State-oriented service-delivery partnership with civil society organizations in the context of counter-terrorism in Nigeria

Njoku, Emeka Thaddues

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

State-oriented service-delivery partnership with civil society organizations in Nigeria in the context of counter-terrorism

Emeka Thaddues Njoku[1]

Structured Abstract

Motivation: The state-orientated service delivery role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in counter-terrorism measures (CTMs) has been discussed, but little is known about how these partnerships work in practice and how CSOs make sense of such partnerships and their implications.

Purpose: Using the case of counter-terrorism in Nigeria, this article examines the patterns of the state service-delivery partnership with CSOs. It explains how CSOs perceive this partnership and its socio-political and policy implications.

Approach and Methods: A mixed-method design was adopted to examine the experiences and perspectives of executives and programme officers of faith-based, youth/children CSOs, women's and human rights groups engaged in capacity building, technical assistance and advocacy in counter-terrorism operations in northeast Nigeria. It also considered the views of government officials, including security agents involved in counter-terrorism policy-making and enforcement.

Findings: State engagement of CSOs to tackle terrorism distorted their organizational structures. CSOs were engaged in service-delivery activities the state believed would not jeopardize its CTMs, as opposed to their political advocacy. In this way, the state controlled the political realm and influenced the non-political arena. CSOs believed that the service-delivery partnership impinged on their organizational principles and capacity to demand government accountability and transparency. This study contributes to generalizable

---

This article has been accepted for publication and undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the Version of Record. Please cite this article as

doi: 10.1111/dpr.12524

This article is protected by copyright. All rights reserved.

knowledge on the adverse effects of state–CSO partnerships.

Policy implications: Conflict-affected states would benefit from ensuring that security measures do not undercut CSOs' ability to serve as a bridge between the government and society by encouraging them to restrict their roles to service provision. The practice of excluding advocacy-oriented CSOs in security measures is counter-productive, and may potentially silence public demands for transparency, accountability and justice, thereby entrenching insecurity and impinging on humanitarian interventions. CSOs should be engaged as vital and equal partners in addressing security issues.

Keywords: Boko Haram and Islamic State of West African Province; civic space; de-risking; securitization; state–civil society relations; transparency and accountability

1 INTRODUCTION

There have been many debates on the state formulation and entrenching of service-delivery roles for civil society organizations[2] (CSOs) in the context of counter-terrorism (Bolleyer & Gauja, 2017; DeMattee, 2019; Njoku, 2019; 2018; 2017a; Poppe & Wolff, 2017; Skokova et al., 2018; Watson & Burles, 2018), but little is known about state-oriented service-delivery partnerships with CSOs in practice. In addition, knowledge of how CSOs make sense of their partnership with the state and its implications remains marginal. In view of this, Salamon and Toepler (2015), and Toepler (2010) called for systematic studies to show how governments' partnerships with CSOs have had adverse effects on CSOs. Toepler specifically (2010, p.326) asserts that "there seems to be a rather disappointing near-dearth of empirical work testing the assumptions of the pathological effects of government support". Moreover, Salamon and Toepler (2015, p. 2169) state that "the concerns are real and deserve attention".

The article draws on Nigeria to advance the debate and offers empirical evidence on the adverse influence on CSOs of the state's service-delivery engagement of them in the context of counter-terrorism. It also analyses how CSOs make sense of such service-delivery approaches in partnering to curb the rise of terrorism, and examines the socio-political consequences of the partnership. It draws on a mixed-method approach to data collection and analysis carried out between 2015 and 2018.

---

[2] For the purpose of this study, "civil society is characterized as a platform where individuals organize around common, collective purposes [and] it entails associational forms such as social developments/ movement groups, human rights organizations", trade unions, faith-based organizations, networks, coalitions, peace groups, and campaigns (Howell & Lind, 2010a, 2010b, p. 3).

First, the findings show that as part of efforts to enforce CSOs' service-delivery roles in the counter-terrorism context, the government of Nigeria established its National Counter-terrorism Strategy (NACTEST)—a security policy that recognizes the roles of CSOs in mitigating the rise of terrorism. The government engaged about 70 CSOs as service providers in its counter-terrorism measures (CTMs), motivated by their experience and expertise in working in local communities and their grassroots connections. CSOs were engaged to provide educational services aimed at deconstructing terrorist rhetoric in formal schools and madrasas, de-radicalization programmes for ex-terrorists, enable inter-religious dialogue, socio-economic development programmes, and provide various forms of aid such as health care, food, and temporary housing equipment for internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in camps. More significantly, the state mobilized CSOs to obtain vital security-related intelligence from communities.

Second, some CSOs believed that simply providing welfare services, rather than engaging in political advocacy, did not conform with their organizational principles. Engaging CSOs to provide services in the context of counter-terrorism eroded their watchdog and accountability roles. It also impinged on their capacity to demand government transparency in the enforcement of CTMs. The findings also showed that despite being engaged by the state to provide services, CSOs believed that they can contribute their ideas to counter-terrorism policy-making.

This study contributes to both the liberationist and functionalist debates on state–civil society partnership. Liberationist scholars argue that a genial partnership between the state and CSOs is atypical since the state always seeks to influence CSOs to serve its interests while functionalists (advocates for state–CSOs partnership) argue that such partnership could potentially lead to CSOs' loss of autonomy, vendorism, and neglect of key principles in order to obtain government funds, greater bureaucratization and stunting of advocacy. The article also builds on existing studies relating to state formulation and entrenchment of a much reduced role for CSOs in the context of counter-terrorism.

2 STATE–CSO PARTNERSHIP AND SERVICE-DELIVERY ROLES

According to Coston (1998), there have been diverging arguments on state–CSO partnership, broadly between the functionalist and the liberationist positions. The former advocates a robust state partnership with CSOs while the latter disapproves of such a relationship. One argument put forward by the functionalist proponents (Brinkerhoff, 1999; Coston, 1998; Esman &Uphoff, 1984; Leonard & Marshall, 1982; Salamon & Toepler, 2015) is that theories

of state–CSO relations focus on preserving CSOs' autonomy and view an alliance with the state as a threat to their core principles. Consequently, they are said to gloss over the growth of healthy state–civil society partnership in some political contexts (Brinkerhoff, 1999). They argue that such approaches fail to do justice to the government because of the lack of frameworks for state actors to achieve an effective state–CSO partnership in order to address challenges that the state cannot tackle on its own (Salamon & Toepler, 2015; Toepler, 2010).

The functionalist argument for sound theoretical and practical development of frameworks to understand and enhance state–CSO partnerships may have influenced Jennifer Coston's formulation of eight typologies and a model of such partnerships. Coston (1998) argues that, depending on the political context, relations between the state and CSOs could be characterized in the following ways: repressive, rivalry, competitive, contracting, third-party, co-operation and complementarity; and asserts that such typologies can be explained in part to the government's acceptance or rejection of institutional pluralism, the balance of power in the relationship and the degree of formality. Coston (1998) further argues that state–CSOs relations are both inevitable and desirable. Thus, the typologies would help state actors to form healthy state–CSO relations that would benefit society in providing services that neither the state nor the market can do. Brinkerhoff (1999) reiterated this by empirically demonstrating on-going convivial relations between the state and CSOs with reference to four low-income countries (LICs). He argues that a well-organized partnership between the state and CSOs helps in effectively delivering services, capacity building and various forms of technical expertise in addressing social challenges. He also identified factors that may positively or negatively influence state–CSO relations, such as regime type, level of trust, legal framework and regulation, and the nature of the policy to be implemented. Salamon and Toepler (1999) advance theories of voluntary failure and third-party government or new governance to explain the importance of state–CSO partnership, and the balance between the two sectors. CSOs' limited access to funds in order to function effectively is complemented by the government's capacity to provide revenue while in turn CSOs' expertise complements government weakness in providing public goods. In other words, both actors are mutually dependent for optimal performance.

The liberationist critics of state–CSO partnership (Clark, 1991; Edwards & Hulme, 1992; Fowler, 1997; Rahman, 1984; Tandon, 1992) maintain that there is rarely a cordial relationship between the state and CSOs as the former always seeks to influence CSOs to serve its interests irrespective of CSOs' own principles. They argue that, for CSOs to be effective, they must move beyond the supply-side approach, which entails providing social

services, to the demand-side, which involves political advocacy and a good governance mechanism that is premised on transparency and accountability of public officials to the marginalized and vulnerable members of society (Clark, 1991; Edwards & Hulme, 1992; Tandon, 1992). It is hoped that state–CSO relations are based on "mutual respect, acceptance of autonomy, independence and pluralism of NGO opinions and positions", but in reality these relations are characterized by lack of trust or mutual suspicion (Bano, 2018; Clark, 1995, p. 595). States fear that the growth of CSOs threatens their own grip on power (Fowler, 1992).

For their part, many CSOs believe that government entreaties for their collaboration would ultimately undermine their autonomy (Clark, 1995). Although the liberationists observe cases where CSOs partnered with the state in the belief that it would enable them to meet their stated objectives of ensuring grassroots participation and development, they argue that such relationships are laced with risks of "corruption, reduced independence and financial dependency" (Clark, 1995, p. 595).

It is also pointed out that functionalist scholars overlook advocacy in their analysis, models or theories that define or explain state–CSOs relations. Although Coston (1998) claims that many service-delivery CSOs also undertake advocacy, the emphasis is on the former function, stating (ibid., p. 364) that her analysis of state–CSO partnership "does not include the consideration of NGOs' advocacy. NGOs engaging in advocacy are also frequently service providers. That is, their relationship with the government is contingent on the function in question. Indeed, the advocacy function is present in many of the relationship types, although its implementation becomes more complicated as relationship types are formalized".

In many contexts in which autonomy and independence are crucial for their effectiveness, however, advocacy tends to be at the core of CSOs' engagement. As Salamon and Teopler (2015) observed, the voluntary failure and third-party government theory of state–CSO relations have some limitations, which include loss of autonomy, vendorism, bureaucratization and stunting of advocacy. However, Salamon (1995, p.104) concludes that, in the context of the United States, "the message that emerges from the analysis to date is that many of the concerns about the partnership have not materialized to anywhere near the extent feared". Salamon agrees that concerns about the perverse nature of state–CSO relations are real and require further empirical studies. Even Brinkerhoff (1999), who is supportive of state–CSO relations, has observed that in LICs, the partnerships could be

tense. "African governments are often uneasy about political implications of service delivery partnership with relatively independent NGOs whose grassroots activities can lead to challenges to state authority" (Brinkerhoff, 1999, p. 65).

Moreover, the events following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States altered the relationship between the state and CSOs in many countries. CSOs were effectively securitized[3] in response to terrorist attacks in the United States and other countries around the world. This was because states considered CSOs to be national security threats and vulnerable to terrorist abuse, particularly as an avenue for channelling funds for terrorist acts (Hayes, 2017). The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) led the regulation of CSOs in order to prevent them from being exploited by terrorist leaders. The FATF established Recommendation 8 (R8), a legal instrument aimed to curb funding for terrorism worldwide, which directs states and non-state entities to enact domestic laws and policies that explicitly check and vet CSOs' finances. Compliance with these directives is compulsory, as the FATF imposes sanctions on non-compliant states or private organizations (Hayes, 2017). Some scholars argue that these counter-terrorist legal instruments allowed advanced democracies, hybrid and authoritarian regimes alike the leverage to establish a reduced role for CSOs and curb their political advocacy (Bolleyer and Gauja, 2017; DeMattee, 2019; Skokova et al., 2018; Watson & Burles, 2018).

Such concerns make the theoretical position of the functionalist scholars problematic, as empirical evidence in the post-9/11 counter-terrorism regime, state–CSO partnerships in advanced democracies were not as healthy as claimed. Rather, CTMs created or reinforced the feelings of mutual suspicion between states and CSOs, particularly human rights and Muslim groups (Sidel, 2010; Watson & Burles, 2018). While functionalist scholars glossed over political advocacy in favour of service provision in state–CSO partnerships, the implementation of CTMs has shown the importance of advocacy to protect the interests of the marginalized and vulnerable caught in the crossfire of their enforcement (Howell, 2014).

---

[3] Securitization is "an articulated assemblage of practices where heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools) are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actors, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (sensations, thoughts,) about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor's reason for choices and act by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customized policy must be undertaken immediately to block its development" (Balzacq, 2011, p. 3).

In the context of Nigeria, Njoku (2018; 2020) argues that the state is threatened by CSOs' political advocacy, and believes that it is essential to place less emphasis on human rights claims to overcome terrorism. Consequently, the state's exclusion of CSOs in the framing of CTMs empowered it to construct a service-delivery role for CSOs (Njoku, 2018). Njoku (2017a) terms this engagement-containment approach the "politics of conviviality", which he claimed impinges on CSOs' independence and capacity to effectively address social issues.

Although there are studies on the construction and entrenchment of a service-delivery role for CSOs in state–CSO relations in Nigeria and other political contexts, there is a need for more systematic research to back up these claims since studies showing that that state service-delivery practices and its effects on CSOs have been poorly analysed. Salamon and Toepler (2015) and Toepler (2010) called for systematic studies to show how governments' partnerships with CSOs have affected the latter. This makes it important to have a comprehensive understanding of the service-delivery relationship between the state and CSOs in the context of counter-terrorism and how CSOs make sense of the government's approach and its implications. As highlighted in the next section, Nigeria is a critical case for exploring this question.

3 TERRORISM AND COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES IN NIGERIA

While the socio-political trajectory of the Nigerian state saw the intermittent emergence of violent groups, the Boko Haram and Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) groups took a more lethal turn. The actions of these terrorist groups distorted the Nigerian security infrastructure, which defied the military's consistent narrative that they had been "technically defeated", despite their persistent and unrelenting attacks on military formations in the northeast region.

The Nigerian government has sought to curb the expansion of terrorism in the country since its emergence. These include hard and soft measures such as the declaration of a state of emergency in the northeast, formation of a Military Joint Task Force and the 7th Division of the Nigerian Army, and the revival of the Multilateral Joint Task Force (MJTF) with neighbouring countries. It also supported the establishment of a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) to help security forces in the northeast. In 2011, the Terrorism Prevention Act and the Money Laundering Prohibition were established and later amended.

Recognizing that hard measures alone cannot effectively counter the rising terrorist threats, the government established the National Counter-terrorism Strategy (NACTEST). This strategy, among other things, incorporates the government's soft measures, particularly the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), currently known as the National Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE). The government also acknowledged the critical roles of CSOs in enforcing its soft CTMs and engaged them.

Although hard and soft CTMs are advocated worldwide, their effective enforcement has been difficult due to the propensity to abuses (Howell, 2014). In Nigeria, the implementation of the measures is fraught with cases of human rights violations such as illegal detention, torture, sexual violence and summary executions (Amnesty International, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2016; National Human Rights Commission, 2013; Njoku, 2017a; 2019). However, while experts and observers have documented these problems, the literature on the effects of CTMs on CSOs' capacities in mitigating the challenges of terrorism and counter-terrorism continues. This makes it vital to examine the nature of the Nigerian government's partnership with CSOs in practice in the counter-terrorism context and its implications.

3.1 Research Method

The study employed a mixed-method research design. Through a survey, data were gathered from programme officers and executives of women's groups and faith-based, youth and children, and human rights CSOs. These organizations were engaged in activities such as humanitarianism, peacebuilding, human rights advocacy, and development issues in northeast Nigeria between 2009 and 2015. The study also surveyed five government officials. Secondary sources included relevant literature from government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on counter-terrorism in the northeast region, as well as the intersections between counter-terrorism and CSOs sourced between 2014 and 2018. The research sites were purposively selected and included the operational areas of CSOs in northeast Nigeria (Gombe and Borno states) and IDP camps in Plateau State. It also included the headquarters of CSOs engaged in advocacy efforts and providing aid in the northeast (Abuja, Lagos Oyo states) and the head offices of the government officials involved in counter-terrorism policy-making and enforcement in Abuja.

The study population included 12 CSO executives and five government officials. From the available records of CSOs, 445 programme officers were identified, of whom 211 were sampled. The stratified sampling technique was used, and proportionate sampling was

employed to ascertain the precise number of programme officers in each of the CSOs relative to their specific population for the administration of the questionnaire; 205 questionnaires were recovered and used for the analysis. They showed that 28 (13.7%) focused on peacebuilding, 48 (23.4%) on development, 59 (28.8%) on humanitarianism, and 70 (34.1%) on human rights advocacy.

The study also deployed purposive sampling in selecting 17 CSO executives and government officials for in-depth interviews.[4] It was, however, found that the selected CSOs did not represent the total number of CSO programme officers in the country, and were those involved in various capacity-building, technical assistance and advocacy efforts in Nigeria's northeast region, where counter-terrorism operations are on-going. The selected government officials are those who make and enforce counter-terrorism policies. This approach was essential, as only those organizations and government officials involved in counter-terrorism operations can offer valuable information. The survey instruments comprised the interview guide and questionnaire. The research questions comprised contentious issues on the intersections between counter-terrorism and CSOs, with reference to the state's establishment and engagement of CSOs as service providers and its implications.[5]

First, respondents were asked to rank their responses to government-endorsed and non-restricted activities on a nominal scale of Yes=1 and No=2. These include the following: government's counter-terrorism policies have affected your access to logistical support; restrictions of access to food supplies or programmes; restriction of access to medical supplies, restrictions on the transport of goods/services/personnel; restriction in the purchase/acquisition of vehicles or other means of transport; restrictions on the purchase/acquisition of information and communication technological (ICT) equipment.

Second, respondents were asked to rank their responses on how they make sense of government engagement of their organizations in the counter-terrorism context. They responded to the following: delivering government counter-terrorism services conform to your organizational principles; government's service-delivery engagement erodes CSOs' roles of acting as a watchdog on state activities; government's service-delivery engagement affects CSOs' role of holding government bureaucrats and politicians accountable; government's

---

[4] This forms a part of a larger dataset of 29 interviewed respondents (15 Government official and 14 CSOs executives.

[5] Charity and Security Network https://www.charityandsecurity.org/

service-delivery engagement affects the CSOs' role in demanding transparency in government activities; and government's service-delivery engagement abrogates CSOs' duty to contribute ideas to policy formulation. The Likert-scale response ranged from '1 = undecided' to '5 = strongly agree'. The quantitative data were analysed through the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) while the secondary sources and in-depth interviews were content analysed.

3.2 Research findings

The NACTEST document describes the formal engagement of CSOs as social service providers in the counter-terrorism context:

> *Addressing conditions conducive for the spread of terrorism including, human rights, conflict resolution, the rule of law, social-political and economic issues. The civil society organizations are to engage in outreach activities and taking proactive steps to address the roots causes of terrorism. Targeted programmes of cooperation focusing on the promotion of dialogue and tolerance, provide policy advice and expertise on aspects of preventing terrorism and developing security consciousness and situations awareness through sustained public enlightenment campaigns. Mobilization and the sensitization of the general public on how to respond to a significant emergency security situation (Federal Government of Nigeria 2014, pp. 16–32).*

Dr Akilu, who was in charge of the implementation of the NACTEST, stated that the policy "was to foster greater awareness of countering violent extremism among CSOs, build the capacity of both state and non-state actors in combating the drivers of radicalization, and strengthen the links between key stakeholders in order to coordinate CVE action effectively" (Blueprint, 2017).

Table 1: Responses on CSOs' activities the government considers less threatening to CTMs

Question	Yes (percentage)	No (percentage)	Total count
Government's counter-terrorism policies/regulations affected your access to logistical supports	10 (4.9%)	195 (95.1%)	205 (100%)
Restriction of access to food supplies/programmes	6 (2.9%)	199 (97.1%)	205 (100%)

Restriction of access to medical supplies	4 (2%)	201 (98%)	205 (100%)
Restrictions in the purchase/acquisition of vehicles or other means of transportation	4 (2%)	201 (98%)	205 (100%)
Restrictions in the purchase/acquisition of ICT equipment	4 (2%)	201 (98%)	205 (100%)

The findings from the survey of programme officers showed the government's support concerning CSOs' provision of social services in the context of counter-terrorism in the northeast. Table 1 shows CSOs' most frequent responses when asked if the government's counter-terrorism policies/regulations have affected their access to logistical support, indicating that 95.1% believed that they experienced no government restrictions in the areas of access to logistics in their efforts to curb the surge of terrorism in northeast Nigeria. Asked if there were restrictions on access to food supplies/programmes and if there were restrictions on access to medical supplies in the context of counter-terrorism in northeast Nigeria, 98% and 97.1% of respondents indicated that they faced no government restrictions in areas of access to food or medical supplies needed for aid delivery in northeast Nigeria respectively. Respondents were also asked if there were any government constraints in transporting goods/services/personnel, and 97.1% indicated that they had faced no such restrictions. Lastly, respondents were asked if they had experienced government constraints on the acquisition of vehicles or other means of transport and of ICT equipment needed for their operations in northeast Nigeria. The results showed that 98% said they experienced no form of constraints in purchasing any forms of transport, and 98% also indicated that they had faced no constraints in the purchase of ICT equipment needed to carry out their activities. The CSO executives reported various delivery roles in which they were engaged during counter-terrorism operations. These included educational activities aimed at deconstructing terrorist narratives in formal schools and madrasas, de-radicalization programmes for ex-terrorists, facilitating inter-religious dialogues, and socio-economic development programmes. It also includes providing various forms of aid such as health care, food, temporary housing equipment and toiletries to the IDPs in various camps scattered across the country, and provision of critical security-related information in the early stages of

or during violent insurrections.[6] One CSO executive stated: "for my organizations and other civil society organizations, part of the process includes coming to the table with some levels of expertise that will provide the same levels of multiple engagements to the government […] my organization comes because we have expertise in early warning, considered to be a complementary part of intelligence gathering, but in this part, it is regarded as open intelligence from civil society organizations".[7] He reported that information sharing had been a significant challenge for the state in countering terrorism, so information sharing by communities has been considered central.

CSOs have strong connections in communities, which fostered the state's engagement. Such CSO early-warning systems helped the government to establish an "open intelligence" system, which is considered critical in tackling terrorist activities in the country.[8] Similarly, a development CSO director stated: "we help them [government] in developing their soft approach. We had a series of meetings. We worked in putting up the steering committee for the development of the soft approach".[9]

A Nigerian government counter-terrorism consultant stated the government's rationale for supporting or permitting CSOs' engagement in service delivery in the northeast: "during the initial phase of the Boko Haram violence some civilians in the North-east were jeering at the troops when the Boko Haram was attacking them. That means there wasn't local mobilization of the local populace and the civil societies or NGOs because you also need NGOs to get the people educated and enlighten because when you don't engage them, there is a loophole".[10] A counter-terrorism officer in the Office of the National Security Adviser also stated:

> My director met with several civil society organizations all over the country,
> and since then, we have been working closely with civil society organizations.
> We have met with 60 or 70 organizations all over the country that are working
> in fields related to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). If you [organizations]
> are working on engaging youths or community development or conflict

---

[6] Executive Director development CSO (Abuja, March 10, 12 2015, personal communication); Executive Director of a development CSO (Lagos, February 19, 2015, personal communication); National Coordinator Peacebuidling CSO (Lagos, February 19, 2015, personal communication).

[7] Country Coordinator of Peacebuilding and Development CSO (Lagos, January 10, 2015, personal communication).

[8] Country Coordinator of Peacebuilding and Development CSO (Lagos, January 10, 2015, personal communication).

[9] Executive Director of development CSO (Abuja, March 10 12, 2015, personal communication).

[10] Nigerian government Security Consultant (Oyo, February 2015, personal communication).

resolution, then there is a clear link with countering terrorism, and so we have been reaching out to organizations working in this field to understand what they have been doing and what it looks like on the ground. Honestly, CSOs/NGOs often understands their community more than the government will ever know. So, it is crucial that we reach out to them to understand and so we have to work with them to fine-tune our programmes and go into partnerships.[11]

Thus, the state sees and engages CSOs as critical instruments through which it can successfully implement its soft CTMs. CSOs' capacity building, technical expertise, and grassroots connections with local communities in the northeast are important to the government in mobilizing support for its CTMs.

Echoing the reason why CSOs should narrow their activities to service-delivery, a senior military officer in charge of counter-terrorism policy formulation and enforcement stated: "all these civil society organizations or NGOs should only focus on delivering services in support of government counter-terrorism efforts in the Northeast. Trying to serve as watchdogs on the counter-terrorism operations will cause confusion and endanger men and officers fighting Boko Haram and affect government counter-terrorism plans".[12] Similarly, another counter-terrorism officer in the National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) stated that their perception of CSOs is that they provide aid to the victims of terrorism and not to advocate for them. The perception of CSOs as service-delivery agencies further defines how government security agents engage with them. The officer said: "We see them doing things that are in line with what they are supposed to do, like giving incentives [aid] to the less privileged [victims], giving them clothes and water…We see them as partners that should give incentives or aid".[13] In the same vein, the counter-terrorism officer in the Office of the National Security Advisor stated that: "…in terms of the actual project we believe that NGOs should be going into communities to do service deliveries that are linked to Countering Violent Extremism…It is important that civil society organizations are in service delivery in these communities".[14]

---

[10] Counter-Terrorism Officer in the Office of the National Security advisor (Abuja, March 2015, personal communication).
[11] Senior counter-terrorism military officers in the Nigerian Army (Oyo, July 21, 2015, personal communication).
[12] Counter-Terrorism officer, NSCDC (Oyo, February 19, 2015, personal communication).
[13] Counter-Terrorism officer of the Office of the National Security Advisor (Abuja, March 27, 2015, personal communication).

Four senior military officers involved in counter-terrorism operations also described how security forces and CSOs can form cordial and productive relations if CSOs stick to meeting victims' needs. They further highlighted a tense relationship between CSOs and the state owing to the CSOs suspicions of partnering with the state.[15] For instance, one senior military officer said:

> CSOs have their roles to play; for example, you have some CSOs who provide relief during conflict situations. When you have military relief and CSOs there [North-east], both of their operations become symbiotic because the CSOs cannot do anything if the place is very terrible. So, they need the military. But then, by their nature, CSOs always feel that they do not need the military to do their work. They believe that having the military close to them is going to be inimical to their work. It is something that is recurrent worldwide, not just peculiar to us here. But these things are not intended to be so. But the thing is when you have them on ground they are always some little types of interest.[16]

Although the NACTEST document contains human rights components, in practice these appear very passive in government counter-terrorism operations. Even though state actors recognize that the violation of human rights and civil liberties is the root cause of terrorism, in practice they still emphasize service delivery. Thus, there was inadequate support for political or human rights advocacy that could have helped the state ensure that counter-terrorism officers adhere to these principles. The predominant perception of government actors and security agents of the role of CSOs as solely service providers in the context of counter-terrorism influenced the focus on this aspect in the state's partnership with CSOs. In other words, in counter-terrorism operations the government sidelined advocacy organizations that play a watchdog role on issues of transparency, accountability and social justice.

By controlling CSOs' non-political activities and curbing their political activities, the state defines what constitute human rights violations or sets the limits for what are defined as rights abuses in the context of counter-terrorism. The empirical evidence in this study supports Njoku's (2018) argument that, in formulating counter-terrorism laws and policies,

---

[14] Four Senior Military personnel of the Nigerian Navy and Army (Abuja, March 9, 2015, personal communication).
[15] Senior military officer (Abuja, March 9, 2015, personal communication).

the government believes that over-emphasizing human rights would be counter-productive, hence its exclusion of CSOs in the framing of CTMs due to their political advocacy. Similarly, it highlights Watson and Burles' (2018, p. 6) claims that in the United States and Russia "civil society is permitted to celebrate the positive aspects of the social order, and remedy its negative effects, but is often excluded from directly or publicly contesting social order". The next section looks at how CSOs have made sense of their service-delivery partnership with the government.

4 MAKING SENSE OF CSOs' SERVICE-DELIVERY ROLES IN THE CONTEXT OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

The analysis in Table 2 presents the perceptions of CSO programme officers of their service-delivery partnership with the government, showing that 50.7% of respondents strongly agreed and 35.1% agreed that the government's engagement did not conform to their organizational principles. In response to specific questions on the impact of government partnership on their organizations about 48.8% and 23.9% believed that it affected their watchdog roles regarding government counter-terrorism operations in the northeast, and 40.5% and 38.5% affirmed that it made them unable to hold the government bureaucrats and politicians to account. Similarly, 59% and 29.3% of the respondents said that the government's engagement impinged on their capacity to demand transparency in counter-terrorism operations. Regarding whether government partnership affected their ability to contribute their ideas to CTMs, 75.1% and 5.4% disagreed, and only about 13.7% and 3.9% agreed.

Table 2: How CSOs make sense of the government's service-delivery engagement of their organisations in the context of counter-terrorism

	Undecided	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Delivering government's counter-terrorism services conform to your organisational principles?	7 (3.4%)	72 (35.1%)	104 (50.7%)	7 (3.4%)	15 (7.3%)	205 (100%)
Government's service-delivery engagement erodes CSOs' roles of	14 (6.8%)	7 (3.4%)	35 (17.1%)	49 (23.9%)	100 (48.8%)	205 (100%)

acting as a watchdog						
Government's service-delivery engagement affects CSOs' role of holding government bureaucrats and politicians to account	11 (5.4%)	6 (2.9%)	26 (12.7%)	79 (38.5%)	83 (40.5%)	205 (100%)
Government's service-delivery engagement affects the CSOs' role in demanding transparency in government activities	5 (2.4%)	5 (2.4%)	25 (12.2%)	121 (59%)	49 (23.9%)	205 (100%)
Government's service-delivery engagement abrogates the duty of CSOs' in contributing ideas to policy formulation	4 (2.0%)	154 (75.1%)	11 (5.4%)	8 (3.9%)	28 (13.7%)	205 (100%)

In the same vein, CSO executives expressed dissatisfaction with government oriented service-delivery engagement with their organizations in the context of counter-terrorism. Although some believed that the government approach does not eliminate their neutrality or ability to hold the state actors accountable, they agreed that it is incrementally affecting their ability to do so.[17] For instance, a programme officer at a faith-based CSO engaged in humanitarian work stated: "It has always been difficult to put the government to account in this part of the world in all spheres of governance. The most difficult problem we have been having is that in some states [in Nigeria] the Freedom of Information Act has not been domesticated. At the federal level, even when you ask as long as it has to do with security, it is a no-go area".[18] Similarly, an executive of a women's rights CSO stated: "if you go to them [state security officials] under the FOI [Freedom of Information Act), they will not give you information". The FOI Act is a critical legal instrument that empowers CSOs to do more than just provide services in the context of CTMs. It enables CSOs to assess vital

---

[16] Executive Director development CSO (Abuja, 10, 12 March, 2015, personal communication); Executive Director of a development CSO (Lagos, February 19, 2015 personal communication); Programme Manager of faith-based CSO engaged in humanitarian work (Abuja, March 10, 2015, personal communication).
[17] Programme Manager of faith-based CSO engaged in humanitarian work (Abuja, March 10, 2015, personal communication).

information to check for transparency and then hold government officials accountable in the enforcement of CTMs.

One executive of a CSO on women's rights said that the state's purpose in service-delivery partnership is aimed at ensuring that CSOs do not publicly criticize the government's CTMs: "the role they want to give to CSOs is just to agree …The implication is that we would deny that there is human rights abuse [in the context of counter-terrorism]". On the issue of government accountability, another CSO executive stated that "it is difficult to do that… So much is devoted to fighting it [terrorism], yet little is seen …the accountability [capacity of CSOs] is not just right".[19] Similarly, when asked if CTMs affected their capacity to hold the government accountable, a development CSO programme manager responded that "to an extent yes. For example, when you consider the use of this clause called security vote[20] in the budget …, we are unable to track expenses [financial expenditure on counter-terrorism in the North-east]".[21]

These views advance the liberationist argument that state partnership with CSOs, based on mutual respect for the latters' core principles, is difficult to achieve because the state influences the CSOs to serve its interests. Moreover, such partnerships impinge on CSOs' autonomy, and many end up becoming entrepreneurs pursuing state funds (Borgh & Terwindt, 2014; Clark, 1995). Interestingly, in hybrid and authoritarian regimes, the state has used the narrative of counter-terrorism to turn CSOs into state appendage, effectively making them "governmental non-governmental organizations" (GONGOs). Stevens (2010) and Noori (2007) argue that in Uzbekistan, state–NGO relations influenced CSOs in ways that led to them being replaced with GONGOs. Stevens (2010) explicitly states that despite the government's claims of plurality in dealing with CSOs, many of these organizations had become arms of the state.

Indeed, some hybrid or authoritarian regimes, the post-9/11 CTMs have not only re-ordered state–civil society relations in ways that weaken CSOs' political activism but have also altered their organizational structure. For instance, Brechenmacher (2017, p. 27) argues

---

[18] Executive Director of a development CSO (Lagos, February 19, 2015, personal communication).

[19] Security Vote entails monthly financial allocations in the order of millions of dollars to the 36 states in Nigeria, which are used for funding security services within these states. These monthly allocations vary in each state because those with more security issues get more allocations than others. However, the security vote has been an issue of contestation between the state and its citizens.

[20] Programme Manager rights-focused and development CSOs (Lagos, February 17, 2015, personal communication).

that in Russia, due to the intense state regulation of CSOs, these organizations began to make structural change by reducing or stopping their involvement in political advocacy in preference for service delivery. Some even became for-profit organizations as a way to avoid government scrutiny. Similarly, Dupuy et al. (2014, pp. 13–14) assert that in Ethiopia the implementation of the Charities and Society Proclamation led many human rights CSOs to close down while others rebranded by moving away from human rights activism to service delivery in order to cope with government constraints.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article has provided empirical evidence on the service-delivery patterns of the state's engagement with CSOs. It has also offered an analysis of how CSOs have made sense of the government's approach. The Nigerian case study is a response to functionalist scholars' charge that there is as yet no empirical proof of the "pathological effects" of state–CSO partnerships. The article contributes to the generalizable knowledge on the liberationist theory that state interests often shape state–CSO partnerships. This study proves that, contrary to current assumptions in the context of counter-terrorism, state–CSO partnerships are not based on cordial or mutual respect. Rather, the state controls the political realm and also exerts influences on the non-political arena.

The state unambiguously supports CSOs' non-political activities such as service-delivery or development-related activities in northeast Nigeria. It has also engaged CSOs in NACTEST or PVE programmes, which are parts of state's soft counter-terrorism approach and are focused on providing social services rather than on political advocacy. This reality helps in understanding how states construct the role of service-delivery for CSOs in the context of counter-terrorism (Howell & Lind, 2010). It equally helps to fully appreciate states' two-pronged approach of co-option and control, or the repression of CSOs in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom as well as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, India, Kenya and Russia (Burles, 2018; Howell, 2014; Skokova, 2018; Watson & Sidel, 2010). It also advances our knowledge of scholarly arguments on the state's two-pronged approach of providing access to foreign donor funds to CSOs that are willing to engage in service provision and restricting it to those that are critical of the state, such as in Australia (Green, 2018) and Ethiopia (Dupuy, 2014). It also advances Fowler and Sen's (2010) argument that states have "donor darlings" and "donor orphans".

The findings also provide an interesting and hitherto neglected area on how CSOs make sense of CTMs. The study argues that in the Nigerian context, CSOs believe that state CTMs do not align with their own organizational principles. Although CSOs believe that they can contribute to CTMs the state's engagement with them solely in a service-delivery function makes it difficult. Specifically, it impinges the capacity of CSOs to demand transparency and accountability in the enforcement of CTMs. Interestingly, one of the things raised by some of the interviewed CSOs was the state's flagrant disregard for the FOI Act in situations where CSOs invoke it as a way of checking on the government's counter-terrorism operations or demanding accountability. Such state actions affected CSOs' ability to act as a watchdog of the state in the counter-terrorism context.

Moreover, the argument that the state's service-delivery engagement of CSOs, which influenced their inability to demand accountability and transparency from the government, advances other conclusions in diverse political contexts. For instance, in a study conducted by Borgh and Terwindt (2012) on the closure of operational space of CSOs in Indonesia, Guatemala, Honduras and Philippines, the governments were happy with CSOs that engaged in their service-delivery roles while targeting and stifling CSOs that demand accountability in government policies. They explicitly stated that "Service-oriented NGOs were comparatively free to operate. However, certain claim-making by NGOs can be affected by restrictions, particularly professional NGOs involved in accountability claims and grassroots organizations with resource claims. These restrictions can come in many forms and sequences. Threats, criminal stigmatization, punitive criminalization, and the closure of spaces for dialogue are the most frequent restrictions" (Borgh & Terwindt, 2012, p. 1075). Similarly, Brenchenmacher (2017) stated that in Egypt, the state resisted CSOs' demands for accountability in the context of countering terrorism, claiming that "Sisi in August 2015 approved a second anti-terrorism law, which imposes fines for spreading 'false' reports on terrorist attacks or anti-terror operations and protects law enforcement from accountability for abuses" (Brechenmacher, 2017, p. 47).

The engagement of CSOs purely as service providers has social, political and policy implications in conflict-affected countries. While the approach may give rise to a new version of CSOs as state appendages, states may also deploy them in legitimizing its repressive policies. Interestingly, states have invoked these variants of CSOs to attack independent CSOs, particularly those engaged in political advocacy. For instance, Howell and Lind (2009, p.

123) stated that in Afghanistan, the government's perception of CSOs as primarily service-delivery agents as well as CSOs' dependence on the government to access donor funding "has led to the creation of a rentier civil society in Afghanistan that struggles to maintain its autonomy or define its own priorities, goals and roles". In other words, Nigeria and other conflict-affected states have seen the emergence of GONGOs, whose motive is to protect and promote state interests, hence a decline in political activism (Brechenmacher, 2017; Dupuy & Prakash, 2015; Njoku, 2020). If not adequately checked, counter-terrorism could provide avenues for the subtle and complete modification of CSOs' roles away from protecting and promoting the interests of society. In other words, CTMs are providing a pretext for illiberal governments or hybrid regimes to remove CSOs' watchdog powers. The co-option of CSOs as part of the state apparatus creates suspicion about CSO–society relations and a decline in public trust for CSOs. Reiterating this point, Howell and Lind (2009, p. 130) stated that "ironically, the co-option of civil society into state-building strategies in Afghanistan as a way of strengthening the state has actually undermined the legitimacy of civil society and contributed to negative popular attitudes of NGOs".

Governments in conflict-affected countries must move beyond the hegemonic partnership with CSOs and recognize the critical roles that independent and advocacy CSOs play in conflict zones and how their contributions help in mitigating the effects of terrorism or insurgency. There is a need to adopt a bottom-top approach that also recognizes advocacy groups' grassroots connections, knowledge of challenges and abuse of the rights of those who are vulnerable and marginalized, and understanding of the grievances of communities affected by conflict. In addition, through their advocacy efforts, CSOs also provide early-warning signs of the eruption of violence or intelligence gathering needed to curb terrorism and other forms of political violence. They also ensure that security agents or government officials who violate individuals' rights and civil liberties in the process of countering terrorism or other political violence are identified, investigated and prosecuted, thus addressing local grievances that can impede intelligence sharing. Indeed, conflict-affected states would benefit from ensuring that CTMs or counter-insurgency measures do not undermine the capacity of CSOs to serve as a bridge between the government and society by confining their roles to service provision.

Moreover, isolating human rights from counter-terrorism or counter-insurgency operations also gives rise to grievances that are frequently manipulated by terrorist or insurgent groups to recruit members (Njoku, 2017b; 2019). It discourages political participation, for example in socio-political security dialogues, deliberative actions and

peacebuilding processes aimed at addressing security challenges. For instance, Rodríguez-Hernández and Cepeda-Ladino (2020:176) stated that "the role of civil society during the Colombian armed conflict has been crucial in calling for human rights protection, democratic openness, and denunciation of violations and crimes in the last two decades. However, the risks related to these activities have discouraged the majority of the population to be involved in these actions". Thus, governments in conflict zones should seek the backing of civil society in their security programmes. Widespread support of counter-terrorism or counter-insurgency programmes is key to addressing hydra-headed challenges of terrorism, insurgency and other forms of political violence.

In conclusion, the practice of excluding independent and advocacy CSOs in security policy-making and enforcement should be abandoned, because it has the potential to silence people's voice to demand transparency, accountability and justice, and thereby entrench insecurity. It also has an impact on governments' ability to respond effectively to a humanitarian crisis in conflict zones. Instead, independent and advocacy CSOs should be embraced and engaged as vital and equal partners in addressing national security challenges.

First submitted December 2019

Final draft accepted September 2020

References

Balzacq, T. (2011). A theory of securitization: Origins, core assumptions and variants. In T. Balzacq (Ed.), *Securitization theory: How security problems emerge and dissolve*. Routledge.

Bano, M. (2018). Partnerships and the good-governance agenda: Improving service delivery through state–NGO collaborations. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 1–14. doi.org/10.1007/s11266-017-9937-y

Borgh, C., & Terwindt, C. (2012). Shrinking operational space of NGOs – a framework of analysis, *Development in Practice*, 22, 1065–1081. doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2012.714745

Bolleyer, N., & Gauja, A. (2017). Combating terrorism by constraining charities? Charity and counter-terrorism legislation before and after 9/11. *Public Administration*, *95*, 654–669. doi.org/10.1111/padm.12322

BluePrint. (2017). Partnership Against Violent Extremism holds first General Assembly. https://blueprint.ng/partnershipagainst-violent-extremism-holds-first-general-assembly/

Brechenmacher, S. (2017). *Civil society under assault: Repression and responses in Russia, Egypt, and Ethiopia*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Brinkerhoff, D. W. (1999). Exploring State–Civil Society collaboration: Policy partnerships in developing countries. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *28*, 59–86. doi.org/10.1177/089976409902801S01

Clark, J. (1995). The state, popular participation and the voluntary sector. *World Development*, 23, 593–601. doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(94)00147-Q

Clark, J. (1991). *Democratizing development: The role of voluntary organizations*. Kumarian.

Coston, J.M. (1998). A model and typology of government-NGO relationships. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 27, 358–382. doi.org/10.1177/0899764098273006

Edwards, M., & Hulme, D. (1992). *Making a difference: NGOs and development in a changing world*. Earthscan.

Esman, M.J., & Uphoff, N.T. (1984). *Local organizations: Intermediaries in rural development*. Kumarian Press.

DeMattee, A.J. (2019). Toward a coherent framework: A typology and conceptualization of CSO regulatory regimes. *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, *9*, 1–17. doi.org/10.1515/npf-2018-0011

Dupuy, K R., & Prakash, J. (2014). Who survived? Ethiopia's regulatory crackdown on foreign-funded NGOs. *Review of International Political Economy*, *22*, 419–456. doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2014.903854

Fowler, A., & Sen, K. (2010). Embedding the war on terror: State and civil society relations. *Development and Change*, *41*, 1–27 doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2009.01620.x

Fowler, A. (1997). *Striking a Balance: A guide to enhancing the effectiveness of non-governmental organizations in international development*. Earthscan.

Fowler, A. (1992). *NGOs as agents of democratization: An African perspective*, Mimeo. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Hayes, B. (2017). *The Impact of international counterterrorism on civil society organisations: Understanding the role of the Financial Action Task Force*. Bread for the World—Protestant Development Service Protestant Agency for Diakonie and Development.

Howell, J., Ishkanian, A., Obadare, E., Seckinelgin, H., & Glasius, M. (2008). The backlash against civil society in the wake of the Long War on Terror. *Development in Practice, 18*, 82–93. doi.org/10.1080/09614520701778884

Howell, J., & Lind, J. (2010). Securing the world and challenging civil society: Before and after the 'War on Terror'. *Development and Change*, *41*, 279–291. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2010.01635.x

Howell, J., & Lind, J. (2009). *Counter-terrorism, aid and civil society: Before and after the War on Terror*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Howell, J. (2014). The securitisation of NGOs post-9/11. *Conflict, Security &Development*, *14*, 151–179. doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2014.903692

Leonard, D. and Marshall, D.R. (Eds.) (1982). *Institutions of rural development for the poor: Decentralizations and organizational linkages*. University of California Press.

Federal Government of Nigeria. (2014). The National Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Office of the National Security Adviser.

Njoku, E. T. (2020). Investigating the intersections between counter-terrorism and NGOs in Nigeria: Development practice in terrorism-affected areas. *Development in Practice*, *30*, 501–512. doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2020.1714546

Njoku, E. T. (2019). The ligaments of counter-terrorism regime: Sexual Violence and the vicarious traumatisation of female non-governmental organisation workers: Evidence from Nigeria. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, *30*, 1233–1263. doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2019.1649830

Njoku, E. T. (2018). Strategic exclusion: The state and the framing of a service delivery role for CSOs in the context of counterterrorism in Nigeria. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1543131

Njoku, E. T. (2017a). Politics of conviviality? State-civil society relations within the context of counter-terrorism in Nigeria. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*. doi.org/10.1007/s11266-017-9910-9

Njoku, E. T. (2017b). Laws for sale: The domestication of counter-terrorism legislation and its impact in Nigeria. In N. Romaniuk, F. Grice, D. Irrera, and S. Webb (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Counter-Terrorism Policy* (pp. 1003–1016). Palgrave Macmillan.

Poppe, A. E., & Wolff, J. (2017). The contested spaces of civil society in a plural world: Norm contestation in the debate about restrictions on international civil society support. *Contemporary Politics*, *23*, 469–488. doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2017.1343219

Rahman, Md. A. (1984). *Grassroot participation and self reliance: Experience in South and South-East Asia*. Oxford and IBH.

Rodríguez-Hernández, S. M., & Cepeda-Ladino, J. C. (2020). In the name of security? Counter-insurgency policies and civil society in Colombia. In S. N. Romaniuk and E.T Njoku (Eds.), *Counter-terrorism and civil society: Post-9/11 progress and challenges*. Manchester University Press (forthcoming).

Salamon, L. M., & Toepler, S. (2015). Government–nonprofit cooperation: Anomaly or necessity. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *26*, 2155–2177. doi.org/10.1007/s11266-015-9651-6

Salamon L.M. (1995). *Partners in public service: Government–nonprofit relations in the modern welfare state*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Stevens, D. (2010). Osama or the Georges: Shifting threats and state policy towards civil society in Uzbekistan. *Development and Change*, *41*, 355–374. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2010.01638.x

Sidel, M. (2010). Counter-terrorism and the regulation of civil society in the USA. *Development and Change*, *41*, 293–312. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2010.01642.x

Skokova, Y., Pape, U., & Krasnopolskaya, I. (2018). The non-profit sector in today's Russia: Between confrontation and co-optation. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *70*, 531–563. doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2018.1447089

Tandon, R. (1992). *NGOs and civil society*. Institute for Development Studies.

Toepler, S. (2010). Government funding policies. In B. Seaman & D. Young (Eds.), *Handbook of research on nonprofit economics and management.* Edward Elgar.

Watson, S., & Burles, R. (2018). Regulating NGO funding: Securitizing the political. *International Relations.* doi.org/10.1177/0047117818782604