ("Funding NATO," 1/12/23; Kirk-Wade, Balakrishnan 8/11/22; "Fact Sheet: U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa," 8/8/22)

There are many benefits of this organization to the Nigerian population, but there needs to be a benefit to the U.S. and NATO for this idea to work. Nigeria and Western Africa are rich in natural resources. These natural resources are used for fuel and materials in electric vehicle (EV) batteries. Some of these natural resources include oil, natural gas, cobalt, uranium, and gold. The U.S. needs to have a foothold on these mines in Africa or else competing countries, such as China, would be able to control the clean energy sector. According to Edward Burrier and Thomas Sheely (2023), "For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) — which supplies 70 percent of the world's cobalt — Chinese entities own or have stakes in nearly all the country's producing mines." It would be very beneficial for the United States to fund DOWA because they would be able to make stakes in African mines of natural resources. Also, the people of the U.S. would benefit because there would be more clean energy which would lead to less pollution in the country. DOWA would be able to give Nigeria and the Western African countries economic and military success. (Burrier and Sheely 6/8/23; Paul 11/21/22)

NATO has provided economic success and stability to its members. Many of these members are among the wealthiest in the world such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Norway. There are only three Balkan states that have not joined NATO (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Kosovo). They are the least developed countries in Europe to this day. Also, foreign investment to the countries that joined NATO increased dramatically. Some examples are: Romania with an increase of 166.29%, Lithuania with close to 290%, and Latvia with 90%. According to Irina Guruli, (2016) "The NATO 'economic effect' can better be understood... which results in tangible deliverables to the average citizen: economic growth, job creation, life expectancy, increased foreign direct investment, expenditures in education, healthcare, regional integration, and equal income distribution." A better economy would promote low unemployment rates leading to citizens affording quality products such as food and healthcare. The Defense Organization of Western Africa (DOWA) would be able to provide all these economic improvements to Nigeria. The hunger rates would decrease and terrorist insurgencies such as Boko Haram

and ISWAP would be stopped. (Guruli, 2/28/21; “NATO Membership Brings Stability and Economic Growth,” 5/14/21)

Nigeria has been in a never-ending hunger crisis for many years. As was stated earlier, Nigeria has 71 million hectares of agricultural land area that produces major crops such as rice, cassava, maize, and millet. About 79.1% of this land is in the Northern States of Nigeria. Because of this cultivable land, most farmers reside in the Northern States. These farmers are leaving for fear of the Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgencies. In December of 2020, 76 farmers in the Borno State were beheaded by Boko Haram. They were beheaded because they had no protection after they were able to arrest and turn in one terrorist affiliated with Boko Haram. Because of attacks like this, farmers are not able to provide food for themselves or meet the quotas of food production for their country. According to “Nigerian Kidnap Gangs” (6/10/23) “In the past three years, a sharp rise in insecurity has led to gangs kidnap hundreds of people for ransom in Nigeria, and a staff of prosperous agricultural enterprises have been particularly targeted, forcing many farms to abandon or reduce operations.” This leads to increased hunger to the Nigerian population. The Defense Organization of Western Africa (DOWA) would be able to combat this hunger crisis. (Akinyetun and Ambrose Sept. 2021; “Nigerian Kidnap Gangs” 6/11/23)

DOWA would be able to protect these farmers by establishing more military bases around the Northeastern parts of Nigeria. A system could be established so that one soldier could be assigned to one family to protect them. That family would be their main priority. If Boko Haram would decide to attack that one family, the soldier would be able to call for backup to neighboring military bases and give that family a chance of surviving. NATO has already been in close ties with the African Union (AU). NATO (4/27/23) states:

“Since 2015 and in response to an AU request, NATO delivers dedicated training to African Union officers through Mobile Education and Training Teams (METT) that deliver tailored courses in Africa. NATO has progressively increased the number of courses delivered and is providing three or more METT courses annually. The METT format allows to reach a wider audience: participants are drawn from among AU staff, but also from the Regional Economic Communities headquarters, which form the backbone of the development of Africa’s continental force, the African Stand-by Force (ASF). On average, 30 AU students participate in each training session.”

This type of organization could be applied to DOWA. If the soldiers of the Nigerian and other Western African governments had this type of training, they would be more equipped to fight Boko Haram and ISWAP. METT provides eight curriculum course disciplines. Some of these disciplines are protection, cooperative security, and intelligence. This program would be able to protect farmers from Boko Haram and increase food production for Nigeria and other Western African countries. (“Cooperation with the African Union” 4/27/23; “Mobile Education and Training Teams” 2023)

In conclusion, Nigeria has faced ongoing problems for the last 20 years from the Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorist organizations. They have affected families by abducting their children, causing hunger, and increasing their poverty. The Defense Organization of Western Africa (DOWA) can put an end to these struggles. It will be able to provide unity between Nigeria and the Western Africa states, military improvement and training to fight terrorist organizations, and a dramatic increase in economic development such as sufficient food and healthcare. In these years to come, Nigeria can put an end to its hunger issues using DOWA and eradicate Boko Haram and ISWAP at its root.

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