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Department of Political Science and Public Administration

THE EVALUATION OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPACT OF COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGIES IN NIGERIA

Master Thesis

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Turkish Abstract : Bu tez, terörle mücadele stratejilerinin vatandaşların sosyal ve siyasi katılımını nasıl etkilediğini, Nijerya'ya odaklanarak inceliyor. Terörle mücadele, toplumsal uyum, yönetişim, insan hakları ve kanıta dayalı politika yapma arasındaki karmaşık ilişkileri araştırıyor. Araştırma, Nijeryalıları güçlendirmek ve barışçıl, demokratik bir toplum oluşturmak için politika yapıcılara ve sivil topluma uygulanabilir öngörüler sağlamayı amaçlıyor

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that in the preparation of this thesis, scientific ethical rules have been followed, the works of other people have been referenced in accordance with the scientific norms if used, there is no falsification in the used data, any part of the thesis has not been submitted to this university or any other university as another thesis.

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SUMMARY

In the face of contemporary threats, counterterrorism strategies are a cornerstone of national security. Yet, a crucial question remains unanswered: how do these strategies impact citizen participation in social and political life, particularly in nations like Nigeria grappling with ongoing challenges? This master thesis dives into this under-explored territory, investigating the interplay between counterterrorism practices and citizen engagement in Nigeria.

By delving into the complex relationship between counterterrorism and societal cohesion, governance structures, human rights protections, and the vital role of evidence-based policy making, this research aims to illuminate the effectiveness of these strategies. Ultimately, it seeks to empower Nigerians and foster a peaceful, democratic society. Through this investigation, the thesis aspires to generate actionable insights and recommendations for policymakers and civil society organizations, empowering them to navigate the critical intersection of counterterrorism and citizen engagement in Nigeria.

Keywords: Counter-terrorism strategies, State-Society Relations, Terrorism, Nigeria, Boko Haram

ÖZET

Çağda tehditlerle karşı karşıya kalındığında, terörle mücadele stratejileri ulusal güvenliğin temel taşı haline gelmiştir. Ancak, yine de cevaplanmamış kritik bir soru var: Bu stratejiler, özellikle Nijerya gibi devam eden zorluklarla boğuşan ülkelerde vatandaşların sosyal ve siyasi hayata katılımını nasıl etkiler? Bu yüksek lisans tezi, keşfedilmemiş bu alana derinlemesine iniyor ve Nijerya'daki terörle mücadele uygulamaları ile vatandaş katılımı arasındaki etkileşimi araştırıyor.

Terörle mücadele ile toplumsal uyum, yönetim yapıları, insan hakları koruması ve kanıta dayalı politika yapmanın hayati rolü arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiye derinlemesine inerek, bu araştırma söz konusu stratejilerin etkinliğini aydınlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Nihayetinde Nijeryalıları güçlendirmeyi ve barışçıl, demokratik bir toplum yaratmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu araştırma yoluyla tez, politika yapıcılar ve sivil toplum kuruluşları için uygulanabilir öngörüler ve öneriler üretmeyi, onlara Nijerya'daki terörle mücadele ve vatandaş katılımının kritik kesişim noktasında yol göstermeyi arzulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Terörle Mücadele stratejiler , Devlet-Toplum İlişkileri, Terörizm, Nijerya, Boko Haram

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACSA	**:**	Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreement
AFRICOM	**:**	African Command
AGF	**:**	Attorney General of the Federation
AMEP	**:**	Africa Military Education Program
AMLA	**:**	Money Laundering Act
CT	**:**	Counter Terrorism
CTC	**:**	The Counter-Terrorism Centre
DSS	**:**	The Department of State Services
FIU	**:**	The Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit
FMF	**:**	Foreign Military Financing
GCTF	**:**	Global Counter-terrorism Forum
GIABA	**:**	Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa
HSC	**:**	Human Security Collective
ICCT	**:**	International Centre for Counter-Terrorism
IEDs	**:**	Improvised Explosive Devices
IMET	**:**	International Military Education and Training
IS	**:**	Islamic State
ISIS	**:**	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISWAP	**:**	Islamic State West Africa Province
JAS	**:**	Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad
MEND	**:**	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MNJTF	**:**	Multinational Joint Task Force
NACTEST	**:**	National Counter Terrorism Strategy
NADECO	**:**	National Democratic Coalition
NAF	**:**	Nigerian Armed Forces
NALICON	**:**	National Liberation Coalition
NCTC	**:**	The National Counter Terrorism Center
NEDC	**:**	North East Development Commission
NSA	**:**	National Security Adviser
NSC	**:**	National Sanctions Committee
ONSA	**:**	Office of the National Security Adviser
PCNI	**:**	Presidential Committee on North East Initiatives

PINE	**:**	Presidential Initiative on Northeast
PSC	**:**	Peace and Security Council
SOFA	**:**	Status of Forces Agreement
SSI	**:**	Safe School Initiative
SSS	**:**	State Security Service
TPA	**:**	Terrorism Prevention Act
TSCTP	**:**	Trans Saharan Counter-terrorism Partnership
UAVs	**:**	Unmanned Aerial Vehicles
UK	**:**	United Kingdom
UN	**:**	United Nations
UNCTITF	**:**	UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force
UNDP	**:**	United Nations Development Programme
UNOCT	**:**	United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism
UNODC	**:**	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes
US	**:**	United States
VSF	**:**	The Victim Support Fund
WFP	**:**	The World Food Programme

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PREFACE

I would like to express my gratitude to Rahmat Ullah for his support, throughout the entirety of this thesis. I would also like to extend my appreciation to my family for their encouragement and understanding during this journey.

INTRODUCTION

Topic

Traditionally, counter-terrorism strategies have been subscribed to the belief that the effective eradication of terrorism requires aggressive measures and military interventions to combat the perceived threats. The work at hand focuses on an issue at the heart of this topic; By exploring the intersection of counterterrorism and state-society relations. This study examines the effects of counter-terrorism strategies on citizens' involvement in social and political activities in Nigeria. Our research takes a deep look into these strategies and their unintended consequences as well as their impact on society. Through a comprehensive analysis based on a constructionist lens, we analyze how governmental perceptions of security threats shape the development and implementation of counterterrorism policies. By integrating prior research and utilizing qualitative research methods, the thesis aims to offer practical findings for policy-making based on evidence, with the ultimate goal of empowering Nigerians and promoting a peaceful and democratic society.

Research Focus

The research at hand aims to tackle a problem at the intersection of counterterrorism and state-society relations and engagement in Western Africa specifically Nigeria. Although there is considerable literature on the topic of counterterrorism there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of how counterterrorism strategies influence and impact citizens involvement in social and political activities in Nigeria. The research problem highlights the lack of comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria. Despite implementing various counterterrorism measures in Nigeria, knowledge gaps exist in understanding which strategies are truly effective in combating terrorism. Without a thorough assessment of the effectiveness of these strategies, policymakers may struggle to allocate resources efficiently and tailor interventions to address specific threats.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the insufficient knowledge regarding the broader societal and political implications of these strategies. Beyond their immediate impact on security,

counterterrorism strategies can have far-reaching societal and political consequences. These may include effects on civil liberties, community trust in government institutions, and the overall functioning of society. As well as discussing knowledge gaps, it is also necessary to consider the limited insight into the impact of counterterrorism measures on societal cohesion. Counter-terrorism measures can occasionally unintentionally exacerbate social divisions or alienate certain communities, leading to increased tensions and reduced societal cohesion. Understanding how these measures affect different segments of society is crucial for fostering Inclusivity and social harmony, yet this aspect remains understudied in the Nigerian context.

Moreover, a key point to note is the inadequate assessment of the effects on governance structures and human rights. Counter-terrorism efforts can intersect with governance structures and human rights in complex ways. For instance, measures aimed at enhancing security may sometimes come at the expense of civil liberties or due process rights. Without thorough assessment and monitoring, there is a risk of undermining democratic norms and institutions. However, there currently needs to be more research examining the specific effects of counterterrorism strategies on governance structures and human rights protections in Nigeria.

Another aspect to examine is the need for evidence-based policymaking to improve counterterrorism efforts. To effectively combat terrorism while upholding democratic principles and protecting human rights, policymakers require robust empirical evidence to inform their decisions. Without a solid evidence base, there is a risk of implementing ineffective or counterproductive strategies. Therefore, there is a pressing need for research that generates actionable insights and facilitates evidence-based policy making in the realm of counterterrorism in Nigeria.

To bring it all together, this study examines how different counterterrorism strategies influence the social and political lives of citizens in Nigeria aiming to contribute to creating informed and effective policies that empower Nigerians and serve to build a peaceful and democratic society. The focal point of this research is to address a problem at the intersection of counterterrorism and state-society relations in Western Africa, particularly Nigeria. The goal is to contribute actionable insights that will inform evidence-based policy making aimed at

empowering Nigerians and fostering a peaceful democratic society. In light of the above problem statement, the research question for this study would be: How do counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria affect state-society relations and citizen participation in social and political activities, and how can evidence-based policy making be utilized to address these challenges?

Purpose and Importance

The main purpose of this study is to investigate and evaluate the impact of counterterrorism strategies on citizens' involvement in social and political activities in Nigeria, particularly focusing on their influence on societal cohesion, governance structures, human rights protections, and evidence-based policy making. The study seeks to address the lack of comprehensive understanding of which strategies are effective in combating terrorism and how they affect broader societal and political implications. With this study, we also aim to fill in the literature gap and contribute to the understanding of how counterterrorism practices shape the opportunities and challenges Nigerians face when they try to engage in their communities and political systems. By taking a deeper look into counterterrorism strategies we assess their effectiveness and potential impacts on meaningful socio-political participation in Nigeria. Ultimately we hope to provide insights and recommendations for policymakers and civil society organizations that positively influence citizen engagement and participation. The past decade has seen the rapid development of many terrorist activities in many African countries. This research aims to fill in an important literature gap in the scholarship, we address existing gaps by analyzing and evaluating strategies for counterterrorism.

The importance of this research can be summed up under the following main points. First, this research is important because it provides an assessment of counterterrorism strategies thus addressing the lack of comprehensive understanding of these strategies' impact on citizens' sociopolitical lives. Second, a lack of examination of the effects of counterterrorism strategies on civil liberties can increase the risk of undermining the intersection of counterterrorism efforts with governance and human rights protections manifested in citizens' involvement in social and political activities. Third, the research focuses on an evaluative approach to the topic and aims to provide actionable insights for evidence-based policy making.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

In this study, there are several research questions and hypotheses that will be addressed. The main research question is as follows:

How do counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria influence state-society relations and citizen participation in social and political activities, and how can evidence-based policy making be utilized to address these challenges?

The supporting questions are as follows:

1. What are the various counterterrorism strategies implemented in Nigeria?

2. How do these counterterrorism strategies impact societal cohesion in Nigeria?

3. How do these strategies affect governance structures and human rights protections in Nigeria?

4. How do counterterrorism measures influence citizen engagement in social and political activities in Nigeria?

5. What are the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian citizens regarding the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies?

6. How can evidence-based policy making be integrated to address the sociopolitical challenges arising from counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria?

For this thesis, we hypothesize the following main assertion:

Counter-terrorism strategies in Nigeria significantly impact state-society relations and citizen participation in social and political activities.

Research Framework and Methodology

The theoretical foundation of this study rests on Constructivism theory. This theory in the field of international relations examines how state behavior and global results are influenced by

social norms, identities, and concepts. When applied to counterterrorism, the constructivist theory can be used to assess how the official government's views on security threats, perceptions of terrorist group identities, and societal norms affect the development and execution of counterterrorism tactics in Nigeria. It also provides insights into how these tactics influence social cohesion and governance structures. This study is framed within the following conceptual framework allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the topic, counterterrorism, social and political participation.

This study is exploratory and interpretive in nature. It follows a case study design with an in-depth analysis of counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria. By employing qualitative modes of inquiry, we attempt to illuminate the effects of the different counterterrorism strategies on Nigeria's socio-political participation. The research data in this thesis will be drawn from the already existing body of literature on the topic. Sources like books and journal articles will be the primary sources of knowledge on which we base our study. A critical evaluation of a collection of sources will be used to elaborate and build on the existing body of knowledge, shedding light on the dynamics of securitization, human-based counterterrorism strategies, and their particular effects on the social and political participation of the people in Nigeria.

CHAPTER ONE
DEFINITION OF TERMS AND BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Operational Definition

Counter-Terrorism Strategies: These are political or military actions designed to prevent, curb or eliminate the acts of terrorism (Stigall et al., 2019).

Terrorism: This is the unlawful use of violence and intimidation against civilian to achieve a political or religious goal (Boaz, 2015)

Policies: These are deliberate systems of guidelines that guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes (Office Publications, 2018).

Socio-Political: Relating to, is of, or involving a combination of social and political factors (Webster dictionary, n.d)

1.2 Literature Review

This literature review will provide a brief overview of the main resources used in this study. It will be divided based on the outline of the thesis body. First, an overview of the existing literature on terrorism and terrorist groups in Nigeria will be presented. This part represents a historical background of terrorism in Nigeria, focusing on groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP. Their emergence, evolution, and how they operate in terms of the processes from recruitment to violent acts of terror will be examined. To understand the context of counterterrorism in Nigeria, it is important to consider the historical background of terrorism in the country and the strategies implemented by the state.

The next chapter will focus on the state's side and its implemented counterterrorism strategies. Aspects of legal frameworks and policy making will be explained. For the fourth and last chapter, the focus will be centered around elaborating on our findings and making interpretations of the government responses and counterterrorism measures. We will evaluate the

effectiveness of these strategies by looking deeply at their impacts on society and their socio-political engagement. Finally, we will make conclusions intending to provide recommendations for the development of counterterrorism strategies that foster inter-generational socio-political engagement, ultimately pushing for the re-framing of counterterrorism narratives in Nigeria.

In the article "The Evolution of Boko Haram" Gray and Adeakin (2015) hypothesized that Boko Haram can be most effectively comprehended as a specific expression of Islamism, particularly as a missionary, activist, and jihadist movement. The document delves into the evolution of Boko Haram through various stages, initially emerging as a sub-state missionary activism group and eventually evolving into a jihadist entity. It underscores the shortcomings of Nigerian intelligence agencies in adequately addressing the danger posed by Boko Haram, attributing these failures to internal obstacles and the absence of unified strategies. Gray's publication contributes to the existing literature by examining the emergence and development process of Boko Haram, recognizing significant changes in belief systems, strategies, and goals. In his analysis, he outlines important stages of the terrorist group's development and offers an understanding of the reasons behind Boko Haram's evolution. Additionally, it evaluates the shortcomings of Nigerian intelligence bodies and their influence on speculated changes in Boko Haram, emphasizing deficiencies in both military and civilian knowledge, internal competition among agencies, and a lack of collaboration between intelligence organizations within Nigeria.

Zachary (2012) in an article titled "Boko Haram: The Rise, success, and Continued Efficacy of the Insurgency in Nigeria" focused primarily on examining the reasons behind Boko Haram's emergence and sustained success in Nigeria, with a specific emphasis on the group's violent, ideology-based campaign that has had a significant impact on the country. The argument put forward in the article centers around how despite potential suppression efforts, Boko Haram has not only been able to maintain its activities but also expand and develop as an organization, posing a grave threat to Nigeria's stability and security. Furthermore, the historical formation of Nigeria by British colonialists through the amalgamation of diverse nation-states with varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds is discussed. This exploration connects this historical background to current circumstances in Nigeria, particularly highlighting the Nigerian government’s role in addressing crises caused by groups like Boko Haram.

Ani and Chukwu (2014) in their article titled "Counterterrorism Operations In Nigeria" draws our attention to the need for Nigeria to enhance its technology and intelligence capabilities to effectively combat terrorism and insurgency. The authors also discuss and emphasize the importance of developing advanced technology, improving intelligence gathering, and promoting peace education to address the challenges posed by terrorist activities in the country. Aiming to inform effective policy-making the authors go further to suggest strategies for enhancing peace education and promoting ethical religious socialization for conflict management in Nigerian society.

Another source that considers the counter-terrorism strategies implemented by the Nigerian government to face terrorist groups is the article "The Nigerian Government Response In The Northeast" by Kurtzer (2020). He points out that the Nigerian government's actions in response to the humanitarian crisis in Northeast Nigeria lack meaningful understanding of humanitarian operations. The article argues that there is a need for improved civil-military relations, adherence to international humanitarian law, and increased engagement with local media and humanitarian organizations to address the urgent needs in the region.

Comolli (2017) in her article “Terrorism and Counterterrorism In Africa” discusses the factors needed to fight terrorism in Africa. She argues for a multidimensional approach to this security threat that goes beyond military actions. In her view, military operations are necessary but are not fully effective on their own. By exploring various aspects Comolli emphasizes the interconnectedness of terrorism with so many socio-economic factors that can foster the development of terrorist groups. Moreover, in her work, the author concludes that the traditional state-centric approach to national security issues is state-centric. This approach may not always align with the African context according to Comolli as she proposes that counterterrorism efforts should focus on promoting the legitimacy of central government institutions and improving the state-society relationship and dynamics.

More on counterterrorism and counterterrorism strategies we take a look at the article titled "Efficacy of counter-terrorism cooperation: A critical appraisal of Nigeria–United States counter-terrorism cooperation" by Owojori et al. (2023). The authors attempt to evaluate the

effectiveness of the counter-terrorism cooperation between Nigeria and the United States. The authors also aim to critically assess the strategies, mechanisms, and outcomes of this collaboration in combating terrorism. This article contributes to the scholarship on the topic through its in-depth analysis of the Nigeria–United States counter-terrorism cooperation. By providing a critical appraisal, the article offers valuable insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the existing partnership. Additionally, the article suggests recommendations for enhancing the counter-terrorism cooperation between the two countries, thereby contributing to the academic discourse on international counter-terrorism efforts.

Cronin (2010) in her article "The evolution of counter-terrorism" argues that there is a need to assess whether tactics will ultimately triumph over strategy in the fight against terrorism. In her article, she explores the dynamic interplay between tactical responses to immediate security threats and overarching strategic approaches to counter-terrorism. She hypothesized that while tactical measures play a crucial role in disrupting terrorist activities, a comprehensive strategic framework is essential to effectively address the root causes of terrorism and prevent future threats. Cronin emphasizes the importance of balancing proactive tactics with resilient strategic planning to combat terrorism effectively. The contribution of this article to the literature on counter-terrorism lies in its nuanced analysis of the evolving nature of terrorist threats and the corresponding shifts in counter-terrorism tactics. By highlighting the complexities of modern security challenges and the need for a holistic approach to counter-terrorism, Cronin's work adds valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on how best to confront and mitigate the risks posed by terrorism in the contemporary world.

Ultimately, this literature review delves into the scholarship on the issue of counterterrorism and counterterrorism strategies in Africa, specifically in Nigeria. It takes a look at sources dealing with terrorist groups like Boko Haram, government responses, and counterterrorism strategies and their effects on society and its relation with the state. By critically evaluating existing literature, this thesis aims to fill in the gaps and contribute to the development of effective society-based counterterrorism approaches that foster intergenerational socio-political engagement and ultimately lead to a reframing of counterterrorism narratives in Nigeria.

1.3 Contextual Background

Terrorism has been a constant security threat to many African states. Nigeria, Africa's largest nation by population, has witnessed firsthand the effects of terrorist groups. Terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have terrorized citizens and led to their displacement and death at times. In response, the Nigerian state has put in place counterterrorism strategies to combat these groups and their acts of horror. Military interventions, deradicalization programs as well as increased border security and surveillance measures are some of the strategies that Nigeria has implemented to protect its citizens. While counterterrorism strategies are necessary not all of them are successful or effective on a short or long-term basis. This thesis will explore key aspects of the context of counterterrorism and state-society relations. socioeconomic factors, governance issues, religious dynamics, and regional instability will be examined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges surrounding counterterrorism in Nigeria and inform the development of more comprehensive future counterterrorism strategies.

CHAPTER TWO
TERRORISM IN NIGERIA: BOKO HARAM

2.1 Short Historical Overview of Terrorism in Nigeria

The objective of this study is to offer a brief historical overview and exploration of terrorism in Nigeria by elaborating on illustrating historical examples. It is important to understand the historical context of terrorism in Nigeria to gain insight into its current manifestations and implications. This will help us build a systematic and chronological understanding of the patterns and motivations behind terrorist activities in Nigeria.

Terrorism in Nigeria can be traced back to the 1990s, although it is the start of violence for political purposes. The event that sparked terrorism as a political tool in the country was a series of bomb attacks that targeted Nigerian military figures institutions and public spaces as well between 1994 and 1997. The series of bombs cause is debatable as the ruling regime at the time The Abacha regime blamed opposition or pro-democracy groups such as NADECO and NALICON (the National Democratic Coalition and the National Liberation Coalition) however these groups argue that the bombings were carried out by the regime itself. Many victims fell due to the attacks, from journalists, and politicians to military figures and activists. These events created public confusion about the origin and motivations of the attacks. In addition to spreading fear and a sense of insecurity throughout the country. Albert (2005, p. 37-56) reflects on the bomb explosions in Abacha Nigeria in a special research issue by the same title. He states that the problem started with the annulment of the presidential election and points the finger at General Abacha who "seized power from Sonekan on 17th November 1993 and resorted to the use of state terrorism to contend with the challenges posed by the human rights and pro-democracy activists who fought for the de-annulment of the 1993 elections.

Albert (2005) considers that Terrorism assumed its second stage of maturity in Nigeria after 1993. The second stage of terrorism in Nigeria is mainly associated with the terrorist group Boko Haram. Britannica the online encyclopedia acknowledges 26th July 2009 as the start of

Boko Haram's violent insurgency. The encyclopedia (2024) notes that "Boko Haram gained widespread exposure in 26th July 2009 when, after an incident in which group members were allegedly subjected to the excessive use of force by police and then were unable to get an official investigation into the matter, the group launched attacks on police posts and other government installations, killing scores of police officers."

2.2 Emergence and Evolution of Terrorist Groups

Many factors come together to act as drivers of the formation of terrorist groups. In Nigeria, socioeconomic, political, religious, and security factors contributed to the emergence and evolution of terrorist groups. Following independence in 1st October 1960, Nigeria faced political instability, military coups, and ethnic tensions. These factors arguably created fertile ground for the rise of extremist groups such as Boko Haram (Nwolise, 2005). On terrorism in Nigeria, "the phenomenon is not new in principle, it has only recently graduated to a "professional" level. (Nwolise, 2005). The author goes on to describe incidents she heard of as a child growing up in the 1960s in Nigeria, she says that " as primary school children in the early 1960s, we heard of and saw political thugs chasing opponents of their paymasters out of homes and murdering them, they burnt the houses of their paymaster's opponents, and some of them were paid to kidnap, torture and kill, these are all acts of terrorism, the difference today is that the phenomenon has moved from thuggery, kidnapping, and murder through armed robbery to bombing, hijacking, and high-class political assassinations."

Relevant factors that drive terrorism in Nigeria are "In consonant with the submissions above, Akande (2015) posits that several factors have been identified by analysts and scholars as being responsible for terrorism in Nigeria. These factors range from corruption, poverty, unemployment, religious extremism, and illiteracy among others." The complex web of different factors behind the insurgency of terrorism and terrorist groups combine the role of government and its failings, radical idologies, easy to access weapons and self-serving politicians, in addition to external actors who can fuel the violence to serve a specific agenda. "The emergence of terrorism in Nigeria is driven by factors such as Bad governance, Religious extremism, the

proliferation of small arms and light weapons, political greed and foreign influence." (Oladimeji, 2019)

To properly study the emergence and evolution of terrorist groups in Nigeria we must take a look at the historical background and context of the country. We can begin first by understanding the country's pre-independence phase and then go on to its post-independence phase. Diving deep into Nigeria's history, we can say that the country was created by British colonialization, through combining diverse independent nation-states with linguistic and cultural differences to form one entity. Initially, the country was divided into northern and Southern regions with the British officials governing indirectly through appointed representatives in the Muslim north and mostly Christian south. During the colonial rule, ethnic and religious tensions and divisions were heightened in Nigeria due to the imposition of British policies and the forced amalgamation of various ethnic groups. Tribal loyalty was and still is of critical importance in the Nigerian culture it can even override nationality further exacerbating the north-south divide. Social unrest was fueled by economic disparities, and political marginalization which led to frequent coups, counter-coups, and civil war over power and wealth distribution.

Shifting over to the post-independence phase, corruption became deeply rooted in Nigerian politics and governance. The Nigerian independence in 1st October 1960 was marked by ethnic violence and power struggles. The military rule, dependent on oil revenues, led to centralization and the division of Nigeria into smaller states. Nevertheless, religious-based identities were strong and deeply rooted in the formation of political identities especially in Nothern Nigeria. After the military rule ended in 29th May 1999 there was a start for the return to peaceful civilian democratic rule however the legacy of socioeconomic challenges, and ethnic and religious tensions remained obstacles in the country's political and social road to stability. Colonial legacies of division and social tensions paved the ground for the emergence of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram. Fault lines that contributed to a proper climate for terrorism to rise and develop run deep through the social, political, and religious fabric of Nigeria not only its historical background. Political tension and poverty persisted through the post-independence phase in Nigeria, resulting in deeper divides and inequalities between the rich south and the increasing poverty in the north. Boko Haram played on the fragile and divided social identities to

make root for their message of violent jihad and martyrdom. Elkaim (2012) conveyed that Boko Haram's message of violent jihad and martyrdom resonates with historical tensions and sources of friction within Nigerian society. The group's ideology finds fertile ground in the context of poverty, power struggles, and historical grievances. The exploitation of ethnic and religious divisions by Boko Haram are used to further their agenda of violence and radicalization as well as garner support and recruit members.

Bringing to focus the role that the government played in the emergence and rise of terrorism, the lack of governance and transparency from the Nigerian government in addressing issues of corruption and socioeconomic challenges created an environment conducive to the growth of terrorist groups like Boko Haram. A 2011 report by the United States Department of State which notes that "Corruption and lack of capacity within the National Police Force have hindered the government's ability to respond effectively to security and terrorist threats within Nigeria's borders and that Nigeria lacked communications, surveillance, and vehicle support to detect and apprehend terrorists and criminals transiting the country's borders," all of which offers Boko Haram a crucial operational advantage" (Elkaim, 2012). The legal constraints faced by the Nigerian government to the constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion leading to legal ambiguity and more security concerns. These factors influenced the emergence of terrorism in Nigeria and helped terrorist groups like Boko Haram not only emerge but also rise and become a security threat to Nigeria and its nation, posing a significant challenge to the stability of the country and the region as a whole (Elkaim, 2012).

2.3 Profile of Major Terrorist Organizations

For this study, the attention will be focused on Boko Haram as a main study example and reference however it is worth mentioning that there are other notable terrorist groups in Nigeria. The Ansaru group, which is considered a splinter group of Boko Haram known for carrying out kidnappings and attacks on foreigners. The group is affiliated with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and focuses on targeting Western interests in Nigeria and the Sahel region. In addition, there is the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) which is another splinter group of Boko Haram with strong ties to ISIS. It is located primarily in the Lake Chad region and is known for

brutal attacks on civilians and military forces. Lastly, MEND (the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta) should also be mentioned as a notable group in Nigeria, although its activities are more focused on the Niger Delta region and the fight for resource control rather than religious extremism and has been largely inactive in recent years, with some factions engaging in criminal activities.

2.3.1 Boko Haram emergence and evolution

It is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by Boko Haram and describe the group's origins, goals, leadership figures, and structure. The term or name Boko Haram translates to"Western education is forbidden" It is a mix of words inspired from Hausa and Arabic languages. Boko means "school" in Hausa and Haram comes from the word forbidden in Arabic. However their official name is different, the official name is mainly in Arabic which is: "Boko Haram Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad" which translates to "the Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad." The group aims to abolish Western education and government and establish an Islamic state, they preach against all Western-based ideas, lifestyles, etc, and want to establish Sharia law in Nothern Nigeria.

The group was founded on 29th July 2002 by Muhammad Yusuf, who initially preached peacefully for a return to Islam and the rejection of Western values in Borno State, Nigeria by setting up a religious center in Maiduguri. The group started to gain attention after the attacks of 24th December 2003 on the Yunusari Local Government Secretariat and a police station in Yobe state. Armed assaults were carried out against the government and police officials in a clear message of defiance to the Nigerian Government's authority. The attacks brought the attention of the public to the group and highlighted their violent tactics. Although there are no clear records in terms of lives lost the attacks resulted in casualties. As a result of this attack, the Nigerian government responded to the attacks by cracking down on the group through various measures such as arrests and crackdowns on their operations. The group became a direct urgent threat to the security and stability of Nigeria, as well as neighboring countries.

2.3.2 Phases of the evolution of Boko Haram

Boko Haram as a terrorist group can be understood as a particular manifestation of Islamism, specifically as a missionary, activist, and jihadist phenomenon. There are four main phases that Boko evolved through. The first phase consists of substate missionary. In this phase, the group was still being formed by merging various Islamist organizations in Maiduguri, Nigeria in 1995. The initial focus at this stage was to recruit and indoctrinate as many members as possible and preach against Western education as well as challenge existing Islamic legal frameworks (Gray et al., 2015).

The second phase was the substate Jihadist Islamist Organization, in which the group began to transform into a jihadist organization and established links with al-Qaeda, making the rise of the jihadist phenomenon in Nigeria between December 2003 and July 2009 (Gray et al., 2015). In the third phase, the terrorist group regrouped under Abubakar Shekau's leadership and declared affiliation with al-Qaeda, emphasizing its ideology and political objectives making way to become a National Jihadist group (Gray et al., 2015). In the fourth and last phase, Boko Haram declared its formal affiliation with other jihadist groups such as AQIM and ISIS expanding its operations beyond Nigeria into its neighboring countries Mali, Cameroon, and Chad moving from a national into a transnational jihadist organization (Gray et al., 2015).

After the death of their leader Yusuf in 2009, Boko Haram became more violent under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau marking a shift in leadership and ideology over time. The group started executing deadlier attacks and kidnappings such as the incident of The Chibok schoolgirls' abduction which gained international notoriety on 14th April 2014. The different fractures within Boko Haram in detail and affirms that "the death of the group's leader led to fractures within Boko Haram, with new factions forming regularly.

In November 2011, it was reported that the group had split into three factions; namely, a hardline ideological sect led by a close associate of Yusuf's named Abubakar Shekau, a second faction that was mostly intent on bringing about political changes in the north, and another that

used the Boko Haram brand to further its criminal enterprise" (Elkaaim, 2014). These factions were at odds with each other and differed in tactics and goals, "One sect, calling itself the Yusufiya Islamic Movement, disagrees with the direction Boko Haram has taken since the death of Yusuf, allegedly because of the more radical nature of the group's activities after coming under the influence of Abubakar Shekau. They believe in maintaining the systematic approach that Yusuf introduced and are thought to be the "older generation" of Yusuf's followers. In turn, Shekau holds sway with the younger members. To complicate matters further, another group has emerged named "Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan (Ansaru)," which translates to "Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa." The group has expressed displeasure with the current direction of Boko Haram's tactics, especially its willingness to commit violent acts against fellow Muslims. The emergence of a faction from within Boko Haram that rejects a takfiri strategy promoting violence against other Muslims shows that there are those within the organization, and Boko Haram's potential pool of recruits, that are more concerned with bringing a degree of dignity and respectability to their daily life than with bringing about the fall of the government (Elkaaim, 2014).

Boko Haram has evolved, adapting its leadership and tactics, and becoming influenced by external factors such as al-Qaeda. This evolution has enabled the group to expand its reach and impact in Nigeria and beyond. Figure 1 gives a visual of the areas with varying concentration of Boko Haram attacks over the period of seven years (2009-2016) (Olukoya, 2016). According to Blanchard (2014), the Boko Haram insurgency has displaced over 2.8 million Nigerian people and killed over 15,000 people.

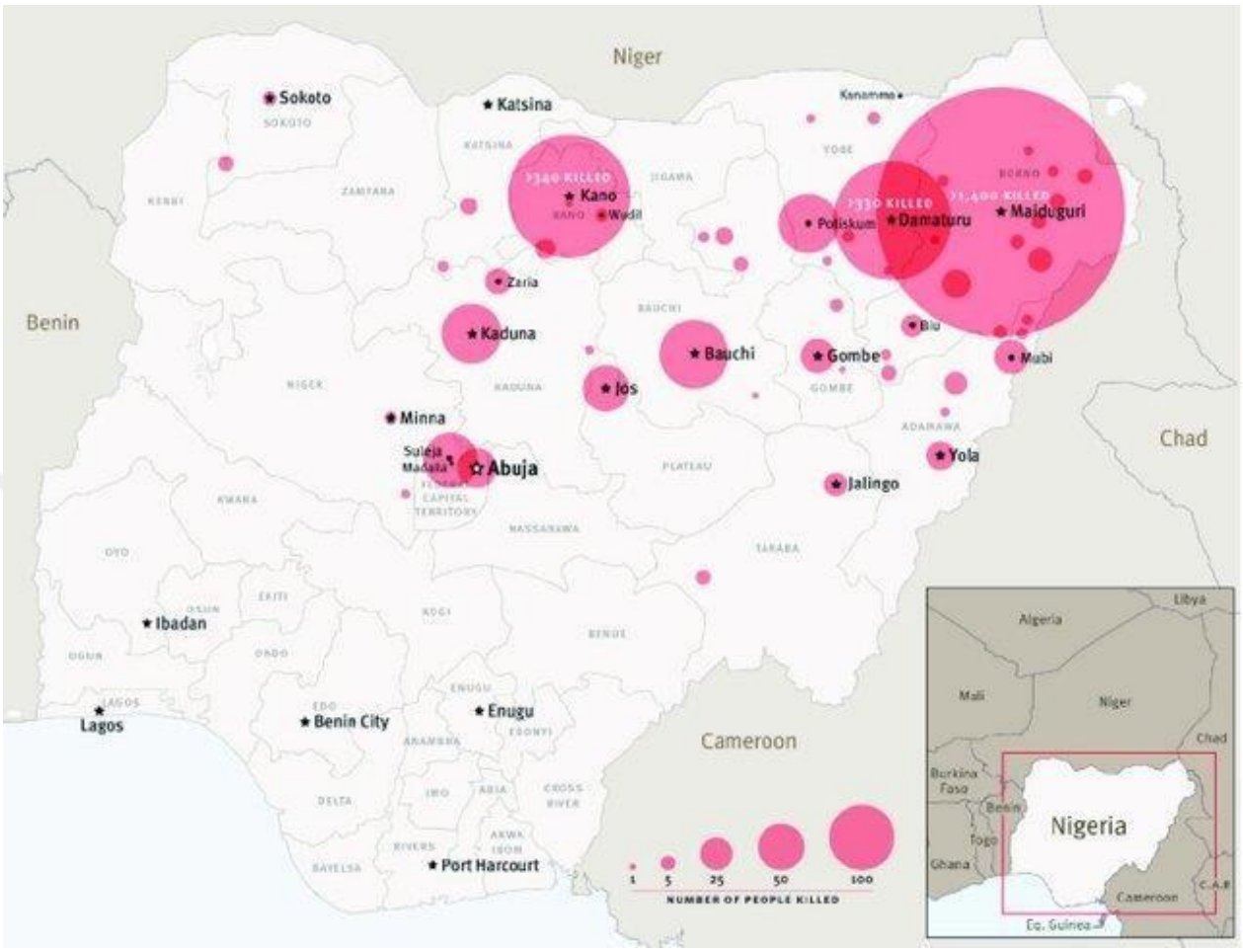


Figure 1 : Map of Nigeria indicating the concentration of Boko Haram attacks

Source: (Olukoya, 2016, p. 162)

2.3.3 Ideological and motivational factors driving Boko Haram

A crucial aspect to consider when studying the ideological and motivational factors driving the terrorist activities of Boko Haram is their religious extremism and interpretations of Islam. The terrorist group adopts a radical and extreme jihadist ideology, emphasizing the use of violence, and armed terrorism to achieve its political objectives and convey its preachings and ideals. They use their misinformed interpretations of Islamic teaching to justify violence and terrorist acts against civilians, government institutions, and security forces. In specific, they adopt the ways of Salafist Political Islam and claim them as true Islamic teachings. It is in

essence the use of religious justifications for enacting violent attacks for politics and power gains. The role of religious extremism and radical interpretations of Islamic teachings play a crucial role in shaping the terrorist group's ideology and tactics.

Moreover, socioeconomic grievances such as poverty, widespread wealth discrepancies, and unemployment can fuel terrorism. The poor north in comparison to the richer south in Nigeria is a fit environment to attract individuals who want to join extremist groups for the sake of money. The lack of education, access to adequate healthcare, and employment opportunities contribute to the growing violent tendencies and act as a breeding ground for terrorism. "There is an absence of both effective civil education and civil administration in the north, and thus the northern, predominantly Muslim states are worse off than the southern states. In the northeastern Borno State, the birthplace of Boko Haram, only two percent of children younger than two years old have been vaccinated, 83 percent of young people are illiterate, and 48.5 percent of children do not go to school. The combination of these factors meets Piazza’s criteria for an ideal terrorist breeding ground. Further, since political and economic marginalization and poverty are evident along not only ethnic and geographic lines, but religious ones as well, Nigeria is more prone to acts of violence."(Elkaim, 2012)

Political marginalization coupled with the desire for self-determination by the people who hold extreme ethnic pride can exacerbate tensions and lead to membership of extreme groups. Excluding and oppressing minority groups based on their political or economic background is a major cause of terrorism within a country. (Elkaim, 2012) Nations that allow minorities to face economic hardship are creating a breeding ground for terrorism. The financial well-being of minority groups is seen as a key indicator of the likelihood of terrorist attacks. When these groups are denied opportunities to participate in politics and improve their economic standing, it can lead to the rise of extremist beliefs.

The rise of violence and ethnic tensions is yet another motivational factor driving the terrorist acts of Boko Haram in Nigeria. The group fiercely opposes Western education, viewing it and its products as a religious offense which is reflected in the chosen name of the group. The

group combines Islamic language with Hausa traditions which makes them relatable for people and connected to existing forms of protest in Nigeria. They have successfully blended local practices with radical interpretations of Islamic teachings to address existing frustrations with the ruling class. Their adopted linguistic tactic helps them mobilize support facilitates the radicalization of individuals and expands their member base.

2.3.4 Recruitment and radicalization Processes

As noted above Boko Haram plays on several sensitive points to reach its goals, one of which is the targeting of vulnerable populations, especially the youth and the unemployed. The group preys on existing ethnic and religious divides, exploiting them to gain support. Their message of jihad and martyrdom resonates with extreme and radical individuals who are often living in poverty, facing political struggles and historical injustices. The terrorist group's affiliation with major terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda has further helped them gain traction and facilitated appealing to and recruiting new members allowing them to spread their influence more.

Boko Haram uses propaganda and indoctrination techniques to convey and spread its message among the people. They use religious rhetoric to not only justify violence but also create a false sense of righteousness of the group in opposition to the portrait of the enemy which is the Nigerian government and Western influences. Thus creating fear and anger among the vulnerable segments of society that are easily influenced and brainwashed. They deliberately misinterpret religious texts to fit their extremist agendas. In addition to the over-glorification of martyrdom and portrayal of fighters as martyrs, appealing to a sense of purpose and sacrifice. Boko Haram's propaganda and indoctrination techniques manipulate religion, exploit social grievances, and glorify violence to cultivate a radicalized following.

The terrorist group Boko Haram exploits social media platforms for their online radicalization and recruitment processes. They establish their online presence to reach more people and attract them. In an article published by RAND Europe, a team of researchers led by

William Marcellino found that "Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and ISIL all use social media, albeit to varying degrees and levels of sophistication." and adds that "Social media propaganda is used to claim or publicize attacks or kidnappings, such as Boko Haram's kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls on the 14th of April 2014. The groups also use social media propaganda to criticize opponents and demonstrate their tactics." and concluded that "While all three groups use social media to attract recruits, both domestically and internationally, these online influences are often complemented by the 'offline' influences of family and peer networks. For example, evidence suggests that ISIL attracts young recruits through the influence of religious leaders."

The use of social media by Boko Haram to advance their agenda by studying their online recruitment strategy. The group's use of social media is effective due to the increased internet access in Nigeria and the ability to spread messages and control visuals quickly. They leverage social media for more than just spreading their messages. They use online platforms to radicalize and indoctrinate potential members, particularly purpose-seeking youth. The group tailors its narrative to fit the Hausa culture to resonate with the locals and reach more people. It also portrays itself as the savior entity that is strong and unified and that is capable of bringing opportunities and change for people. (Sinko, 2021)

2.3.5 Tactics and strategies employed by Boko Haram

In terms of structure, Boko Haram emerged from the merger of various Islamist organizations in Maiduguri, Nigeria, under the leadership of Muhammad Ali. With the leadership of Yusuf, the group witnessed a shift in their activities and style.

Gray et al. (2015, p.191) explained that "By 2009, following some five years of clandestine activity, Yusuf had successfully revitalized Boko Haram, which now sought to further attack and establish Islamist governance throughout all of Nigeria's twelve "Islami states." This was made clear when in late July of that year Yusuf unleashed a wave of jihadist attacks in Bauchi State in pursuit of this new political agenda. These developments, therefore, indicated a hardening in ideological outlook, tactics, and objectives, widely viewed by experts as

a direct result of Boko Haram's newly found links with al-Qaeda." Moreover, with the death of Yusuf, the group was directly impacted and had more tactical evolutions. As the group grew its structure and leader figures changed many factions surfaced and internal division appeared.

As the activities and member base of Boko Haram expanded so did their terror tactics and strategies. The group adapted its tactics as time passed making a shift from, confrontations with police and military forces to hit-and-run attacks and bombings in various institutions and civilians as well. They use terror as a tool to instill fear among the people and target governmental entities, schools, and churches. Its association with other major terrorist organizations allowed Boko Haram to elevate their tactics, and knowledge base and expand their access to sophisticated weaponry and resources. They learn from other similar groups and organizations and employ new ways to inflict violence. Suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, and attacks on security forces, civilians, and infrastructure are the preferred terror acts of the group.

They often carry out attacks on the above-mentioned places to instill fear and advance their agenda. Elkaim (2012, p.16) details more aspects of the tactical evolution of Boko Haram and underscores that " Another manifestation of Boko Haram's tactical evolution is the marked increase in acts aimed to discredit and delegitimize the Nigerian government and expose weaknesses in the security apparatus with the intention of heightening a general sense of insecurity.

On the 7th of September 2010, Boko Haram militants carried out a prison break and managed to free over 100 Boko Haram members awaiting trial on charges related to the uprising a year earlier. During the course of the raid, they freed more than 750 other prisoners and scattered leaflets promising that more violence was forthcoming. On Christmas Eve of that year, Boko Haram initiated a campaign of improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, first targeting Christian Nigerians, and later 2011 election candidates of all ethnicities and religions that it did not accept. The use of IEDs has come to replace targeted shootings from motorbikes as the hallmark of Boko Haram attacks."

The group has a strategic approach to their goals and mission, they progressed and moved from peaceful activism to violent jihad as they are influenced by broader jihadist agendas. Forming global connections with al-Qaeda, ISIS, and others allowed the group to terrorize and export their violent acts beyond the borders of Nigeria into other countries. Elkaim (2012, p.18) summed up the cooperation with other groups as follows "The sum of Boko Haram's tactical evolution points to cooperation with ideologically similar groups that operate throughout Africa. Until they implemented the use of suicide bombings, only al-Shabaab in Somalia (now an al-Qaeda affiliate) and AQIM had used the tactic in Africa. Suicide attacks are seen as a major obstacle for terror groups to overcome in their radicalization process, but if the case of al-Shabaab is any indication, a necessary precondition before becoming an official al-Qaeda affiliate. This development is of increased importance because by some accounts Boko Haram's uses of explosives have reportedly grown increasingly sophisticated and bear hallmarks of bomb making techniques used by Al Qaeda affiliates. Further, the kidnapping of European citizens was interpreted as a clear sign of Boko Haram's shift to the adoption of classic al-Qaeda-style methods and tactics and underscores their augmented ideology where they have essentially bought into the latter's narrative and cause" .

The group leverages ambiguity and government resentment to not only make it difficult for the government to identify leadership figures and take measures against them but also to alienate the people against the government and recruit more members. Elkaim (2012, p. 28) highlights that " Beyond instilling a strong sense of alienation from the government, Boko Haram has also succeeded in alienating Nigerian Muslims from Nigerian Christians. The outbreak of violence along religious lines, framed with religious language, has played into Boko Haram's hands and given them the justification and recruits to intensify the conflict and turn it into a religious war."

To sum up, the terrorist group proved to be highly adaptable with its evolving tactics and strategies and external influences. It remains a great security challenge to the Nigerian government and other countries.

2.3.6 Financing and external support networks

Shedding light on the sources of funding for terrorist groups is of great importance as it allows for a better understanding of the external support networks and the ability to sustain operations and expand capabilities. The group thrives on domestic grievances as well as its global network of external connections with other jihadist groups. Such alliances provide Boko Haram with critical resources and capabilities, transforming it from a local threat to a more sophisticated organization.

Al-Qaeda group is a strong supporter of Boko Haram, it provides it with weapons and training and a jihadist mentorship as a form of ideological guidance. Thus helping shape the group and solidify an extremist ideology and radicalization of its members. Cross-border cooperation is another important aspect of alliances with other terrorist groups. Building a network of similar-minded groups allows them to share resources and tactics leading to improving their overall effectiveness.

Gray (2015, p. 194) quotes a statement by the head of the US African Command (Africom), General Carter Ham and elaborates as follows "Ham also related that AQIM and Boko Haram are especially of concern, stating that "in the terms of the indications we have ... they are most likely sharing funds, training, and explosive material." Moreover, weapons and other equipment captured from Boko Haram further indicate Boko Haram's growing strategic links with AQIM". These networks also act as streams of funding by broadening the financial support base to include the wealthy who are sympathetic to jihadist ideals. Aside from network-based financing, Boko Haram collects money to fund its terror activities through more terror acts like kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and smuggling. They loot and exploit the besieged communities under their control to gain more funds.

Boko Haram demonstrated a large capacity for tactical evolution, a wide external support network that allows them to sustain their activities, expand their reach grow stronger, and inflict

more terror and violence on innocent people. The group's ability to leverage connections with jihadist groups, engage in criminal activities for funding, and benefit from international cooperation underscores the complex web of support that sustains its insurgency in Nigeria. In the words of Elkaim (2012, p. 15), " Boko Haram presents a wholly new challenge for Nigeria, in that they can access the assistance of other established jihadist groups and networks from whom they can acquire weapons, knowledge, finance, and ideological support".

2.3.7 ISWAP's origins, ideology and activities

Another major active terrorist group in Nigeria is ISWAP, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). This extremist group, born from a splinter faction of Boko Haram, has pledged allegiance to the global Islamic State organization. ISWAP seeks to establish a strict Islamic caliphate in the region, employing brutal tactics against civilians and military forces alike. Their violent insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin has caused immense suffering and instability, posing a significant security threat to Nigeria and its neighbors.

The group is closely affiliated with the Islamic State (IS) and adherence to a Salafi jihadist ideology. The group is listed as a terrorist group by the UN for its ties with ISIS (UN Security Council, 2020). According to the Africa Report N273 by International Crisis Group (2019) problems with the leadership of Boko Haram started due to the "increasing pressure from the Nigerian military". The report goes on to describe the shift in the leadership figures and highlights that " The group was still intact in March 2015 when Shekau pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and it took up the name Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). But a year later it fractured in two. Following the lead of Mamman Nur and Abu Musab al-Barnawi, a son of Mohammed Yusuf, a number of senior leaders split off from Shekau's forces. Nur and al-Barnawi's faction, retaining the name ISWAP, gained recognition from ISIS and attracted a growing number of militants".

According to the same report ISWAP gained control of territory around Lake Chad and launched its first independent attack in June 2016, it mentions that "Their first major independent military operation was a 3rd June 2016 attack on a Nigerien base in Bosso, a town on Lake Chad

close to the Nigerian border. It illustrated what would become ISWAP's modus operandi: a raid targeting the military, capturing weapons and supplies, without civilian casualties" (ICG, 2019). In essense, a faction of Boko Haram, led by Mamman Nur and Abu Musab al-Barnawi, pledged allegiance to ISIS and shifted away from the initial group Boko Haram. This breakaway group, now known as Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), emerged in 2016 due to leadership disputes within Boko Haram. With an estimated 3,500 to 5,000 fighters, ISWAP remains active in Nigeria, carrying out deadly attacks against both military personnel and civilians.

ISWAP adheres to the ideology of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and share a lot of similar key points. First, they both have a strict interpretation of Islam and Islamic teachings. Both groups adopt a violent interpretation of Islam aiming to establish a caliphate ruled by Sharia law. Second, both terrorist groups reject secular governments. They see existing governments in their regions as illegitimate and oppose any non religious authority. Third, they believe that violence is justified against anyone who opposes their ideology, including civilians and Muslims who do not follow their interpretation.

Clashes and fights took place between the two groups after the break up, the same (ICG, 2019) report details that "Occasional clashes still occur, particularly when Shekau's raiders seek to rob and kidnap civilians in ISWAP-controlled areas on the Nigerien and Nigerian shores of Lake Chad, as well as in the Konduga local government area in Nigeria, and ISWAP units try to fend them off". An Al Jazeera news article (2023) reported that " JAS (Boko Haram) launched two devastating attacks against ISWAP in 2022; the first killed 33 wives of ISWAP militants in Sambisa. The second was a surprise January 1 attack on its rival's armoury base at three villages by the shores of Lake Chad. An unknown number of rebels were killed in the onslaught led by Doron Bakura, a self-appointed successor to Shekau" . And that "Between February and March 2023, ISWAP launched reprisals that killed no fewer than 200 JAS fighters, women and children in parts of Borno, according to local media reports".

The key differences that distinguish ISWAP from Boko Haram, are not just at the leadership level but also their attitudes towards civilians, their religious ideology, their relationship with ISIS and their military tactics. In contrast to Boko Haram which attacks

civilians including Muslims, ISWAP is less hostile towards Muslim civilians, aiming to tax and govern them. ISWAP is selective in their application of religious justifications, they are inclined to be critical of Shekau's (a former BK leader) targeting of Muslims. While both groups pledged aligence to ISIS, Boko Haram consistently uses similar branding and outreach techniques, ISWAP is not as consistent and may be evloving in their approach as a new faction. In terms of military tactics, Boko Haram relies on traditional methods while ISWAP shows signs of adopting more sophisticated tactics. ISWAP as a group is a manifestation of the rise of the jihadist threat in Nigeria.

The IS influence over ISWAP and the strategic guidance and financial support the terrorist groups receive from their alley helped the group evolve and access sophisticated weaponery. (Barkindo, 2023) In addition, IS social media channels like YouTube were used by ISWAP for propaganda purposes to showcase executions and trainings. ISWAP grew and established itself as a strong terrorist group not only in parts of Nigeria but also in the overall Lake Chad region which consists of five countries, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Central African Republic (Barkindo, 2023).

ISWAP's approach to warfare prioritizes both movement and deadliness. They primarily rely on a multifaceted strategy consisting of guerilla warfare tactics. This translates to hit-and-run attacks, surprise ambushes, and swift raids against military outposts and checkpoints, keeping their targets off-guard. To inflict mass casualties, ISWAP strategically deploys suicide bombers, targeting both civilian populations and military personnel. Furthermore, they construct and deploy Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) to target vehicles and infrastructure, aiming to disrupt essential services and inflict widespread damage. ISWAP's brutality extends to mass kidnappings of civilians, potentially for ransom or for the purpose of forced recruitment into their ranks. This combination of tactics creates a climate of fear and instability within the areas ISWAP operates, hindering everyday life and development.

The use of technology by ISWAP has evolved and has shifted from online presence and spreading propaganda to using sophisticated tech to carry out deadly terrorist attacks and bombings. The extremist group ISWAP is developing a worrying new tactic: weaponized drones.

Research suggests they're testing these drones for delivering bombs, posing a significant threat to both military targets and civilians seeking aid. This escalation has the potential to worsen the ongoing conflict in the Lake Chad Basin. "(ISWAP) could be close to using delivery drones for attacks in the Lake Chad Basin. Weaponising and adapting unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) is a new trend in the group's operational strategy, and could worsen the conflict" (Malik, 2023). What is more, "Institute for Security Studies (ISS) research shows that ISWAP is already trialling delivery drones to carry improvised explosive devices. This includes assessing the weight that can be carried, how far they can go and how long they stay in the air. The threat goes beyond military targets and may impact humanitarian service delivery" (Malik, 2023).

ISWAP's violent insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin region rose to new levels after the death of Sheaku. Barkindo (2023) states that in June 2021, IS reportedly proposed establishing four caliphates in Nigeria's Borno state, overseen by a central Shura Council led by former ISWAP leader Abu Musab al-Barnawi. With this IS aimed to solidify ISWAP'S control in the Lake Chad region and beyond. ISWAP engages in armed clashes with the government forces in Nigeria, Niger and Chad. Their targets include the military, civilians, and government institutions. While reports suggest that there may be less targeting of civilians in comparison to Boko Haram ISWAP still carries out deadly attacks on civilians.

Attacks include targeted killings, suicide bombings and mass kidnapping so they can get ransoms or force recruitment. A news article by France24 reports that "17 people were killed in a raid on a remote village in northeast Nigeria after villagers refused to pay an illicit tax". Another incident is presented as follows "In April 2022, ISWAP jihadists killed 11 people in attacks on bars and a technical college in Geidam, days after six people were killed and 16 injured in an explosion targeting another bar in northeastern Taraba state". " An Al JAzeera report in 2020 highlighted attacks by the ISWAP terrorist groups and its impact and number of casualties, at least 20 soldiers and more than 40 civilians have been killed, and hundreds injured in twin attacks in northeast Nigeria's Borno state, residents and a civilian task force fighter said". The news report adds that "Saturday 7th June 2020, attacks in the Monguno and Nganzai areas, came just days after armed fighters killed at least 81 people in a raid on a village in a third area, Gubio".

These attacks have a devastating impact on Nigerian society as they result in deaths, kidnappings, and disruption of livelihoods. ISWAPs attacks cause significant loss of life and leave many injured. Fear of attacks can force people to flee their homes, thus disrupting local communities and economies. Violence discourages trade, investment and general economic activity in the region.

ISWAP's growing influence and territorial control in the Lake Chad region has expanded in 2021. Due to its close ties and affiliation with ISIS, ISWAP eliminated Boko Haram leader Shekau to pave the way for territorial expansion in Nigeria and Lake Chad. The terrorist group took over a key area called Sambisa after launching a successful attack on Boko Haram. A UNDP report on the conflict in Lake Chad Basin (2020-2021) affirms that " As ISWAP took over villages in and around Sambisa immediately after Shekau's death, it gave the people the options of staying or leaving" . After this ISWAP became a dominant militant group in the region although it failed to reintegrate Boko Haram fighters into its group. Although ISWAP's attacks against civilians were far less they escalated their attacks against major cities and targeted a senior military official.

ISWAP's dominance in Lake Chad appears to be waning in 2023. A major Boko Haram attack late in 2022 captured key ISWAP locations, forcing their leadership to retreat. ISWAP's counterattacks have been unsuccessful, and a prominent ISWAP commander, Kaila, defected to Boko Haram in early 2023. ISWAP's overall attack rate and expansion efforts have dropped significantly in 2023. Additionally, unlike previous years, a growing number of ISWAP militants are surrendering to authorities. While not completely defeated, ISWAP is clearly facing serious challenges. A Crisis Group Africa Briefing N196 (2024) gives an overview of the struggles faced by ISWAP recently yet highlights that although it faced struggles it still succeeded to inflict damage and carry out terrorist attacks in the region. " On average, ISWAP took responsibility for 26 attacks every month in 2020, 30 in 2021 and 38 in 2022 – a continuous rise – but for only 21 in the first nine months of 2023 combined". The report showcases the rise and deline of ISWAP activities from the tear 2020-2024 in Figure 2 and 3.

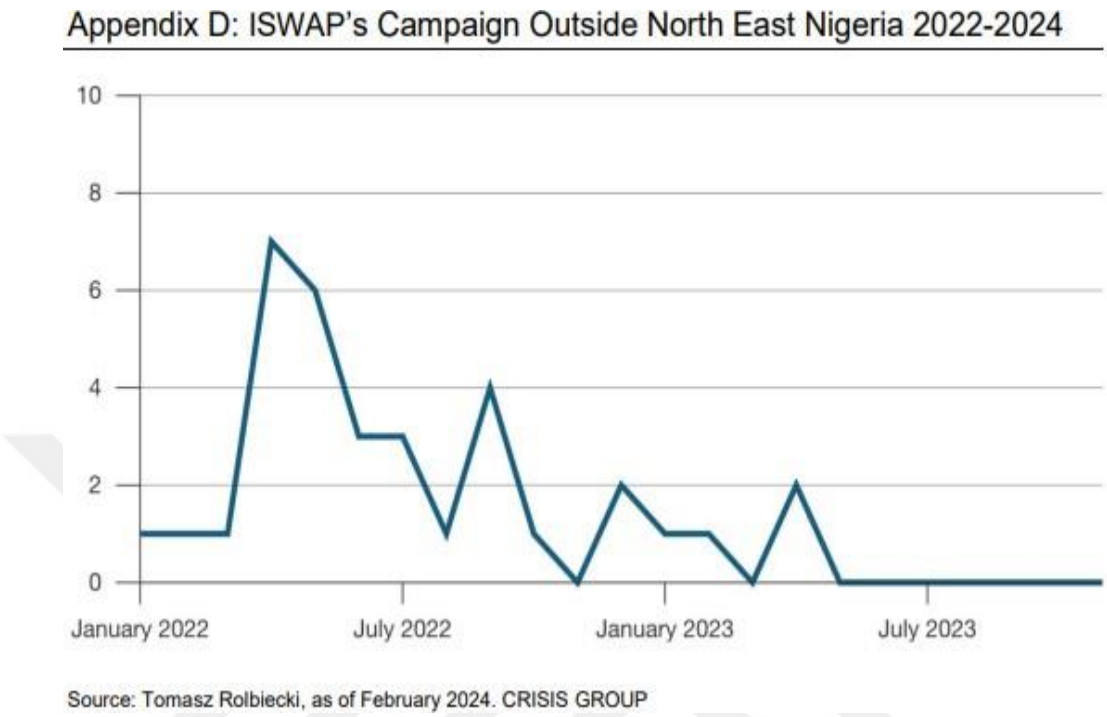


Figure 2: A steep decline in ISWAP attacks from January 2022-July 2023

Source: Rolbiecki (2024)

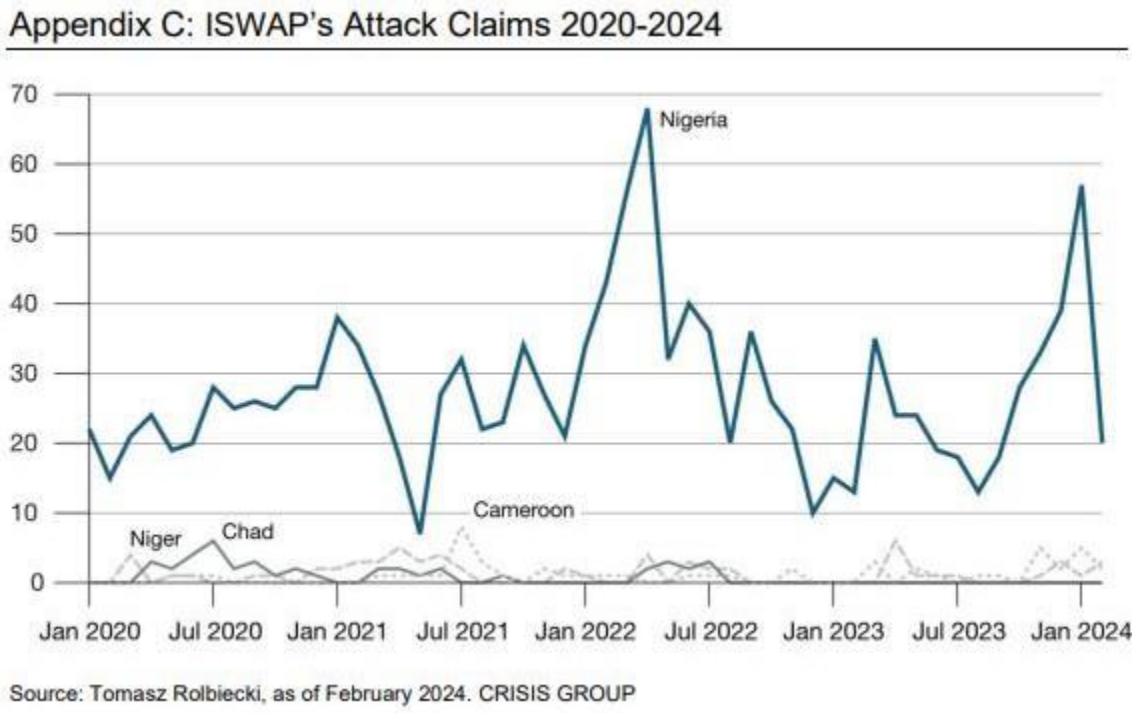


Figure 3 : High concentration of ISWAP attacks in Nigeria and other neighbouring countries

Source : Rolbiecki (2024)

ISWAP is yet another major security threat in Nigeria and the region. Although internal struggles within the leadership and structure of the group continues the attacks and impact of teh terrorist group is still on the rise. ISWAP's collaboration with IS seems to be intensifying, with efforts to establish a caliphate system and attract returning fighters. This, coupled with a growing focus on Nigeria and expanding attacks, suggests a more prominent and dangerous role for ISWAP in the region.

CHAPTER THREE
THE COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGIES IN NIGERIA

Boko Haram has been the dominant terrorist group in Nigeria to establish an Islamic State in the North. There are many socioeconomic factors, political grievances, religious extremism, and external influences contributing to the group's emergence and evolvement. Boko Haram has adapted its tactics and evolved them to include bombings, kidnappings, and alliances with other jihadist groups. This chapter examines how counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria have responded to Boko Haram terrorist threats and analyzes the different governmental efforts to deal with them.

3.1 Implications of Terrorism and Government Responses

Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation with 226.5 million citizens as of January 2024 (DataReportal, 2024). This large nation has been facing a significant challenge from terrorism for over a decade. Terrorist groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP have inflicted violence and instability in the northern part of the country. To counter this threat, the Nigerian government has undertaken a multi-pronged approach. This includes military deployments to combat extremist activity, collaboration with regional and international forces to improve border security, and efforts to address the root causes of extremism through deradicalization programs. However, the effectiveness of these counterterrorism strategies remains a subject of debate, with concerns about human rights abuses, civilian casualties, and the need to tackle underlying social issues.

3.1.1 The humanitarian Crisis

The consistent violence inflicted by Boko Haram activities caused a humanitarian crisis in the northern part of Nigeria, It displaced people caused many loss of life, and infrastructure damage. Boko Haram's insurgency has displaced millions of Nigerians, with estimates exceeding 2 million people forced to flee their homes due to violence. In a 2022 report Human Rights Watch (HRW) highlights that The UNHCR 2022 reported that "as of July 2022, the Boko Haram conflict had displaced about 2.2 million people in the Northeast, the vast majority–over 1.8

million—in Borno State. The conflict also displaced over 280,000 refugees from the Northeast into three neighboring countries—Cameroon, Chad, and Niger". Many people became refugees and lived in crowded refugee camps with limited access to necessities. Food shortages, insufficient shelter, limited income, and security concerns are the challenges that these people face.

3.1.1.1 Displacement of citizens

In a Crisis Group Briefing of 2023, the article distinguished two waves of displacement of people in the northern Borno state in Nigeria. "A first wave of displacement started in 2013, when Boko Haram – which calls itself JAS – began ransacking towns and villages, particularly in Borno state. Some residents fled to neighboring countries, including Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, and others moved elsewhere in Nigeria, but most stayed in Borno, heading to larger, better-protected towns. A second wave took place in 2015 when the Nigerian military went on the offensive and relocated civilians it found in Boko Haram-controlled areas to urban centers. Maiduguri, the state capital, received the most people, more than 500,000 of Borno's 1.8 million displaced." The article emphasizes the impact on Borno state, with Maiduguri, the capital, receiving the most displaced people.

3.1.1.2 Food shortage

The 2022 report by HRW describes the difficult situation in these camps and claims that aid groups stopped providing food rations, leaving families hungry. "Many displaced people in Maiduguri said they suffered severe hunger after agencies including the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Borno State Emergency Management Authority (SEMA) stopped providing monthly food rations and cash transfers for food." (HRW 2022). Due to limited incomes and the fact that displaced people struggle to find work opportunities, many families don't have access to food. As a result, they resort to begging or skipping meals. In an interview with the organization, a SEMA official described food shortages and people's struggle to find food by saying "Since the food distribution stopped, people do not have anywhere to get food, they are weak, malnourished to the point where they come to me to beg for even 50 naira (US$0.09) to enable them to find food to eat. It is overwhelming".

3.1.1.3 Inadequate shelter

Finding shelter is also a big challenge for displaced people, they can either join overly crowded government camps or resort to building tents and other temporary structures. The report describes the situation in informal camps in Maiduguri “In some informal camps in Maiduguri, private landowners have permitted displaced people to build structures consisting mostly of thatch or tarpaulin for temporary shelter. People live independently in these camps, which are not organized or supported by the government. Humanitarian agencies, however, sometimes provide one-off support to some informal camps by constructing latrines or donating thatch and tarpaulin to enable displaced persons to build shelters.”

3.1.1.4 Unsanitary living conditions

The Norwegian Refugee Council brings to attention another important issue which is the inadequate sanitary conditions of refugee camps. In a 2019 article, the council suggests that “Hundreds of thousands of people are living in overcrowded displacement sites far below international minimum standards and without proper access to latrines and clean water. Some have put up shelters made of wooden sticks and pieces of ripped fabric. These improvised shelters do not protect against wind or rain and offer almost no privacy or security. Many don’t even have a door - leaving women, men, and children highly vulnerable to intrusions and attacks.” The article elaborates further on these conditions and highlights the high risk of the spread of serious diseases such as Cholera. “More than 180,000 people are currently in need of shelter in Borno State with many sleeping in the open or in deplorable makeshift homes. As the rainy season gets underway, fears of another deadly outbreak of cholera are looming. Last year, 10,000 cholera cases were confirmed along with 175 recorded deaths, although the real figure is likely to have been much higher.” There is an urgent need for proper shelter and sanitation facilities to prevent further suffering and disease outbreaks.

3.1.1.5 Loss of lives

Loss of life is a direct result of terrorist attacks have resulted in the north of Nigeria. Boko Haram's violence is estimated to have claimed over 38,000 lives according to Statistica

(2023). The Global Centre For The Responsibility To Protect published an article in 2024 that details accounts of killings and deaths related to terrorist groups' activities in Nigeria. The article estimates that over 8.3 million people need assistance due to violence. The death toll by Boko Haram attacks between 2009 and 2020 is estimated to be at 35.000 people killed. It also claims that there are at least 10.000 pregnancies allegedly terminated by the Nigerian military. There were many recent attacks in 2023 and their death toll number, in "November 25, 2023: At least 150 civilians kidnapped in Zamfara State. December 23-25, 2023: At least 190 people killed in Plateau State clashes. January 23-24, 2024: At least 30 people were killed in Plateau State clashes. January 3, 2024: At least 17 people killed in Kaduna State attack. December 5, 2023: At least 85 civilians were killed in a Nigerian airstrike on Kaduna State religious ceremony. November 1, 2023: At least 40 people were killed in a Yobe State attack by suspected Boko Haram fighters. November 5, 2023: At least 15 farmers were killed by Boko Haram in Borno State. February 4, 2024: Unconfirmed number of civilians killed in Yobe State attack." GCR2P (2024). Overall, the center exposes a horrific situation in Nigeria, where violence by armed groups and security forces has displaced millions and left a trail of death.

An AlJazeera news article (24 June 2021) affirms that the death toll of the more than decade-long violence and terrorism has had a significant number of casualties most of which are women and children. The article highlights that "A 12-year-old conflict in northeast Nigeria has caused, directly and indirectly, the deaths of some 350,000 people, the vast majority of which are children below the age of five, the United Nations found in a new report. The death toll, given by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in a new study on the war and its effect on livelihoods published on Thursday, is 10 times higher than previous estimates of about 35,000 based only on those killed in fighting in Nigeria since violence broke out".

The Boko Haram terrorism in northern Nigeria has unfolded as a devastating humanitarian crisis. Millions are displaced, struggling with hunger, inadequate shelter, and disease. The loss of life, estimated in the hundreds of thousands, exposes the urgent need for international intervention to protect civilians, deliver aid, and find a lasting solution to the violence.

3.1.2 Social, psychological and religious impacts:

The Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria has inflicted a devastating toll, not just on lives and infrastructure, but also on the social fabric and mental well-being of millions caught in the crossfire. Witnessing violence, displacement, and constant fear have left deep scars, demanding a multifaceted approach to rebuilding lives and communities.

3.1.2.1 Mental health disturbance

With the rise and evolution of Boko Haram over the years Nigerians found themselves living in the constant threat of violence which creates a climate of fear, impacting daily activities and social interactions. Those who have been directly impacted by terrorist attacks can experience trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Survivors of attacks and those living in affected areas often experience psychological trauma, leading to anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Mental health struggles of young Nigerians internally displaced by Boko Haram's insurgency, focusing on camps in Durumi and New Kuchingoro, with over 2 million Nigerians internally displaced and young people particularly vulnerable to mental health issues like depression and PTSD, these young people developed coping mechanisms like music and sports, but there was a lack of professional mental health support in the camps.

The participants of a study by (Olufadewa et al, 2022) showed signs of stress, trauma, and symptoms of anxiety and depression. They express a need for broader support by the official authorities that includes mental health services, physical healthcare, and educational and economic opportunities. One participant said "… I had to walk barefoot for days during the time of war (the Boko Haram terrorism) and getting fatigued or exhausted from walking can cause a variety of diseases that are unknown and even depression and anxiety" and another expressed that "Due to the war we experienced, and fleeing we had to do, as well as watching my family being killed by terrorists made me depressed to the point of having high blood pressure" (Ajefu et al, 2022).

Boko Haram terrorism in northeastern Nigeria has impacted the mental health of household leaders, specifically focusing on depressive symptoms. The research confirmed that there is indeed a link between Boko Haram violence and worsened mental health in Nigerian households. Unemployment, illness, and food insecurity emerge as key factors amplifying the negative impact of conflict on mental well-being. Importantly, the research identifies disparities, with rural residents, younger adults, and male household heads experiencing higher levels of depressive symptoms. These findings inform the design of interventions to bolster mental health in conflict zones by addressing unemployment, healthcare access, and food security.

3.1.2.2 Disruption of social activities

Boko Haram's terrorism has had a devastating social impact on Nigerian society. Fear and trauma have become constant mental health issues, disrupting daily life and social interactions. Families are displaced, with millions living in crowded camps lacking necessities. The violence has also exacerbated existing ethnic and religious tensions, fracturing social cohesion. Relations between people from the north and people from the south are characterized by social tension. Women and children are particularly vulnerable, facing abduction and exploitation. Boko Haram has been notorious for abducting schoolgirls and using them as militants or brides. “The number of attacks by Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria and neighboring countries has risen, and half a million children have had to flee to safety in the past five months, bringing the total number of displaced children in the region to 1.4 million” according to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UN News, n.d). In addition, a BBC 2024 news article affirms that “The largest mass abduction by Boko Haram occurred when more than 270 schoolgirls were seized from their dormitory in Chibok town, also in north-eastern Borno state, in 2014.”

Boko Haram uses women for both symbolic and practical reasons. Thousands of women have been abducted by the terrorist group and that many of them are pregnant. Women who are rescued and returned home face many difficulties and stigma, making it hard for them to reintegrate into their communities. Social norms, fear of Boko Haram, and the lack of adequate support from the government make it hard for women to seek help and uplift their situations. (Bloom et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the education system has been crippled, hindering future opportunities. Overall, Boko Haram's reign of terror has deeply scarred Nigerian society. In addition, there is considerable infrastructure Damage, Schools, hospitals, and public buildings have been targeted by terrorists, crippling access to essential services and hindering development efforts. This also results in the disruption of daily life. Markets, schools, and places of worship become potential targets, altering daily routines and hindering social cohesion. Boko Haram's attacks have inflicted a horrific cost on Nigeria. Billions of property lie in ruins, and countless innocent lives have been lost. The violence has choked economic growth by scaring away investment and travel. Millions are displaced, especially in the northeast, facing trauma and an uncertain future. The conflict has also been marred by human rights abuses on both sides, raising serious concerns about the government's ability to protect its citizens.

3.1.2.3 Religious tension

In terms of religious tensions and the impact of terrorist attacks on religious people, religious Minorities especially Christians, have been targeted by Boko Haram, leading to displacement and interfaith tensions. Boko Haram's extremist ideology has exploited religious differences in Nigeria, widening the divide between Muslims and Christians. Christian communities in Nigeria have borne the brunt of Boko Haram's violence, living in fear of attacks on churches and believers. The violence unleashed by Boko Haram has weakened the role of religious institutions as agents of peace and interfaith dialogue. The terrorist group’s actions risk radicalizing some Nigerians, creating fertile ground for extremist interpretations of Islam. Despite the immense challenges, there are glimmers of hope as religious leaders from different faiths come together to promote peace and counter Boko Haram's narrative.

3.1.3 Impacts on Nigerian politics

The Rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria has unleashed a wave of violence and instability, leaving a deep scar on the nation’s political fabric. The emergence and insurgency of the terrorist group became a driving force for security concerns, potential for increased militarization, and challenges to national unity. Terrorism has become a major national security concern,

influencing political discourse and policy decisions. The government's response may lead to increased militarization, raising concerns about civil liberties and democratic processes. In addition, sectarian violence can exacerbate existing ethnic and religious tensions, posing a threat to national unity.

The rise of Boko Haram has significantly impacted Nigeria's political development. The impact can be seen in the issue of the broken Power-Sharing Agreement. The power struggle between the North and South due to a broken power-sharing agreement is seen as the root cause of the insurgency. The power-sharing agreement originated in the 1970s after the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) it came as an attempt to end decades of political instability and ethnic tensions. Although it was never written, it is considered an understanding among political elites and political parties in Nigeria. The idea of the agreement is that the presidency would rotate between a northern Muslim and a southern Christian every two terms. This system faced criticism for being overly simplistic and not addressing the complex ethnic and religious makeup of Nigeria. Additionally, it potentially limited opportunities for qualified candidates outside the designated regions.

Concerning the Boko Haram terrorism, the marginalization or feelings of political exclusion in the north, particularly after a southern president served for two terms (2003-2007), is believed to have fueled resentment and grievances that Boko Haram exploited to carry out its terrorist agenda. Overall, Democratic processes have been stifled by the constant fear of violence. In 2015, the postponement of national elections due to security concerns highlighted the disruptive influence of the insurgency. Military responses have also raised concerns about human rights abuses, further eroding public trust in the government. Boko Haram's actions have undoubtedly reshaped Nigeria's political landscape, posing a significant challenge to the country's democratic development and national unity.

The Boko Haram terrorism has demonstrably destabilized Nigeria's political development. A fractured power-sharing agreement between the northern and southern regions is hypothesized to be a contributing element to the violence. Ebi (2018) The presidential transfer of

power that took place in 2010 is linked directly to this issue, as it is a manifestation of the role of the Nigerian government in counterterrorism efforts " On 5 May 2010 President Yar Adua died in office, necessitating the transfer of power to his vice-president, a southerner, Dr Goodluck Jonathan. However, Dr Jonathan's ultimate nomination and election as president was seen by some northerners as not sustaining the rotational criteria and this is a likely reason for the present uneasiness in northern Nigeria." This could have potentially fueled resentment in the north, which Boko Haram exploited to gain support and power. The persistent threat of attacks and the corresponding militarized response have hampered democratic progress, fostering a climate of instability and apprehension.

Furthermore, the over reliance on military solutions has yielded limited success and resulted in civilian casualties, further eroding public trust, some critics would describe national policies on issues of terrorism as ineffective. The displacement of millions due to the violence presents a significant challenge to the government's capacity, Boko Haram has inflicted violence and caused many deaths and displacement of millions of people in the north. Most critically, Boko Haram's assaults threaten the very foundation of Nigeria's national identity – its secular character and unified state. The insurgency represents a pivotal juncture, necessitating urgent and comprehensive solutions to avert a descent into further chaos and potentially even another civil war.

Boko Haram's violence dominated Nigeria's political scene. Security concerns soared, and militarization rose, threatening national unity. Terrorism dominated political discourse, potentially weakening the already young and fragile Nigerian democracy. The response may limit freedoms. Sectarian violence could further fracture the nation along religious and ethnic lines

3. 2 Key actors Involved in Counterterrorism

Counterterrorism refers to the efforts undertaken by governments, international organizations, etc to combat and prevent terrorism and terrorist acts. The field of counterterrorism can be broadly divided into three major fields, Prevention, disruption, and response. Prevention means dealing with the root causes of terrorism, such as social and

economic hardships within a nation or a group that might make individuals susceptible to illegal acts, extremism, and radicalization. To disrupt terrorism means to identify and stop terrorist plots before they are carried out in the community. Intelligence gathering and law enforcement play the biggest role in this field. Responses to terrorism are dealing with minimizing the damage caused by terrorist attacks and ensuring public safety during and after the event, it is where the official forces react to terrorist incidents.

3.2.1 Government agencies

The main actors involved in counter-terrorism strategies in Nigeria are the Nigerian Armed Forces which carry out military responses to terror attacks, the Nigerian Police Force which is in charge of maintaining law and order and lastly the Department of State Services the body charged with intelligence gathering. It is worth mentioning that in 2022 The National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC) was established. This agency coordinates counterterrorism efforts across various government bodies improving communication and supporting cross-institutional collaboration.

3.2.2 The Nigerian Armed Forces

The Nigerian Armed Forces play a central role in a direct military confrontation with terrorist groups, conducting operations to neutralize threats and retake territory to limit the operating field of terrorist groups. According to Force Internationale Mixte or Multinational Joint Task Force, the Nigerian Armed Force's origins lie in the elements of the royal West African Frontier Force that became Nigerian when independence was granted in 1960. The Nigerian Army’s main functions are to defend Nigeria from external aggression, maintain territorial integrity, suppress insurrections, and assist civil authorities in restoring order when called upon to do so by the president. “ Section 217 sub-section (2) of the Nigerian Constitution (1999) specifies Nigerian Armed Forces roles to 1. Defend Nigeria from external aggression. 2. Maintain its territorial integrity and secure its borders from violation by land, sea, or air. 3. Suppress insurrection and act in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly. 4. Perform such other functions as may be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly (Audu, 2019).

3.2.3 The Nigerian Police Force

The Nigerian Police Force is involved in communities, preventing terrorist attacks within civilian public gatherings and public institutions. According to their official website, the NPF states that they are the principal law enforcement agency in the country and that “It had its origins in Lagos following the creation of a 30-man Consular Guard in 1861. The small guard was subsequently expanded to 600 men in 1891 and renamed "Hausa Police", because of the enlistment of some captured run-away Hausa slaves at Jebba by Lt. Glover R. N. Again in 1879 the Hausa Police was further enlarged by the recruitment of more men and renamed the "Hausa Constabulary". It then consisted of 1,200 officers and men commanded by an Inspector-General of Police.” In more recent history and after the independence of 1960 the forces were first regionalized and then nationalized under the first republic to unify the Police Force and harmonize it.

The history and functions of the NPF are written and explained in the constitution of 1999 “Sections 214 to 216 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria provides for the Nigeria Police Force. Section 214 of the 1999 Constitution (As amended) categorically states that "There shall be a Police Force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section, no other police force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof ”.

The Police Act, however, regulates the Force. Section 4 of the Police Act provides that, ' "The Police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged” (NPF 2024).

3.2.4 The Department of State Services (DSS)

The Department of State Services focuses on gathering intelligence and performing counter-intelligence operations to identify potential threats and disrupt terrorist plans and networks. On their official website, the DSS states that the department has roots in pre-colonial

Nigeria. and that it formally came into existence in 1948 with the establishment of the then “E” Department (Special Branch) domiciled in the Office of the Inspector General of the Nigeria Police Force. The State Security Service (SSS) is empowered by Instrument SSS No.1 of 1999 and several decrees to perform a wide range of duties in protecting Nigeria's internal security. These include preventing and investigating crimes like espionage, terrorism, and economic sabotage, protecting government officials and facilities, and advising the government on security matters (DSS 2024) (Akuul, 2011) .

The efforts made by the Nigerian Police Force to maintain peace and security in Nigeria have helped Nigeria make progress in its fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups activities. “ In contemporary times therefore, it appears there are growing efforts in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the Police Force towards the maintenance of peace and security in Nigeria. For example, from the late 1990s to date, the Nigerian Police Force has embarked on several measures of fighting crime some of which include: Operation Sweep, Operation Flush, Operation Fire for Fire, Anti-crime Patrol, Operation Dzenda to mention a few been introduced. All these are efforts to ensure peace” (Akuul, 2011).

3.2.5 The National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC)

According to the NCTC official website, their mission is to lead efforts at combating terrorism and violent extremism by developing coordinated strategies and integrating all CT (Counter-terrorism) actions across government, providing terrorism analysis, and national and international CT partners in a Whole of Government and Whole of Society approach to achieve our national CT objectives. Under the directory of the National Security Adviser, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu “ the NCTC has recorded some remarkable achievements. It has among others, attracted high-level officials from regional and global partners as well as organizations, including the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), and the UK Government, seeking partnership with Nigeria to engender peace and stability from the harrowing experience occasioned by the non-state armed groups” (NCTC, 2024).

3.2.6 International partners

Nigeria works closely with its international partners to set its counterterrorism strategies into motion. These partners include the US, the UK, and the African Union. Each of these partners collaborates with Nigerian official entities to work on a specific approach to counterterrorism. For example, the United States provides military training and intelligence sharing to Nigerian forces while the United Kingdom offers security assistance and counterterrorism expertise to support the security strategies of Nigeria, lastly, the African Union gives regional cooperation and peacekeeping efforts support to Nigeria.

3.2.6. 1 The United States

The US and Nigeria's security partnership is strong and is characterized by fostering cooperation in maritime and border security, military professionalization, and counterterrorism against Boko Haram in addition to defense trade and governance strengthening. The US supports Nigeria in its counterterrorism efforts through training, funding, weaponry trade, and agreements. The International Military Education and Training IMET), Africa Military Education Program (AMEP), and Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) are some of the educational and training initiatives that resulted from the cooperation between the two countries.

Funding is another major aspect of the Nigeria partnership, the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Maritime Security, military training, and counterterrorism strategies. The US is also a big supplier of weapons to Nigeria. Military sales between the two countries include A-29 Super Tucano aircraft and AH-1Z attack helicopters intending to minimize or mitigate civilian harm during operations. In addition to operations and military funding, the US also funds peacekeeping operations and gives support to advisory services on civilian harm mitigation and accountability. Furthermore, establishing agreements between the two countries such as the Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreement (ACSA) and Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), not only formalizes cooperation but also, facilitates logistic processes and builds trust and transparency. Moreover, participation in joint exercises like African Lion, Flintlock, and Obangame Express further strengthens military capacities by exchanging expertise and

knowledge (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2024). US security cooperation with Nigeria is also based on monetary assistance. In a 2022 Factsheet on US security partnerships and the protection of civilians, the Case of Nigeria and the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) US security assistance to Nigeria exceeded 27,908,900 US dollars in 2019 as shown in Figure 4.

3.2.6.2 The United Kingdom

The UK and Nigeria have a strong defense relationship. The UK is providing military training and advice to Nigeria to help them fight the terrorist group Boko Haram. This includes training in infantry skills, bomb disposal, and leadership. The UK is also working with other countries to improve regional coordination and intelligence sharing. The Minister for the Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, said: "The UK stands united with Nigeria in the international fight against terror. With our world-class military expertise, we are helping the Nigerian military develop the skills necessary to tackle the threat of Boko Haram" . "From expert operational guidance and medical mentoring in the North East, to counter explosive device training across the country, the UK is leading the way in its commitment to supporting a safe and stable Nigeria" (GOV.UK 2017).

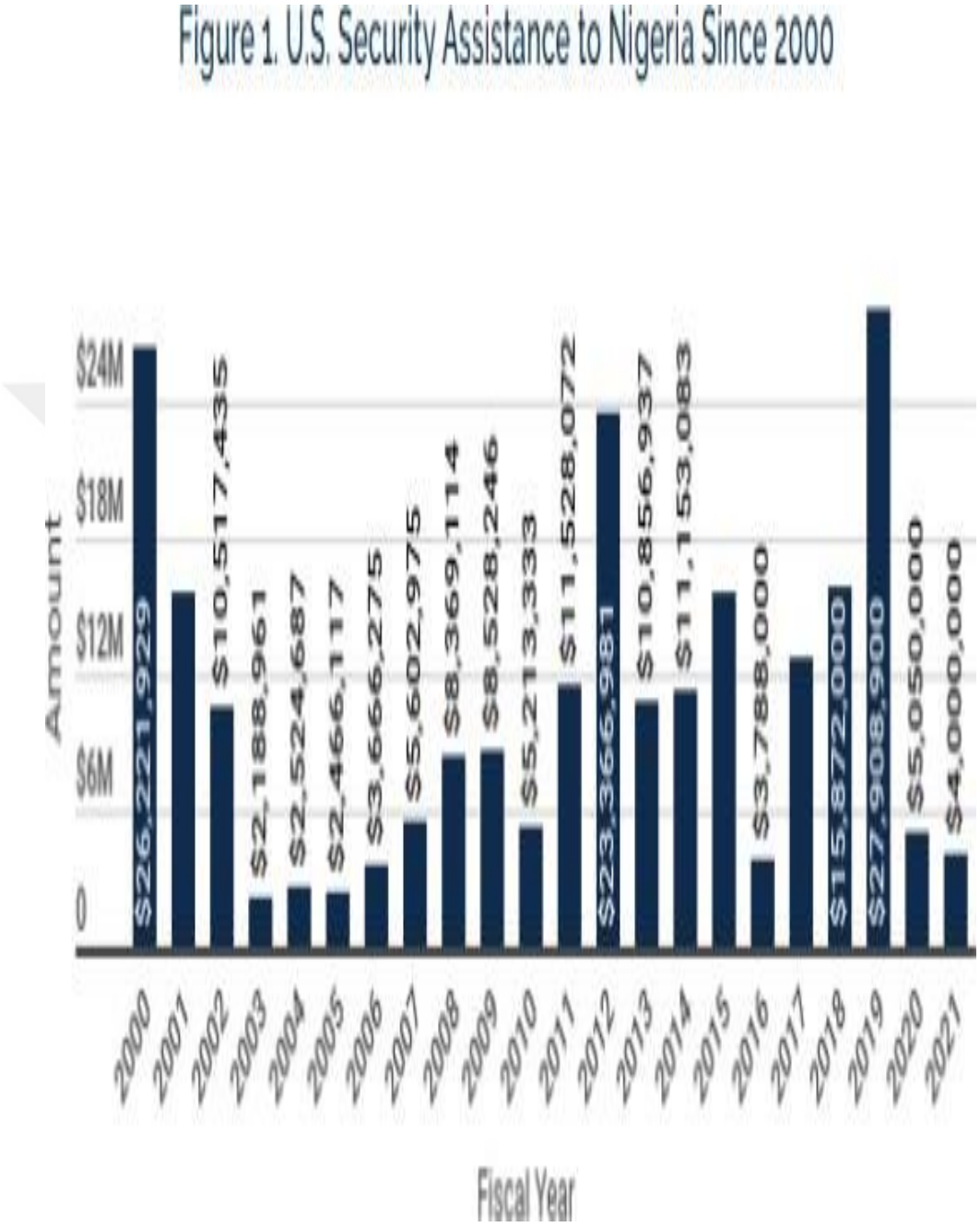


Figure 4: US security assistance to Nigeria from 2000-2021

Source: US 2020 Factsheet

In a UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership Inaugural Dialogue document, the two countries reaffirm their " commitment to work together to respond to the shared threat of

terrorism." and highlight that " In support of this commitment the United Kingdom offers to share our experience of delivering a multi-agency approach in response to terrorist incidents. The United Kingdom also offers to share insight on terrorist financing, trans-border movements, and the illegal movement of small arms and light weapons" (GOV.UK 2017).

3.2.6.3 The African Union

The African Union (AU) has established a comprehensive framework to combat terrorism through various instruments and as a member state, Nigeria has access to benefit from this framework. There is a set of legal agreements and conventions that make up the AU framework and they are the 1999 Algiers Convention, 2002 Plan of Action, and the 2011 African Model Anti-Terrorism Law. The 1999 Algiers Convention sets the base of the legal framework by defining terrorism and outlining obligations for member states, including protecting human rights, preventing terrorist training and entry into their territories, sharing information on terrorist activities, and cooperating to support terrorist financing.

The 2002 Plan of Action goes deeper and focuses on improving border control and surveillance through measures like document verification, implementing advanced security features in travel documents, and sharing info on suspicious individuals. With the 2011 African Model Anti-Terrorism Law the AU provides clear actionable steps for states to take, including defining terrorist offenses and penalties, establishing procedures for apprehending terrorists, setting up a financial intelligence unit to track terrorist financing, and finally creating mechanisms for the extradition of terrorist offenders (Omenma et al., 2020). Overall, the AU helps with monitoring implementation through the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the Commission. Its goal is to minimize terrorist activities by addressing porous borders and reducing money laundering that benefits terrorists. This legal framework created and upheld by the AU and its member states serves to improve information sharing and strengthen border security to combat terrorism across the African continent.

Boko Haram's roots lie in Nigeria's social and political problems. To combat them, Nigeria employs a multi-pronged approach. Domestically, military forces confront them directly,

while police and intelligence agencies focus on prevention and disruption. The National Counter Terrorism Center coordinates these efforts. Additionally, Nigeria collaborates with the US, UK, and African Union for training, intelligence sharing, and legal frameworks to tackle Boko Haram and terrorism more broadly.

3.3 Legal and Policy Frameworks

3.3.1 Counterterrorism laws

3.3.1.1 The Terrorism Prevention Act 2011 (as amended)

Before 2011, Nigeria lacked specific anti-terrorism legislation. "Before the enactment of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011, the only statute that addressed, albeit tangentially, the issue of terrorism in Nigeria was the Economic and Financial Crimes (Establishment, etc) Act No 1 of 2004 (EFCC Act)" (Alisigwe et al., 2019). The efforts to create a legal system to counter terrorism in Nigeria was not received well, many bill drafts in 2005 and 2006 faced opposition based on concerns regarding religious bias and criminalizing the Niger Delta activism. After the 9/11 events in the US, many countries joined the "war on terror" wagon and started to create and establish laws and measures to counter-terrorism. However, for Nigeria, this came ten years after the 9/11 attacks. Nigeria didn't follow through with the guidelines of UN Security Council Resolution 1373 requiring member states to criminalize terrorism (Alisigwe et al., 2019). The escalating threats of Boko Haram in 2009 made the Nigerian government realize the seriousness of the situation and most importantly the need to develop a proper legal and security framework to deal with terrorist groups in the country.

With the global shift against terrorism, US pressure, and escalating domestic threats from terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, Nigerian authorities were left with no choice but to act fast. The Terrorism (Prevention) Act (TPA) 2011 (as amended) is the primary law against terrorism in Nigeria. This Act was passed due to pressure from the US and following the rise of Boko Haram. It defines terrorist acts and empowers authorities to combat terrorism. The Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011 (as amended by the Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2013) has the purpose of addressing the rise of terrorism in Nigeria, particularly Boko Haram. The Terrorism (Prevention) Act (TPA) was introduced in 2011 to establish a legal framework for

counter-terrorism approaches in Nigeria and it was amended in 2013 but raised concerns about infringement on human rights (Alisigwe et al., 2019).

The Act defines terrorism and outlines criminal offenses, prohibits acts of terrorism, and provides procedures for tackling them, it covers areas like proscribing terrorist groups, financing, hostage-taking, investigations, and international cooperation (Ajileye, 2015). Legal Frameworks for the Prevention of Terrorism in Nigeria are detailed in the offenses brought by the Amendment Act "The following new line of offenses are created under the TPA 2011 (as amended/: (a) murder, kidnaps or other attacks on the person or liberty of an internationally protected person (s. 3) (b); terrorist meetings (s. 4) (c); soliciting and giving support to terrorist groups for the commission of a terrorist act (s.5) (d); harboring terrorists or hindering the arrest of a terrorist (s. 6) (e); provision of training and instruction to terrorist groups or terrorists (s. 7) (f); concealment of information about acts of terrorism (s. 8) (g); provision of devices to a terrorist (s.9) (h); Recruitment of persons to be members of terrorist groups or to participate in terrorist acts (s.10); (i) incitement, promotion or solicitation of property for the Commission of terrorist acts (s. 11); (j) provision of facilities in support of terrorist acts (s. 12); (k) financing of terrorism (s. 13); (l) dealing in terrorist property (s. 14), (m); hostage taking (s. 15); (n) membership of a terrorist group or proscribed organisation (s. 16); (o) conspiracy to commit terrorist acts (s. 17); (p) aiding and abetting terrorist acts (s. 18); (q) escape or aiding and abetting escape (s. 19); (r) attempt to commit an offence under the Act (s. 20); (s) preparation to commit terrorist acts (s. 21); (t) unlawful assumption of character of officer of any law enforcement or security (s. 22); (u) tampering with evidence and witness (s. 23); (v) obstruction of any officer of a law enforcement or security agency (s. 24) amongst others.

The official and final document has undergone many amendments and to reach its final form to the point that it has little resemblance from the old document. Of the 40 sections contained in the TPA 2011, 31 sections were either amended, substituted, or deleted, leaving only 9 sections in the Parent Act standing. The unprecedented manner in which the TPA underwent amendment requires that in the discussion on terrorism laws in Nigeria, the remaining standing sections of the TPA 2011 be merged with the provisions of the TPAA 2013 to form a

single Act. Both laws as collapsed will hereinafter be referred to as TPA 2011 (as amended) (Alisigwe et al., 2019).

The TPA 2011 is criticized for not providing a clear and direct definition of "terrorism" however as explained it goes into detail on the description of acts of terrorism. The Act also mentions terrorist funding and states that providing or collecting funds for terrorism is illegal and that financial institutions must report suspicious transactions to the Financial Intelligence Unit. The penalties for most crimes related to terrorism or acts of terrorism can be either life imprisonment or even the death penalty. The broad scope of the Act and these harsh penalties as seen by civil society activists have raised concerns about potential abuse and infringement on human rights. Critics argue it could be used to silence dissent or target marginalized groups. The narrow focus of the Act on violent acts can be seen as negligence of other forms of terrorism such as cyberattacks or propaganda, which might not be fully captured by the definition (Alisigwe et al., 2019).

3.3.1.2 Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022

This Act came as an attempt to improve the previous Act and clarify the ambiguity that has been long criticized. The new and updated Act referred to as Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022 established new bodies to improve the coordination and effectiveness of the Nigerian government's counterterrorism efforts. It created the National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC) which is located in the Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA). The center plays an important role in forming a joint Terrorism Analysis Branch for intelligence sharing, coordinates national counterterrorism policies and plans, conducts public awareness campaigns, and provides capacity building for counterterrorism operations. The Act also established the National Sanctions Committee (NSC) with the aim of including more law enforcement and security agencies, creating general guidelines for designated terrorists and financiers, and implementing UN Security Council Resolutions on targeted financial sanctions. The Committee includes representatives from more relevant institutions for specialized insights.

The Act is important because it expands its scope to address new threats like Proliferation and financing of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and Nuclear and radioactive materials. The Act fills in a legal gap to comply with UN requirements since it directly criminalizes the proliferation and financing of WMDs and allows the implementation of UN sanctions on proliferation financing. In addition to criminalizing unauthorized use or disposal of nuclear and radioactive materials and setting the penalties for such acts to include the death penalty for causing death or life imprisonment otherwise.

Overall, the 2022 Act not only expands and clarifies the previous Act of 2013 but also strengthens the existing measures it includes. Penalties under the new Act are increased and can reach up to life imprisonment or a minimum of 20 years for many offenses. Another added value of the 2022 Act is that it provides support for victims through the Victims Trust Fund which provides compensation and funds prevention programs and it also aligns with the UN Security Council Resolutions on counterterrorism financing and proliferation financing fostering international cooperation and the compliance of Nigerian counterterrorism laws to international norms and regulations. The NFIU Newsletter (2022) clarifies in detail the different aspects of the law and we can identify and differentiate its sections as follows:

- Section 1: Sets out the objectives of the Act, likely outlining the broad goals of fighting terrorism and its financing.
- Sections 2 & 3: Likely define acts considered terrorism and establish national coordination and enforcement mechanisms.
- Sections 6-8: Focus on the National Counter-Terrorism Centre, outlining its structure and responsibilities.
- Sections 9-10: Deal with the National Sanctions Committee, including its composition and functions.
- Section 58: Prohibits the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Section 59: Prohibits the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Sections 60 & 61: Provide a legal framework for implementing UN Security Council resolutions related to proliferation and freezing assets.

- Section 11: Likely deals with penalties for causing death through acts of terrorism, specifying life imprisonment as a punishment.
- Section 91: Establishes the Victims Trust Fund and outlines its purpose of supporting victims and prevention programs.

3.3.1.3 Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022 (AMLA) 2022

This Act was drafted as part of Nigeria's efforts to counter terrorist financing. This Act is also an update and amendment to the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act of 2011 which has 24 sections. The new Act includes 31 sections and expands the scope of reference to many new businesses and professions.

The Act clearly describes important provisions like cash transaction limits, prohibition of transaction splitting, international money transfer reporting, cash declaration to customs, identity verification, and due diligence and risk management which guides financial institutions to verify customer identities and those acting on their behalf using reliable sources. To conduct due diligence on new business relationships, high-value transactions, and suspicious activity. In addition to assessing money laundering and terrorism risks associated with business practices, products, and technology. The Act requires special procedures to identify politically exposed persons or (PEPs) like heads of state, and senior politicians by verifying their source of wealth and funds for their transactions.

Moreover, the AMLA 2022 details how to deal with suspicious transactions and how to report them. The Act requires financial institutions and designated businesses to report transactions within 24 hours, regardless of completion. Suspicious transactions can include those with the unusual frequency of complexity, no economic justification, inconsistency with customer patterns, suspected criminal proceeds, money laundering, or terrorism financing. Failure to report such transactions can result in a hefty fine. Restriction of lawyer-client confidentiality has been taped in the new Act and the confidentiality privilege is suspended in situations where there is property or business purchase or sale. When managing client money or

assets, opening or managing financial accounts, creating or managing trusts, companies, etc. The NFIU Newsletter (2022) makes notes on the sections of the Act as follows,

- Section 1: Sets out the objectives of the Act, likely outlining the overall goals of fighting money laundering and its financing.
- Section 2: Subsection (1): Defines the cash transaction limits for individuals and corporate entities.

  Subsection (2): Introduces the prohibition of transaction splitting to avoid reporting requirements.
- Section 3: Subsection (1): Likely mandates reporting intended international transfers exceeding a certain amount.

  Subsection (3): Deals with declaration of cash or negotiable instruments exceeding a certain amount to Nigerian Customs Service.
- Section 4: Outlines requirements for identity verification, due diligence, and risk management for financial institutions and designated businesses.
- Section 7(1): Defines what constitutes a suspicious transaction that must be reported within 24 hours.
- Section 11(4): Creates an exception to lawyer-client confidentiality in situations related to money laundering or other unlawful acts.
- Section 30: Defines Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) and outlines special procedures for transactions involving them.

3.3.1.4 Legal institutions for countering terrorism in Nigeria

Faced with ongoing insurgencies, Nigeria established various institutions under the TPA 2011 (as amended). Alisigwe et al.(2019) underscores these entities and their importance in his study.

The first institution is the National Security Adviser (NSA), the office of the advisor is mainly concerned with giving support to security and intelligence agencies and the military in preventing and combating insurgency. In addition to overseeing the development and

implementation of a national counter-insurgency strategy and building the capacity to fight it. The office has broad powers to ensure the effective performance of relevant agencies.

The Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) is another important entity in the Nigerian fight against terrorism. This entity oversees the implementation and administration of the TPA, strengthens legal frameworks related to counter-terrorism, ensures compliance with international standards and conventions, facilitates international cooperation against terrorism, and finally oversees the effective prosecution of terrorism offenses.

Lastly, the Law Enforcement and Security Agencies, which have been described earlier in this chapter, support and align the rest of the legal entities by gathering intelligence and investigating terrorism offenses, enforcing counter-terrorism laws and regulations, implementing measures to prevent and combat terrorism, the establishment of secure communication channels for rapid information exchange, conducting research and partnering up with civil society and the public for educational and awareness campaigns and programs.

It is worth mentioning that the Nigerian Constitution and Courts play an important role as pillars in Counterterrorism efforts. The Constitution is the main guarantee of fundamental rights such as the Right to life, liberty, and freedom from torture and setting limitations during counterterrorism operations to not violate these rights. It also ensures due process and fair trial rights ensuring justice while addressing security threats. The constitution indirectly supports counterterrorism efforts through its underlying principles, these principles help guide counter-insurgency efforts such principles can be the respect and promotion of human rights, the rule of law, and the protection of civilians. Ideally, these principles can help inspire and align counterterrorism legislation and procedures with international values and norms.

The Nigerian governments attempt to address Boko Haram suspects through legal channels is not always effective. However the official documents emphasize compliance with international human rights standard. The potential desire for speeding up prosecutions and due process can be understood as a means to establish effective measures and de radicalize as well as

punish the captured members of terrorist groups. In a similar vein, meeting with the obligation of international human rights provisions, the Nigerian government has commenced the Boko Haram suspects' prosecutions in different courts of law across the country. The Attorney General of Nigeria recently ordered the speedy prosecution of the suspects in different detention centers. According to AGF's Office, more than 1169789 suspects have been sent to courts for trial, and about 1000 of such have been successfully prosecuted. The office said those with prima facie cases would be treated with leniency while those that do not will be discharged and undergo the process of de-radicalization. About 82 of the suspects have benefited from the government window to plead guilty to get light sentences (Bashir, 2021).

The Constitution can also empower the judiciary branch to review the actions of the government and its agencies, including those involved in counter-terrorism insurgency. This could help ensure that these institutions operate within the bounds of the law and the constitution and hold them accountable if they do not. The constitution can bridge between the public and the government by limiting the latter's powers during emergencies to minimize the risk of abuse of power and maintain the public's trust and cooperation. The Nigerian constitution, while not directly mentioned in the TPA 2011, plays a significant behind-the-scenes role in shaping counter-insurgency efforts. Firstly, it dictates the circumstances under which the military can be deployed within Nigeria's borders. This establishes limitations on the executive branch's power and ensures military action is legally justified. Additionally, the constitution might define the extent of the military's authority during these deployments, clarifying the scope of their power and preventing potential abuses. Secondly, the Constitution plays a role in federalism by defining the division of power between the federal and state governments. This becomes crucial in determining who has primary responsibility for responding to insurgencies in different regions. A clear division of power helps to streamline counter-insurgency efforts and avoid confusion about jurisdictional boundaries.

3.4 Counterterrorism Strategies Implemented in Nigeria

3.4.1. NACTEST

The Nigerian National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) can be considered a comprehensive blueprint for combating terrorism within the country. It was developed in 2014 under the Goodluck Jonathan administration and revised in 2016, NACTEST outlines a multi-faceted approach to counterterrorism efforts in Nigeria. Nigeria implemented this strategy to emphasize prevention, preparedness, and coordinated response. NACTEST provides a framework for joint, multi-agency efforts against terrorism through a five-work stream approach (Forestall, Secure, Identify, Prepare, Implement) which offers a road map to achieve national security goals.

3.4.1.1 Objectives of the five work streams of NACTEST

a. Forestall: Aims to reduce the number of people vulnerable to radicalization, increase security awareness among citizens, deter potential terrorists and those who facilitate them, and create opportunities and hope in vulnerable communities.

b. Secure: Aims at strengthening border security to reduce illegal immigration and smuggling, protect critical national infrastructure from terrorist attacks, improve the capacity and training of security forces, and enhance security in transportation systems and crowded places.

c. Identify: The aim here is to disrupt terrorist threats and attacks before they happen, increase the ability of security agencies to investigate and prosecute terrorists, cut off terrorists funding sources, and build relationships with communities to counter-terrorism. Additionally, it aims to improve the effectiveness of security agencies and build trust and cooperation between security forces and communities.

d. Prepare: Aimed at minimizing damage and casualties from attacks, and to recover quickly from the aftermath of attacks. So it includes action steps before, during, and after a terrorist attack.

e. Implement: The strategy aims to not only prevent radicalization but also rehabilitate those susceptible to extremist views.

3.4.1.2 Action plans put in place by the government to acheive the objectives of NACTEST

1) Forestall: The Nigerian Government plans to carry this out through counter-narratives and messages that challenge the extremist ideology. By focusing on education and civic engagement. In addition to addressing social issues like poverty, unemployment, and lack of education. Law enforcement also plays a role in enforcing laws against terrorism and incitement to violence. The implementation of De-radicalization programs is important in this regard because it brings together the government and the community to work together on the reintegration of people into society. Overall, the Forestall aspect of NACTEST emphasizes a proactive approach to preventing terrorism by addressing the root causes of radicalization and building resilience within communities.

2) Secure: The key actions needed to achieve this are to increase border patrols, improve intelligence sharing, and cooperate with neighboring countries. To protect critical infrastructure responsible government agencies need to identify and protect key infrastructures like, energy, water, transportation, communication, and finance. The security forces should be supported by providing them with adequate training and equipment to facilitate their work and foster effective emergency responses in law enforcement and counter-terrorism teams. For transportation and crowded places, the government would boost security measures at airports, train stations, and other transportation hubs and develop security plans for shopping malls, worship centers, sports arenas, and other public areas. In this step, the focus of the strategy lies on protecting Nigerians and critical infrastructures by strengthening border security, improving security measures in public places, and enhancing the capabilities of security forces.

3) Identify: The action plan encompasses the following measures, collecting and analyzing information on terrorist groups and activities, establishing a national system for sharing data among security agencies, investigating thoroughly the suspected terrorist activities, pursuing legal action against terrorists in court, and deporting and removing foreign nationals involved in

terrorism from Nigeria. monitoring financial transactions to identify suspicious activities like money laundering, and freeze or confiscate assets belonging to terrorists. The Identify aspect of NACTEST focuses on proactive measures to reduce the number of terrorist attacks and hinder terrorists' ability to raise funds.

4) Prepare: The Nigerian government boosts its response capabilities by training and properly equipping its agencies and first responders teams. By also planning for different scenarios and creating contingency plans for various types of terrorist attacks. Identification of high-risk areas would be the center of focus to protect these vulnerable areas from attacks. Moreover, preparation should extend to reassurance and communication. Effective communication can help reduce fear and build trust.

5) Implement: This step includes detailed and straightforward action steps to be taken by the respective responsible entity and they can be categorized as such,

- Information Sharing and Border Security:

To improve information sharing and border security, improved Information Sharing by creating a central database, and enhancing border security through strengthening border controls.

- Personnel Screening and Port Security:

Furthermore, the strategy mandates vetting and screening of security personnel to ensure their trustworthiness. Additionally, security measures at ports of entry will be improved to prevent the import of unauthorized items.

- National Identification and Travel Document Security:

Another key action involves implementing a national vehicle identification system with tamper-proof features. To strengthen national identification, the plan also includes stricter background checks for driver's license issuance and a centralized birth and death registration process.

- Crime Prevention and Investigation:

The strategy also focuses on crime prevention through the expansion of CCTV usage and stricter control over the import of materials that can be used to make IEDs.

Moreover, measures to combat cybercrimes will be developed to address emerging security threats.

- Justice System and Law Enforcement:

To ensure effective prosecution of terrorism-related cases, the plan calls for improved investigation and coordination between law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the establishment of a dedicated counter-terrorism unit within the Ministry of Justice will strengthen the justice system's response to terrorism.

- Emergency Preparedness and Response:

The plan recognizes the importance of emergency preparedness by establishing designated Disaster Response Units. In addition, a special counter-terrorism force will be created to handle high-risk situations.

- Countering Radicalization:

A two-pronged approach to counter radicalization includes developing programs to counter extremist ideologies and de-radicalize vulnerable individuals.

By addressing these five key areas, NACTEST aims to create a comprehensive approach to counterterrorism in Nigeria. It's a proactive strategy that prevents terrorism, strengthens defenses, identifies threats early, minimizes damage from attacks, and ensures a coordinated response. The responsibility to carry out the national strategy falls on the shoulders of the Counter-Terrorism Centre (CTC). In the Document, this is specified as such " The Counter-Terrorism Centre (CTC) in the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) has the overall responsibility for coordinating the National Counter-Terrorism Programme. The primary responsibilities of the CTC include the development, direction, and implementation of the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It is also responsible for the implementation of some aspects of the strategy while facilitating oversight of operations by security and intelligence agencies" (NACTEST, 2016)

3.4.1.3 Nigerian power approach to counter terrorism

The Nigerian government has undertaken a range of initiatives to counter the Boko Haram threat, including a significant military response alongside efforts to address underlying grievances through soft power initiatives. The Nigerian approach to counterterrorism especially

in terms of security measures can be distinguished into hard power approach and soft power approach.

1) Hard Power approach: This involves the use of military force to counter the act of terrorism. There was a significant increase in military spending after the terrorist activities of Boko Haram in 2009. "Nigeria's military expenditure had been relatively low up to 2008. In 2009, the beginning of the Boko Haram insurgency witnessed the start of the rise in military expenditure, it rose to 223 billion Naira from 192 Billion Naira in 2008 and in nine years, the military expenditure more than doubled to 465 Billion Naira in 2017. Much of the increase went into funding additional personnel, procurement of weapons, and the general war effort (Mamud, 2022). This was basically, to fund its massive troop recruitment, restructuring of deployments, and creation of new military units specifically designed to counter Boko Haram's tactics.

- Nigeria also established the MNJTF in 2012 alongside neighboring countries Chad, Niger, Cameroon, and Benin to join forces and boost military operations. To counter and disrupt terrorist activities by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups Nigerian Military conducts and takes many operations and security measures. According to the Country Report on Terrorism 2022, Nigeria drafted by the US Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism "The Nigerian Air Force's extensive use of A-29 Super Tucanos — purchased from the United States — against BH and ISIS-WA limited Boko Haram's and ISIS-WA's abilities to mass and conduct large-scale attacks in the Northeast".

- In alignment with its legal framework against terrorism Nigeria is using an approach that combines legal and military collaboration to counterterrorism on its territory as highlighted in this passage by the same report "Attacks and kidnappings in the Northwest by criminal gangs, colloquially known as "bandits," reportedly caused more civilian deaths in 2022 than did BH and ISIS-WA attacks in the Northeast. Nigeria's designation of these groups as terrorists under domestic law the previous year allowed increased use of the military in the Northwest. The Indigenous People of Biafra, proscribed by the Nigerian government as a terrorist group, reportedly conducted violent attacks in the Southeast." In Nigeria's fight against Boko Haram the

Military dominates intelligence gathering. “the practice in Nigeria is different from other states where the military holds a central role in collecting and gathering data for counterterrorism purposes” (Bashir ,2021).

- The formation of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) which is a group of local hunters and vigilantes who assist the military in their fight against Boko Haram. Finally, the example of Private Military Contractors (PMCs) in 2015, Nigeria contracted the South African firm STTEP to train a hostage rescue team and support offensive operations against Boko Haram. The nature of Nigeria’s Boko Haram war has been adapting to the evolvement of the terrorist group (Falode, 2016). “At the initial stage of the conflict between the security forces of Nigeria and Boko Haram, the state made use of its police force to check the activities of the group. Before 2010 Boko Haram’s activities consisted mainly of civil, social, and religious acts of disobedience to established local norms. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) made extensive use of roadblocks and mass arrests to curb and contain Boko Haram’s activities”.

The Nigerian counterterrorism approaches are reactive to the evolvement of Boko Haram’s changing terrorist activities and tactics. “ With the ascension of this new leader the conflict then entered a more virulent phase. After a year of preparations, Boko Haram began to employ new tactics and methods, including suicide bombings. This forced the Nigerian government to establish the Special Military Joint Task Force (SMJTF) in 2011. It consists of personnel from the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Department of State Security (DSS), the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) and the Defence Intelligence Agencies (DIA)” (Mamud, 2022).

2) Soft Power Approach: In this regard, the Nigerian government’s resorting to mediation and negotiations in several attempts to communicate with Boko Haram. Some of these attempts were under the presidency of former President Obasanjo and President Jonathan. These negotiations took place in 2011,2013 and 2018.

- The disarmament and rehabilitation under the Operation Safe Corridor which was launched in 2016 (Mamud ,2022). This program aims to rehabilitate low-risk Boko Haram fighters through religious re-education, psychosocial support, and vocational training.

- The Presidential Initiative on Northeast (PINE), was introduced by President Jonathan in 2011, aiming to address the economic and social factors that contribute to extremism.

- Another initiative is the Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) created in 2014 after the Chibok school kidnapping, SSI aims to improve school safety and access to education in the Northeast. (Mamud, 2022). "The Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) was launched in Nigeria in May 2014 after 276 girls were kidnapped from their school in Chibok, Borno State. It aimed to create a safer enabling environment for schooling in the Northeast". This initiative was later merged into the Presidential Committee on North East Initiatives (PCNI) which is another initiative that was established in 2016 by President Buhari. It was aimed at helping coordinate humanitarian interventions and development efforts.

- Another similar initiative in its aim is the North East Development Commission (NEDC) founded in 2017. This commission was tasked with coordinating development programs and creating a master plan for the Northeast's recovery from the attacks of the terrorist group.

- Lastly, The Victims Support Fund (VSF) which was established in 2014, is a public-private partnership that provides support to victims of Boko Haram through education, livelihood programs, research, and infrastructure development.

Based on this we can conclude that Nigeria's fight against Boko Haram necessitates a multifaceted approach that combines military force with investment in education, economic opportunities, and social justice to address the root causes of extremism.

3.4.2 Collaboration with regional and international partners

According to the same report by the US Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Nigeria worked with neighboring countries under the Multinational Joint Task Force to counter terrorist activity in the region". The report continues to bring to the attention the close ties of Nigeria and its international partners on counterterrorism efforts and states that " Nigeria is a member of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Program.

- The U.S. Mission to Nigeria collaborated with the Nigerian military through the Nigerian Defense Intelligence Agency's Joint Intelligence Fusion Center, the Geospatial Intelligence Directorate Analysis Center, and the Nigeria Defense Intelligence College" .

- In terms of joint efforts to combat terrorism, the US and the Nigerian Government focus on the importance of training programs and capacity-building for the armed forces and other entities. The (2022) report claims that "The Nigerian government continued to participate in U.S. capacity building programs and to work with the FBI to investigate specific terrorism matters, predominantly through the DSS. The Nigerian government has cooperated with the United States and other international partners to prevent further acts of terrorism in Nigeria.

- The report further states the seriousness and commitment of the Nigerian government to its counterterrorism efforts and highlights its counterterrorism progress in countering the financing of terrorism, "Nigeria is a member of the Intergovernmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA). Its FIU, the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit, is a member of the Egmont Group. Nigeria's November GIABA follow-up report noted that the country had made significant progress in addressing the technical compliance deficiencies identified in its 2021 mutual evaluation. The report goes on to say that " Nigeria continued high-level participation in regional security and counterterrorism conferences".

- Nigeria participated in several counterterrorism training sessions sponsored by the United Nations. Nigeria is a member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and co-chairs the

GCTF's Criminal Justice and Rule of Law Working Group with Italy. Nigeria also is an International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law Board member.

- Another important international partner of the Nigerian government on issues of terrorism is the UNODC which is the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and has a regional country office in Nigeria. According to the Office's website "On 15th November, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), working in conjunction with the European Union and the Nigeria Police Force, will launch a new Handbook on Counter-Terrorism Investigations developed exclusively for Nigerian investigators working in the counterterrorism arena" (UNODC, 2019).

This handbook is very important and will help equip Nigerian investigators with the skills to recover evidence, pursue leads, and exploit intelligence in counter-terrorism investigations. It offers practical guidance and insights on evidence-gathering and crime scene investigations to optimize the work of law enforcement professionals and their effectiveness in counterterrorism investigations. The UNODC on their website mentions that " Mr. Oliver Stolpe, UNODC Country Representative to Nigeria, echoed the IG's comments: By combining sound foundational principles with the latest advances in forensic science and investigative best practice, we hope that this Handbook will become an indispensable aid for police trainers working across the country, and help a new generation of Nigerian counterterrorism investigators to hold offenders to account and deliver justice to their victims".

The guidebook plays the role of a comprehensive source that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring investigators possess the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of modern counterterrorism investigations and bring perpetrators to justice. This guidebook is yet another testament to Nigeria's commitment to counterterrorism and its strong relations with international partners. Fully funded by the European Union as part of the longstanding EU-Nigeria-UNODC-CTED Partnership Project to support Nigeria in strengthening criminal justice measures for preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism, the Nigeria Handbook on Counter-Terrorism Investigations exemplifies this dedication (UNODC, 2019).

- The UNODC also partners up with Nigeria intending to strengthen the country's counter-terrorism capacities. Information on the UNODC website indicates that "The counter-terrorism project in Nigeria aims to enhance criminal justice capacity for effective rule-of-law-based investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of terrorist cases; promote inter-agency collaboration on counter-terrorism matters, enhance the national legal regime against terrorism, strengthen international cooperation against terrorism and ensure respect for human rights. The project featured 24 training sessions with practical lessons, role-plays, mentoring, and experience-sharing by counter-terrorism professionals from different parts of the world." Commenting on the project functions Mr Trevor Rajah, Chief of Terrorism Prevention Branch at UNODC headquarters affirmed that " The capacity building program has been focused on practical issues relevant to the challenges that Nigeria is facing right now. We're making sure that the technical assistance is specific and tailored to the needs of Nigeria". The project promotes cooperation between different government agencies involved in counterterrorism efforts. This could include police, intelligence services, and judicial branches working together more seamlessly to share information and coordinate strategies. The project also improves Nigeria's legal framework to better address terrorism. In addition to fostering international cooperation and collaboration with other countries on information sharing, joint operations, and expertise exchange. Overall, this project takes a multi-faceted approach to counter-terrorism in Nigeria. It strengthens the legal system, fosters collaboration within the government and internationally, and equips professionals with the necessary skills to tackle this complex issue.

3.4.2.1 Civil society organizations and community engagement

Military and legal counterterrorism frameworks require the support of strategies for fostering trust and cooperation with communities. Communities must be educated on the negative impacts of terrorism and how they can be active members in counterterrorism efforts. Such strategies do not only include educating the public on identifying and reporting suspicious activity but also on countering extremist narratives.

Community engagement and public awareness are crucial aspects of counterterrorism efforts in Nigeria. By building trust and engaging communities, authorities can understand local concerns and address issues that make them vulnerable to radicalization. Terrorist groups can

exploit the bad economic and social conditions of people to recruit them. Engaging communities can also help with sharing sensitive information. Communities are often the first to notice suspicious activity or individuals. The government can support community efforts by informing them of the signs of radicalization and how to report them to the authorities.

Countering extremist narratives is another important point to consider. Terrorist groups use propaganda to spread fear and recruit followers. To counter such narratives the public can adopt narratives based on promoting peace, tolerance, and the importance of reporting suspicious activity. Some of the public awareness campaigns started by the official authorities in Nigeria include town hall meetings, media campaigns, educational programs, interfaith dialogue, and community policing. Many of these campaigns involve partnerships between government agencies NGOs, community leaders, and media outlets. These campaigns are often tailored to specific regions and use local languages to ensure maximum reach and impact. Campaigns focus on preventative approaches like educating the public, other campaigns focus on deradicalization of ex-combatants and members of terrorist groups.

3.4.2.2 Countering extremist narratives

The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) " is an independent think-and-do tank dedicated to shaping effective and evidence-based policies against terrorism and violent extremism, grounded in human rights and the rule of law". This think tank started its work in Nigeria with counterterrorism projects in 2014. According to the information on their website, Its goal was to counter Boko Haram's appeal and build community resilience in Nigeria. The project was fully funded by the (UNCTITF) UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force. The ICCT, Human Security Collective (HSC), and the Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA) in Nigeria partner together to carry out the agenda of the project. The project came into reality through three phases:

1. Discussions on radicalization, government strategies, and areas for improvement.
2. The stakeholders engaged various civil society organizations with expertise in conflict resolution, peace building, and countering violent extremism.
3. Developing a common agenda for peace and security, local dialogues, and joint activities as a springboard for future projects.

The importance of Civil Society Organizations lies in their deep understanding of Boko Haram and other extremist groups, their tactics, and their extremist ideology. They can be crucial partners for effective counterterrorism strategies due to their expertise in conflict prevention, de-radicalization, education, and interfaith dialogue (ICCT 2014).

3.4.2.3 Rehabilitation and deradicalization programs

As mentioned before programs for reintegrating former terrorists into society are of high importance to the overall Nigerian effort to counter terrorism. It is crucial that addressing the root causes of radicalization is included within the government's counter-terrorism strategies. Search for Common Ground created a Prepared for Peace: Toolkit for Conflict and Violent Extremism in Northern Nigeria". In the toolkit, several chapters talk about some counterterrorism efforts. It describes some of the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of ex-combatants of terrorist groups.

- Operation Safe Corridor conducted by the Nigerian government offers rehabilitation to "low-risk" Boko Haram and ISWAP fighters and their families. This means that the bandits and those not deemed "low risk" will be excluded from the program. The rehabilitation activities encompass religious re-education, psychological support, and vocational training for a period that extended to more than 16 weeks. The IOM supports the program by assisting in tracking some returnees, and NGOs offer livelihood opportunities, psychological support, and education.

The same toolkit report describes Reintegration strategies in Northern Nigeria, these strategies include community engagement, victim support, rehabilitation, reintegration programs, countering stigma, security measures, and accountability processes.

The report affirms the need to "Include communities in planning and implementation of reintegration programs, addressing their concerns and building trust". This refers to cooperating with and involving local community leaders and members in discussions about how reintegration will happen, what support returnees need, and how to address community fears. "Prioritize support for victims of violence, including psychological care and livelihood opportunities, alongside reintegration efforts". The report highlights the need to give victims access to counseling, medical care, and opportunities to rebuild their lives. The returnees as the toolkit describes may need psychological support to deal with their experiences, job training to find

work and generate incomes for themselves, and help reconnect with their communities. “Design holistic programs addressing returnees' needs like trauma healing, vocational training, and social reintegration”. Working with law enforcement to improve security in the community and screening returnees to ensure they are not a security risk is also emphasized by the toolkit document, in addition to “establishing fair and transparent accountability mechanisms for perpetrators” to ensure that communities have trust in the justice processes carried out by the government and accept the returnees among them (SFCG 2022).

- Peace Clubs fit into the overall effort of counterterrorism in Nigeria. These clubs, promote the fostering of tolerance and understanding among young individuals from diverse backgrounds in northern Nigeria. Utilize team sports and dialogues to address ethno-religious tensions and stereotypes. As stated by the source, members are encouraged to “question ethnic stereotypes and prejudices—to think and act as global citizens” (Sodipo, 2013). In addition, empowers young participants with essential life skills, self-esteem, and an attitude of respect toward others. A member named Abdulmalik expresses his growth: “I’ve learned to see things from (fellow Peace Club members') point of view... We’re different, we’re all living in the same country, but we have so many wonderful things to share”. Furthermore, they, cultivate trust among members while involving parents and communities in peace building activities. The program facilitators exert efforts “to build trust among members” which also extends into the community by rekindling “acquaintances among parents...which had evaporated during decades of ethno-religious tensions”.

These programs focus on rehabilitating youth who have been influenced by radical ideologies. They view radicalized youth as “misled” and aim to offer alternative narratives, thereby undermining extremist views and disrupting the activities of those who promote violence. Countering extremist views with education about true Islamic values and tolerance is a key aspect of these programs. Countries like Saudi Arabia address “radicalized Islamists” flawed understanding of fundamental Islamic tenets by waging campaigns about shariah principles, the true values of the Islamic faith, and the importance of tolerance (Sodipo, 2013). Additionally, there is an emphasis on providing support for incarcerated extremists including addressing local

context and reintegration through meaningful alternative social networks (family, community, employment) along with creating a supportive environment upon release.

In conclusion, effective counterterrorism in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach. While dismantling terrorist groups and addressing security threats are vital, fostering community engagement and promoting peace building initiatives are equally important. Civil society organizations with their local expertise and community trust play a crucial role in countering extremist narratives and fostering resilience. Rehabilitation and reintegration programs offer opportunities to steer young people away from radicalization and give former extremists a chance to reintegrate into society.

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the counterterrorism strategies employed in Nigeria by the official authorities and their partners. We have examined the legal frameworks guiding these efforts, the role of military operations and security measures, the importance of intelligence gathering and surveillance, the need for robust border security and international cooperation, and the significance of community engagement. We have also explored the role of rehabilitation and deradicalization programs in reintegrating former extremists and steering youth away from radicalization. In the next chapter, we will critically evaluate these strategies through the lens of constructivism, analyzing their strengths, weaknesses, and potential for fostering lasting peace and security in Nigeria.

CHAPTER FOUR
SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPACT OF COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGIES

4.1 Constructivism and Evaluation of Counterterrorism in Nigeria

Nigeria has been challenged with terrorism for a long time, to deal with this challenge the Nigerian government needed to develop and implement effective counterterrorism strategies. These strategies aim to disrupt terrorist activities and prevent attacks. It also aims to protect civilians and ensure public safety. Addressing the root causes of terrorism like poverty, inequality, and marginalization is another important aspect of counterterrorism strategies. About our theoretical framework, constructivism theory offers a valuable lens to analyze counterterrorism strategies by examining how they shape and are shaped by ideas, narratives, and identities.

While traditional approaches focus on studying counterterrorism strategies from a military might and security measures lens, this study takes a different approach by utilizing constructivism theory to analyze how counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria are shaped. Constructivism theory focuses on shared meanings, it is argued that states don't just react to objective threats, but to how those threats are perceived and constructed through shared ideas and narratives. Constructivism also highlights the "war on terror" discourse as a powerful tool for framing the issue. Moreover, constructivism can help us study the impact of counterterrorism on the identity of the nation and individuals as well.

This chapter will examine how counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria are shaped by the framing of threats, public narratives, and the 'War on Terror' discourse, identity construction, and the impact of these strategies on the country's socio-political life. Some of the key aspects that this chapter will touch upon include the following ideas: How the framing of threats and public narratives surrounding terrorism influence government actions and public perception. We also take a deeper look at how counterterrorism strategies construct identities of different groups, potentially impacting inter-group relations and social cohesion. It is important to consider the

role of knowledge production in shaping public understanding of terrorism and the potential biases within these strategies. In addition, we analyze how existing norms around security, violence, and religious freedom are challenged or reinforced by counterterrorism practices. Moreover, we consider who benefits from these strategies and the potential marginalization of certain groups by examining the underlying power dynamics at play. Lastly, we evaluate the long-term impact of these strategies on achieving peace and security, fostering dialogue, and addressing the root causes of terrorism.

4.2 Threat Framing, Security Narratives, and National Identity in NACTEST

To analyze counterterrorism strategies we must first understand how they are constructed. We can do this by first identifying how key counterterrorism strategies frame the terrorist threat in Nigeria. Second, we understand what narratives are being constructed about terrorism and terrorists. For our research, we will focus on counterterrorism strategies by using Boko Haram as an example to explore the impact of counterterrorism strategies on socio-political life in Nigeria. Following the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria, the government heavily framed the group as a manifestation of religious extremism. This framing influenced media narratives, often portraying Boko Haram fighters as irrational extremists rather than individuals potentially driven by socioeconomic hardships.

To understand how the Nigerian government constructs the terrorist threat, we will analyze the narratives presented within the National Counterterrorism Strategy document and reports by the National Counterterrorism Center. Starting with the NACTEST document, we will study passages from the strategy to bring forward, counterterrorism narratives and security framing approaches by the Nigerian government through a constructivist theory analysis.

The passage of the Presidential Directive outlines the Nigerian government's approach to counterterrorism. We try to interpret the key narratives and threat framing from the Nigerian President's statement through a constructivist lens. In the statement of the Nigerian President, we can infer the following counter-terrorism narratives. Terrorism as a threat to National Unity and Security. Under this narrative the document of NACTEST positions terrorism as a significant threat that undermines national security, unity, and the sanctity of human life. Terrorism is also

presented as an injurious and unjustified act, terrorism is stated to cause indiscriminate killings and fear, with no justification based on race, religion, or political beliefs. The statement also implies that terrorism is rooted in corruption and social issues. Here the President gives a message of acknowledgement of the underlying social issues like poverty, illiteracy, and distrust in government contributing factors to terrorism in Nigeria. Corruption is specifically highlighted as a "cancer" radicalizing individuals.

Terrorism as a national security threat is framed through a holistic approach that focuses on collaboration, coordination, and respect for international norms. The statement describes the government's approach to counterterrorism which advocates for a comprehensive strategy that addresses not just the immediate threat but also the root causes like corruption and social issues. In addition, The President highlights focusing on bringing together relevant stakeholders and coordinating joint efforts as a crucial element in tackling terrorism. The directive of the President also mentions adherence to the Terrorism Prevention Act and international best practices, including international law and human rights.

Viewed from a constructivist point of view, we can argue that this directive reflects the following constructive ideas. First, the directive attempts to construct a shared understanding of terrorism as a threat to national security and unity. Words used by the President like "menace", "devastating causes", and "sustained fight" emphasize the seriousness of the threat. Furthermore, Through a high official statement, the government positions itself as a narrator of events. This reflects its position of authority that can define terrorism and terrorism acts and outline the appropriate response for them. Also, we can interpret an emphasis on addressing root causes which is a main point in the constructivist analysis approach. Here we can underscore the acknowledgment of the role of poverty, corruption, and social issues. This suggests a recognition that the threat is not just about eliminating terrorists but addressing the underlying conditions that make people susceptible to radicalization.

The executive summary published as part of the official NACTEST document provides valuable insights into the Nigerian government's approach to counterterrorism. We can study this passage to first identify counterterrorism narratives, and security threats framing and then

critically comment on them through a constructivist approach. The summary presents terrorism as a new and evolving threat in Nigeria. The document positions terrorism as a "relatively new phenomenon" in Nigeria, distinct from previous acts of violence. This framing emphasizes the threat's complexity and the need for an adaptable strategy. It also describes Boko Haram as a Faceless Enemy. Here the summary refers to the ambiguity surrounding the leadership figures of the terrorist group. Boko Haram is portrayed as lacking clear leadership or boundaries, which potentially can justify a broader definition of terrorism beyond a specific group.

We can notice a focus on root causes in this passage as well, the National Counterterrorism Strategy re-emphasizes the role of poverty, lack of education, and a “pervasive ideology” in fueling terrorism, suggesting a recognition of the socio-economic factors involved. The executive summary highlights the importance of developing a “counter-narrative” to challenge extremist ideologies, highlighting the role of narratives in shaping the understanding of terrorism.

The summary considers “global Islamist terrorism” as the primary threat that the NACTEST should tackle. With international connections like al-Qaeda and ISIS to domestic terrorist acts the document frames and emphasizes the transnational nature of the threat, there is an emphasis on Preventing Radicalization. This comes as part of the “Forestall” step of the counterterrorism strategy. In this step the priority is to address radicalization and promote security awareness, suggesting a focus on preventative measures. Overall, the strategy outlines five workstreams (Forestall, Secure, Identify, Prepare, Implement) encompassing various aspects of counterterrorism, indicating a comprehensive approach. Finally, the summary section emphasizes collaboration between various government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector, highlighting the importance of a coordinated response.

Viewed from a constructivist lens, the mentioned summary reflects constructivist ideas in their meanings. NACTEST attempts to construct a shared understanding of terrorism as a national security threat. Words like "potent threat," "extremist beliefs," and "mass casualties" emphasize the seriousness of the threat. Again, the summary positions the government as the main narrator. The government positions itself as the authority defining terrorism and outlining

the response. The document emphasizes the "Government's priorities" and its "resolve to protect" citizens. In addition, it reflects a focus on creating countering narratives to extremist narratives. NACTEST prioritizes developing a counter-narrative to challenge extremist ideologies. This acknowledges the role of narratives in shaping individuals' choices and actions. Overall, the summary avoids to use of any sensitive language, or overly religious language in its description and framing of security threats. It rather emphasized transparency, collaboration, and flexibility which suggests an openness to adapting the strategy based on evolving narratives and threat perceptions.

The introduction to the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) establishes the context and rationale for the strategy. The introduction positions terrorism as a "worldwide phenomenon" with a global dimension, highlighting its potential to disrupt international peace and security. Then the counterterrorism narrative moves to domestic levels and portrays Boko Haram as the main threat to national security in Nigeria. While mentioning past terror attacks, the introduction primarily focuses on the "ongoing insurgency in the North-East" led by Boko Haram. The introduction passage focuses on violence, fear, and undermining the government's authority then uses these notions to define terrorist acts. This framing emphasizes the disruptive and destabilizing nature of terrorism. What is more, is that the passage avoids solely focusing on civilian casualties and uses the broader term "members of society" as victims of terrorism. This potentially broadens the understanding of those affected by terrorist acts.

Terrorism is seen and framed as the most serious security threat in this passage. It frames terrorism as the "most serious security threat confronting Nigeria today." This prioritizes counterterrorism efforts within the national security agenda. However, it acknowledges the complexity of tackling terrorism and emphasizes the need for a "whole of a society approach." This suggests a willingness to involve various stakeholders beyond just security forces. To counter this security threat, the text highlights the importance of "properly planned preventive measures" within NACTEST. This suggests a shift towards addressing root causes and preventing attacks. As a basic principle, the document emphasizes the need to adhere to "international best practices," human rights standards, and the rule of law. This framing attempts to position Nigeria's counterterrorism approach as legitimate and responsible.

Reflecting on this security narrative with a constructivist approach we note that, the passage supports and continues to present shared meanings and understandings of terrorism as a significant threat in Nigeria. Words like "serious," "violence," "fear," and "undermine authority" emphasize the negative impact of terrorism. Similar to what has been said above, the government keeps its position as the main generator of narratives about terrorism and counterterrorism. Phrases like "Government's strategy" and "need for a comprehensive National Counter-Terrorism Strategy" highlight the government's leadership role. Finally, the need for NACTEST is justified by framing terrorism as a threat requiring a comprehensive response that prioritizes public safety.

The counterterrorism narratives and security threat framing in NACTEST continue in the rest of the document to position Boko Haram as the central threat. It is described as the "greatest threat to Nigeria currently" and the "current threat" facing the nation. This prioritizes Boko Haram within the national counterterrorism strategy. The NACTEST acknowledges the evolution of terrorism in Nigeria, differentiating between "early acts of terrorism" and the "present form" exemplified by Boko Haram. This suggests an evolving threat landscape that requires an adaptable response. The emphasis on bi-annual review suggests an openness to adapting the strategy based on evolving narratives and threat perceptions. As terrorist groups evolved and spread their terror activities, the narratives of the government also became more specific to reflect this change over time. The document highlights Boko Haram's ideology as a key driver of the threat. It emphasizes the group's desire for a Sharia legal system, its opposition to "Western ideals," and its complete rejection of Western culture and civilization.

This framing positions Boko Haram as a threat to national security, societal values, and the secular Nigerian state. The document also highlights a key area related to shifting tactics and targeting. This is about the progress of the terrorist group's agendas and terror activities. Boko Haram's increasing "sophistication" and its use of evolving tactics, including targeting "Christian worship centers" to inflame religious tensions. This suggests an understanding of the group's attempts to exploit societal divisions and destabilize the country. Overall, NACTEST demonstrates a focus on identifying and understanding the root causes of terrorism insurgency. The roles of social, economic, and political factors in fueling the terrorist groups are

acknowledged. This suggests a multi-faceted understanding of the threat that goes beyond just religious extremism.

An important piece in the Nigerian government's counterterrorism puzzle is public opinion. The national counterterrorism strategy underscores the importance of shaping public opinion. It emphasizes the need for "winning the hearts and minds of the population" and using media to counter Boko Haram's narrative. This highlights the role of narratives in countering terrorism and the need for public engagement. These narratives, including the "War on Terror" discourse, shape public perception and government actions. In addition, these narratives influence the construction of the "enemy" and potential biases.

In terms of National Identity Construction in counterterrorism narratives, the heavy emphasis on security measures in Nigeria, such as increased surveillance or limitations on freedom of movement, can potentially push for the creation of a militarized national identity. This can be considered a threat to civil liberties and freedoms and makes it difficult to address the root causes of terrorism. It can also have negative impacts on societies and alienate them from public political life which highlights the constant need to address public perceptions, counter extremist narratives, and promote social cohesion to build resilience against terrorism. Words like "worrisome," "substantial damage," "scourge," "tragic incidents," and "increased radicalization" emphasize the negative impact of the group and help shape the narrative and construct it in a way that demonstrates Boko Haram as a serious threat to national security and societal values. The expressed need for "counter-extremism" alongside counterterrorism throughout the document, suggests a focus on addressing the root causes of radicalization.

The security threat framing approach of the national counterterrorism strategy continues to describe Boko Haram as a “serious”, “sustained”, and “long-term phenomenon” requiring sustained efforts. This constitutes a challenge to the perception of terrorism as a temporary crisis and solidifies the urgent need for a long-term counterterrorism strategy. However, it is not easy to counter the terrorist acts of Boko Haram. The national document describes the group as an elusive enemy. Having recognized the global connections of Boko Haram, NACTEST emphasizes Boko Haram's potential links to "global Islamic terrorist groups" like al-Qaeda and

al-Shabaab, suggesting a broader threat network with international reach. This framing may influence approaches to counterterrorism cooperation and partnerships. Reaching out and collaborating with regional and international partners has become a priority to the Nigerian government and an essential part of its counterterrorism efforts. As the main narrator and authority outlining the national response to terrorism through the NACTEST strategy, the Nigerian government makes use of public communications to convey a sense of unity against a common enemy. Phrases like "national security system," "NACTEST has identified," and "government will take cognizance" highlight the government's leadership role. In addition, the document emphasizes achieving "social cohesion" and "active citizenship" as ways to build resistance to terrorism.

This highlights the importance of social narratives in countering terrorism. NACTEST is also described as a "comprehensive program of action" with short-term and long-term goals. This emphasizes a multi-faceted approach to counterterrorism. Boko Haram is framed as a threat not just due to violence but also due to its ideology, potential international connections, and attempts to exploit societal divisions. This framing attempts to justify a broader counterterrorism strategy that includes ideological challenges, public engagement, and international cooperation. Public engagement is emphasized based on achieving "social cohesion" and "active citizenship" as ways to build resistance to terrorism. This highlights the importance of social narratives in countering terrorism.

To conclude we can say that NACTEST constructs a specific counterterrorism narrative around the domestic national security threat threat of Boko Haram, framing it as a serious, evolving, and ideologically driven terrorist organization. This narrative emphasizes the dangers the group poses to not only national security, but also societal values, and religious harmony. By acknowledging the role of social, economic, and political factors alongside religious extremism, the document recognizes the underlying root causes of terrorism and offers a more nuanced understanding of the threat. However, the emphasis on shaping public opinion and countering extremist narratives reflects a constructivist approach. The NACTEST argues that terrorism is not just a security threat but also a battle over ideas and public perceptions. Countering Boko Haram's ideology and promoting social cohesion become crucial aspects of the national

counterterrorism strategy. This highlights the importance of narratives in shaping the response to terrorism and the potential of constructivism to inform effective counterterrorism strategies.

4.3 NACTEST Challenges and Limitations in Implementation

Counterterrorism efforts like intelligence gathering and law enforcement cooperation can identify and stop terrorist attacks before they happen. They can also deter potential terrorists from engaging in terrorist acts and improve public safety and security. However, Balancing security strategies and measures with civil liberties can be challenging for some national governments. Addressing root causes and allocating funds for implementing and maintaining effective counterterrorism programs can also be difficult. While soft power approaches to terrorism may not be sufficient, overly aggressive counterterrorism tactics can isolate and radicalize certain communities, potentially creating a breeding ground for future terrorism.

The effectiveness of the Nigerian government's counterterrorism strategies in achieving security. Focusing on reducing attacks while addressing root causes would be considered a strategic approach to tackling terrorism security threats. While the Nigerian counterterrorism strategies have been successful in some areas there are still challenges and limitations in implementing these strategies.

The objectives of NACTEST as stated before are summarized in five main action steps, which are 1) Forestall, 2) Secure, 3) Identify, 4) Prepare, and 5) Implement. In this part of the analysis, we will try to critically review and evaluate the effectiveness of this approach formulated for counterterrorism in Nigeria.

4.3.1 Effectiveness and limitations of forestall

First, Forestall means “Preventing terrorism in Nigeria by engaging the public through sustained enlightenment/sensitization campaigns and deradicalization” (NACTEST, 2014). Its positive effects on society and counterterrorism include creating small businesses and improving access to education, especially in impoverished regions of the North, deradicalization programs are also another positive aspect of the strategy. These programs have the potential to make a

positive impact in the long term by creating economic opportunities and providing education, these initiatives can address the underlying issues of poverty and lack of opportunity that make individuals more vulnerable to radicalization. In the short and long term, this can help protect and empower people against violent extremism and ideologies. According to Faluyi (2017) the focus on good governance, poverty reduction, and education demonstrates a recognition that simply reacting to terrorist attacks is not enough. Nigeria has a long history of governance issues and one of the biggest challenges to the effective implementation of such counterterrorism strategies is inadequate governance and corruption . " In 2015, Nigeria ranked 36th in Africa's good governance index, as the country stood at 46.5%, which is below Africa's average of 50%" (Faluyi, 2017). By tackling the underlying social, political, and economic conditions on all levels the Forestall objective can help prevent terrorism before it happens.

Some of the negative aspects related to NACTEST effectiveness is the monitoring of religious institutions which can be a potentially controversial approach that may not directly prevent terrorism. This step can be seen as discriminatory and marginalizing of certain groups. It also highlights the potential for abuse of power and limiting the freedoms of religion. The overall effectiveness of the NACTEST initiatives might be hampered by practical challenges. This means that the poor state of Nigerian prisons for example can be a potential obstacle to the success of the deradicalization program (Faluyi, 2017).

4.3.2 Effectiveness and limitations of secure

This step is related to the practical in-field approach to counterterrorism, meaning military operations, intelligence gathering, etc. The positive aspects of this step include the efforts to strengthen border security through increased patrols, improved screening measures at airports, and collaboration with regional bodies. The training and equipping of security agencies for counterterrorism is also of crucial importance. The creation of specialized units and the relocation of the military command center to the center of terrorist activities in Maiduguri is a strategic positive approach. The use of CJTF which is the Civilian Joint Task Force, to assist with intelligence gathering and arrests as locals and members of a community are the first line of

the development of events. It is an effective outlook for the government to recognize and help organize such vigilante groups and integrate them into various security outfits.

However, these initiatives are not always smooth to implement and can have their negative aspects. Challenges to this step can include issues of corruption and inadequate staffing which hinder efforts and sabotage securing the long and porous borders of Nigeria. Other similar issues to corruption are internal mistrust and effective information sharing among different security agencies. In addition, Corruption within the military, with some funds allocated for counter-terrorism efforts is mismanaged. Potential risks associated with the CJTF, include allegations of human rights abuses and concerns about their long-term role. Human rights abuses by security forces, including extra-judicial killings, arbitrary detentions, and a lack of civilian oversight.

4.3.3 Effectiveness and limitations of identify

Identify is aimed at ensuring the proper investigation, prosecution, and punishment of terrorists and their financiers. Positive aspects include a deliberate effort to properly train law enforcement and judiciary on counterterrorism, in addition to improving prison conditions so that the deradicalization process of ex-militants can be successful and ease their reintegration back into society. Enhanced data collection advocated by the strategy can play an important role in effective birth and death registration, which helps the government keep track of the demographics of terrorist groups and their associates. Along the same lines, the monitoring of cyber activities comes in handy as many terrorist groups resort to social media to expand their recruitment process and spread their extremist ideology. In terms of combating terrorism on a financial level, NACTEST aspires to create legal frameworks that prohibit terrorism financing through the Money Laundering Prohibition Act (MLPA) and the Terrorism Prevention Act (TPA). Not only that but training financial institutions to detect suspicious transactions and generate Monitoring Critical Transaction Reports (CTRs) and Suspicious Transaction reports (STRs) submitted by financial institutions.

Overall these initiatives are effective in their aim to limit access to funds for terrorist groups however there are challenges to this aspect of the strategy. Loopholes in the legal and

financial systems can be identified by terrorist groups and exploited to their advantage. Delays in asset freezing and lack of monitoring of nonprofit organizations can be a cover for such suspicious activities. The legal system as well as the military and law enforcement are accused of human rights abuses as there are reported cases of extra-judicial killings and arbitrary detentions by security forces. (Faluyi, 2017)

4.3.4 Effectiveness and limitations of prepare

The objective of prepare here is to reduce the impact of terrorist attacks on the population. The initiatives taken under this aim include emergency response measures. 24/7 call center for reporting suspicious activities (ONSA) and disaster Response Units by NEMA in government buildings. Toll-free emergency hotlines by NEMA and IDP cams for displaced persons that are managed by NEMA and other NGOs. For Post Attack Support the government also created initiatives that focus on humanitarian aid like providing food, and medical services for displaced people as well as providing economic assistance to families of victims through the Presidential Initiative for the North East (PINE) and Victims Support Fund (VSF). There is also the Safe School Initiative to improve school security and PTSD clinics for those with psychological trauma. The strategy emphasizes the importance of effective risk identification. This comes from effective training exercises to prepare for attacks and intelligence gathering to discover bombs and potential targets.

Some of the challenges that Faluyi (2017) identifies in this respect include the difficulty remembering long emergency hotlines is difficult in emergencies, and IDP camps struggle with malnutrition and corruption. Security measures also have limitations. CCTV cameras are unreliable due to power cuts and vandalism, and terrorists still manage to acquire bomb-making materials despite restrictions. Finally, resources are stretched thin, with PTSD clinics only reaching a small portion of those needing help. These inefficiencies leave the population vulnerable despite NACTEST's efforts.

4.3.5 Effectiveness and limitations of implement

In this phase, the goal is to coordinate efforts across government agencies, security forces, and civil society to combat terrorism. The positive effects of this step include increased vigilance and intelligence-gathering efforts. The disruption of terrorist activities and recapture of territories. Enhanced training, funding, and intelligence sharing through international cooperation. Lastly, the promotion of inter-religious harmony. Nonetheless, there are equally some challenges associated with the implementation. Such challenges can include distrust and poor information sharing among security agencies and the difficulty in maintaining control of recaptured territories. Resource constraints are a major problem in the implementation of the overall strategy. Displaced people often face hard conditions in camps and limited reach of PTSD clinics and rehabilitation programs.

NACTEST's five-step strategy tackles counter-terrorism through a mix of preventive and reactive measures. The "Forestall" objective emphasizes disrupting terrorist activities and financing, but achieving this requires strong intelligence-sharing and interagency cooperation, which have proven to be weak points in the Nigerian context due to corruption issues. "Secure" focuses on safeguarding critical infrastructure and borders, but faces obstacles like resource constraints and maintaining control over recaptured territories. "Identify" aims to detect potential threats and vulnerabilities, though limitations include inefficient emergency hotlines and public distrust due to corruption within the displaced people's camps. "Prepare" strives to mitigate the impact of attacks by building resilience within government entities and society, but challenges include limited access to rehabilitation programs. Finally, "Implement" seeks to coordinate the entire counter-terrorism effort, yet faces difficulties like information sharing between agencies and ensuring transparency in international partnerships. While NACTEST offers a well-rounded approach, overcoming these challenges is crucial for its success in safeguarding Nigeria from the persistent threat of terrorism.

4.4 Evaluation of Effectiveness and Impact of Counterterrorism strategies

The effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria has both negative and positive impacts. The positive aspects can include the use of diplomacy and opening communication

channels with terrorist groups to protect hostages. To engage with Boko Haram through diplomacy and understanding their motivations could lead to a resolution. The importance of soft power and addressing root causes can help gain and foster public trust and reduce radicalization. Moreover, focusing on socio-political and economic issues like poverty and unemployment can make communities less susceptible to extremist recruitment.

While upholding human rights values in the NACTEST document is clear translating this into real-life military operations, investigations, and legal measures is controversial and difficult to implement. The excessive military force and reliance on harsh tactics can only lead to the alienation of the population and create a breeding ground for extremism and violence. The poor material equipment, improper training, and lack of resources coupled with corruption create a serious block to the efforts and initiatives to counter-terrorism.

4.4.1 Social Life and Human Security

The Nigerian governments military response has been criticized for its excessive use of force and human rights abuses. The military is accused of using aggressive tactics, committing extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detentions. In addition, it is accused of inflicting collective punishment on innocent civilians without any measures of accountability.

4.4.1.1 Fear and mistrust of government

Fear and mistrust is also another effect of military force abuses on the society in general and communities directly affected by terrorist attacks and military operations. Security forces became a source of fear, eroding trust between citizens and the government. This creates a sense of mistrust and fuels tensions. Communities and citizens become filled with resentment and anger. The perspectives of communities understudy by scholars constituted a knowledge gap in the literature on the evaluation of counterterrorism strategies taken by the Nigerian government. The used military force and negotiations carried out by the government are limited and without success, they recommend that counterterrorism should involve the community to be more effective.

There is a wide disconnect between what the government does in terms of counterterrorism strategies and what the communities think is helpful. This is a clear example of the sense of fear and mistrust that communities struggle with as an effect of counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria. “The review is particularly important and significant in informing existing counterterrorism strategies, which seems limited by the disconnect between how the communities, including victims and former Boko Haram combatants, perceive the root causes of terrorism and how the State responds to it” (Ike et al., 2022).

This highlights that the Nigerian governments attempt to fight Boko Haram and other terrorist groups is not effective but rather is doing the opposite and creating more social and political disruptions within the society. The data collected by Amnesty International (2024) found that “military interventions represents a dominant intervention perceived to be abused by the security forces”. In a 2024 report by Amnesty International, the NGO affirms that “The Nigerian military counter-terrorism operations in Northeast Nigeria led to gross human rights violations and crimes under international law including extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, and incommunicado detention. Since July 2019, the Nigerian air force has carried out at least 17 fatal airstrikes on civilian settlements. Also, since 2021, security forces have committed several human rights violations in their response to spiraling violence in southeast Nigeria”. While the Nigerian military combats terrorism in the Northeast, their tactics raise serious concerns.

Reports indicate numerous human rights violations including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and civilian airstrikes. This heavy-handed approach extends to the Southeast as well, where security forces have been accused of similar abuses.

4.4.1.2 Disruption of social life

Disruption of social life and communities is a direct result of checkpoints and heavy security presence and curfews. Such security measures limit people’s ability to move freely, hindering daily activities and routines. This leads to the disruption of work schedules and economic opportunities. Workers and business owners face issues with their daily activities and trade. Business and trade routes are disrupted and so are incomes and money flows. In addition

to the disruption of professional and economic lives, social life and interactions are affected due to the heavy security presence which creates a tense atmosphere, making people hesitant to gather or socialize freely.

Checkpoints can become flash points for frustration and conflict, especially of seen as discriminatory or unfair. Security measures can divide communities, with some residents cooperating with security forces and others viewing them with suspicion. The sense of fear and mistrust can make it difficult for communities to work together and address local issues. This can even lead to creating the opposite effect, communities and individuals can be lead to be radicalized and brain washed by extremists. Curfews and restrictions on movement can disrupt traditional ceremonies, festivals, and gatherings, hindering cultural expression and transmission. Arbitrary detention is also one of the preventative measures that Nigeria is implementing in its counterterrorism approach that has a lot of negative impacts on the social fabric of Nigeria.

4.4.1.3 Unlawful detention, maltreatment and death of civilians

Arbitrary detention cases are not only illegal but also leads to the imprisonment of innocent citizens without having gone through fair trials. Thousands of accused Boko Haram affiliated citizens are held arbitrarily by the military and intelligence services and some of them get executed. As reported by Amnesty International (2015) “In the course of security operations against Boko Haram in north-east Nigeria, Nigerian military forces have extrajudicially executed more than 1,200 people; they have arbitrarily arrested at least 20,000 people, mostly young men and boys; and have committed countless acts of torture. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Nigerians have become victims of enforced disappearance; and at least 7,000 people have died in military detention. Amnesty International has concluded that these acts, committed in the context of a non-international armed conflict, constitute war crimes for which military commanders bear both individual and command responsibility, and may amount to crimes against humanity”. The report elaborated further on cases of arbitrary arrests and underscores that as high as 20,000 people, mostly young men have been arrested in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states since 2011. It is suspected that the real number is actually much more higher due to the lack of a centralized record system. The report notes that there is a pattern of increased arrests during emergencies,

the organization identifies that there is a spike in the rate of arrests when emergency states are declared in the region. According to military data over 4,500 people were arrested between January 2012 and July 2013, including 1,600 during Operation Restore order I.

The report details many stories of extrajudicial killings by the Nigerian military. Some of them are as follows, Giwa Barracks Massacre took place in 2014 where at least 640 detainees who escaped a Boko Haram attack were recaptured and killed by the military. The incident was documented by Amnesty International through interviews and videos. Another case of killings is the Damaturu killings of 2013, where 64 detainees whom were held for months got shot by soldiers in revenge for the deaths of two colleagues. Their bodies were dumped in a mass grave. Moreover, the Bama killings that took place the same year as the Damaturu killings, resulted in the deaths of 35 men who were accused of being Boko Haram after being beaten and loaded into a truck to later be killed by soldiers after a screening operation. The report also highlights the issue of deaths in custody "More than 7,000 people, mainly men and boys have died in military detention since March 2011, according to information collected by Amnesty International. These deaths were often not properly or officially recorded and almost never investigated. Amnesty International gathered the data and the details of individual cases through visits to mortuaries in Maiduguri, internal military reports, statistics recorded by local human rights activists and interviews with witnesses, victims, former detainees, hospital staff, and military sources. In the last two years, Amnesty International gathered 70 testimonies about death in custody, including with 30 former detainees".

There is a significant issue of mass arbitrary detention, where suspects are held for months and even years without charges. Abba confirmed that the UN documented over 3,600 detentions of children by the Nigerian military between 2013-2019. Direct civilian deaths resulted from air strikes that targeted areas where there is Boko Haram presence. The 2022 Country report on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria conducted by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor affirm that "Military operations against ISIS-WA, Boko Haram, and criminal bandit targets resulted in civilian deaths. On February 18th 2022, the air force reportedly killed 12 civilians, including at least four children, during an airstrike targeting bandit leaders on the border with the neighboring country of Niger. Although the air force launched an

investigation into the strike, the results and follow-up measures were not made public. On April 13th 2022, the air force reportedly killed at least six children in a strike in Niger State. The air force and the Niger state government denied civilians were killed". This highlights the tragic civilian casualties resulting from Nigerian military operations against militant groups. Despite the air force investigating incidents like the February airstrike, a lack of transparency around findings and accountability raises concerns about protecting civilians in future operations.

Torture by the Nigerian military is another issue that affects citizens safety and security. Amnesty International has reported several torture cases and ill treatments by official Nigerian forces. "The report, 'Welcome to hell fire', torture in Nigeria, published in September 2014, concluded that torture and other ill treatment in the north-east of Nigeria have increased over the last few years as the conflict has escalated. Former detainees interviewed by Amnesty International described a wide range of torture methods used by the military, including beatings; shootings; nail and teeth extractions; and rape and other sexual violence; as well as conditions in detention that amount to ill-treatment, at a minimum". Nigeria's counterterrorism efforts raise serious concerns beyond human rights violations.

SBM intelligence which is an Africa focused market intelligence, security analysis and strategic consulting firm presented an analysis of the impact of air strikes on civilians. In a 2023 article the firm gave a detailed report on Nigeria Air Force mishaps. According to the report 14 cases of air strikes were there was civilians casualties between January 2017 until January 2023. During this period "more than 300 people have been killed in airstrikes carried out by the Nigerian Airforce in pursuit of terrorists". A Human Rights Watch report (2023) investigated some military air operations. It recounts that a Nigerian Air Force airstrike in Kwatiri, Nasarawa State on January 24th 2023 tragically killed 39 civilians and injured 6. The victims were cattle herders following instructions from Benue authorities after their cows were seized. While the military claims they targeted "suspected terrorists," there's no evidence to support this. No one has been arrested and investigations haven't provided answers. The victims' families are demanding justice, an investigation, and compensation.

The Nigerian government has admitted responsibility but offered limited reparations. The NGO is alarmed by this potential war crime, Nigeria's history of similar incidents, and the lack of accountability. It urges international pressure to force reform in Nigeria's military practices. “In 2013, the military allegedly killed as many as 200 civilians in the town of Baga, in northeastern Borno state” (Reuters, 2023). On another note,” In October 2020, thousands of protesters successfully demanded the disbanding of the police Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), members of which the NHRC found had extorted, tortured and killed civilians. That same month, the army and police opened fire on protesters in Lagos, killing at least 11, according to a state judicial panel” (Reuters 2023).

This horrific practice by the Nigerian military not only violates basic human rights but also risks creating a cycle of violence by fueling resentment and radicalization in the communities affected. A Reuters investigation exposed potential war crimes by Nigerian soldiers in the northeast. Soldiers are accused of deliberately killing children, believing them to be future terrorists. The killings occurred in various situations, from raids to operations meant to eliminate all survivors. Motivations ranged from vengeance to viewing children of insurgents as threats. The military allegedly covered up these acts, often in remote areas, making investigations challenging. “More than 40 soldiers and civilians told Reuters they witnessed the Nigerian military kill children or saw children's corpses after a military operation. Estimates totaled in the thousands. Reuters investigated six incidents in which at least 60 died. One mother described the deaths of her twin babies: “The soldiers said they killed those children because they are children of Boko Haram” (Reuters Investigates 2022).

The Global Centre For The Responsibility To Protect published an article in 2024 that details accounts of killings and deaths related to terrorist groups’ activities in Nigeria. It estimates that over 8.3 million people need assistance due to violence. The death toll by Boko Haram attacks between 2009 and 2020 is estimated to be at 35.000 people killed. Furthermore, there are at least 10.000 pregnancies allegedly terminated by the Nigerian military. Moreover, many recent attacks in 2023 and their death toll number, in “November 25, 2023: At least 150 civilians kidnapped in Zamfara State. December 23-25, 2023: At least 190 people killed in Plateau State clashes. January 23-24, 2024: At least 30 people were killed in Plateau State

clashes. January 3, 2024: At least 17 people killed in Kaduna State attack. December 5, 2023: At least 85 civilians were killed in a Nigerian airstrike on Kaduna State religious ceremony. November 1, 2023: At least 40 people were killed in a Yobe State attack by suspected Boko Haram fighters. November 5, 2023: At least 15 farmers were killed by Boko Haram in Borno State. February 4, 2024: Unconfirmed number of civilians killed in Yobe State attack" (GCR2P, 2024). Overall, the center exposes a horrific situation in Nigeria, where violence by armed groups and security forces has displaced millions and left a trail of death.

Amnesty International's reports detail a horrific pattern of torture, including beatings, sexual violence, and inhumane detention conditions. These methods not only inflict immense suffering but also fail to provide any meaningful intelligence. The lack of access to lawyers and doctors further entrenches a culture of impunity. This brutality risks radicalizing detainees and alienating the very communities the government seeks to protect.

4.4.1.4 Psychological trauma

Psychological trauma associated with witnessing counterterrorism military operations, raids, killings, bombings, and general abuses by security forces have a heavy impact on the mental well being of Nigerians. Living in a highly militarized environment can lead to anxiety, fear, and a sense of powerless among citizens. Abuses can create a breeding ground for extremism, pushing people towards terrorist groups like Boko Haram. According to Abba (2020) children receive abusive treatment in the Northeast by Nigerian Military forces. Abbas states that a report by Amnesty International details how children who escaped Boko Haram are detained and tortured by the Nigerian military. These children that escape Boko Haram were ill treated, beaten, tortured and even subjected to sexual abuses by adult inmates in detention centers.

4.4.1.5 Displacement of citizens and destruction of properties

Displacement often means abandoning homes and farms, leading to unemployment and economic hardship. Displaced communities, crowded camps and the humanitarian crisis that developed due to the forced relocation of people from the North to other regions is one of the

direct impacts of the Nigerian military counterterrorism operations. Displaced people who become refugees experienced traumatizing violence. A 2023 Crisis Group report details two waves of displacement. The first occurred as Boko Haram rampaged through towns, forcing residents to flee. The second wave unfolded in 2015 when the military, in an offensive against Boko Haram, relocated civilians from Boko Haram-controlled areas to urban centers, overwhelming cities like Maiduguri. Millions now reside in overcrowded camps with limited access to basic necessities like food, water, and sanitation.

The Norwegian Refugee Council warns of inadequate shelter and a high risk of diseases like Cholera. A 2022 HRW report describes families struggling with hunger after aid groups stopped food rations. This further strains resources in already crowded camps. Human Rights Watch (HRW) highlights that The UNHCR 2022 reported that "As of July 2022, the Boko Haram conflict had displaced about 2.2 million people in the Northeast, the vast majority–over 1.8 million—in Borno State. The conflict also displaced over 280,000 refugees from the Northeast into three neighboring countries—Cameroon, Chad, and Niger." A 2016 Displacement Tracking report by IOM Nigeria reported that 1,878,205 Internaly Displaced People were captured through the organizations tracking matrix. Figure 5 details the numbers of displaced people in areas of Nigeria where many of the terrorist and counterterrorism operations have been taking place. The largest numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria are concentrated in the northern and central regions. Borno state in the northeast has the highest number of IDP, exceeding 1.4 million person. Other states with substantial IDP populations include Adamawa, Yobe, Benue, and Plateau.

In similar lines, we can note the issue of torched villages in the course of carrying out military operations against Boko Haram. Amnesty Internation (2020) accused Nigerian military of War Crimes the organization reported that the Nigerian military not only burned entire villages but also displaced civilians in Borno state. This came as a response to recent terrorist activities by Boko Haram. The post details that the military burned the villages of Bukarti, Ngariri, and Matiri in early January 2020. There was clear evidence gathered through eye witnesses testimonials, and analyzed satellite imagery that confirmed the burning. Over 400 villagers were forcibly displaced and lost their homes and belongings.

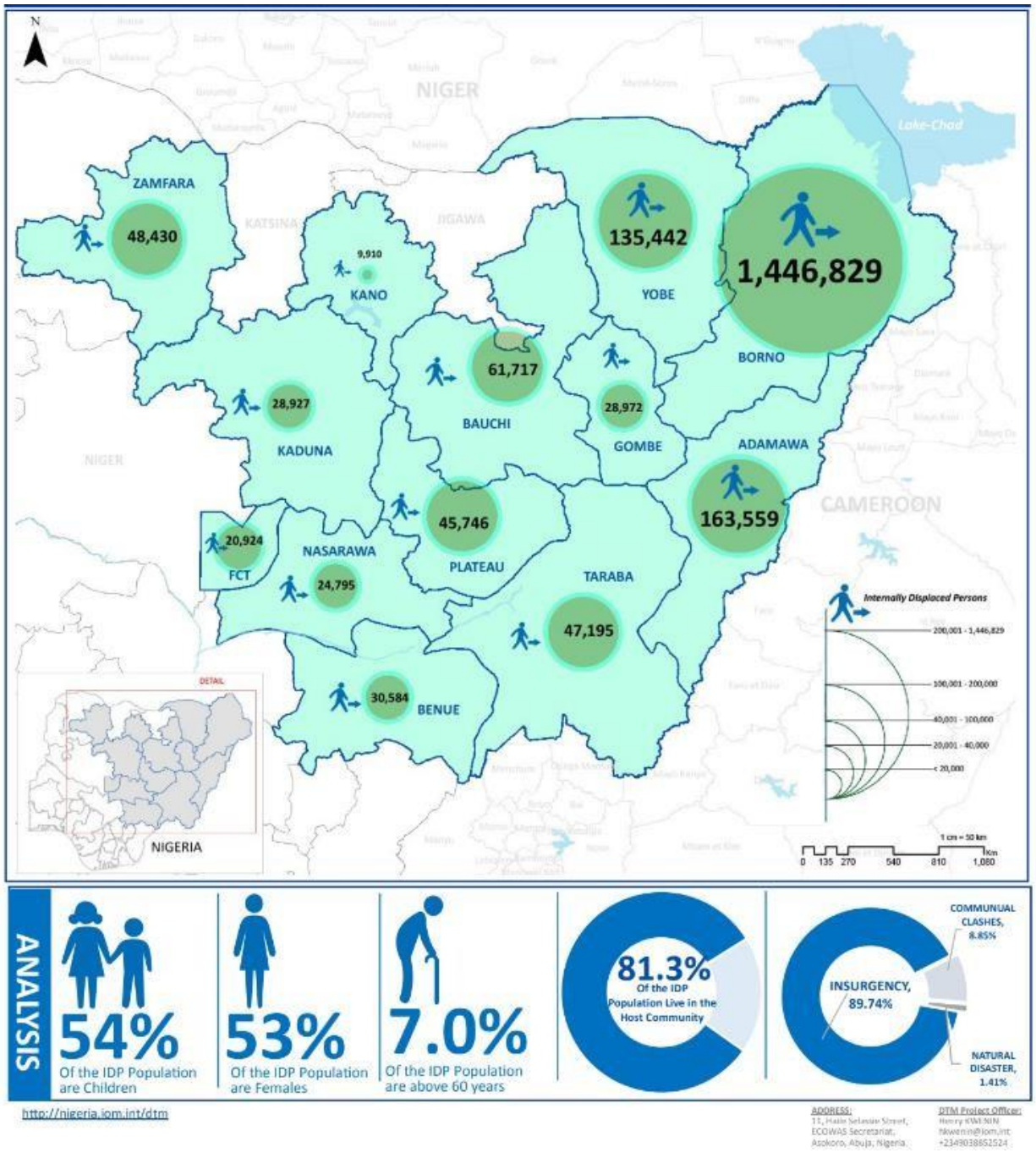


Figure 5: Displacements of civillians in Nigerian states with Boko Haram attacks and military counterattack

Source:http://nigeria.iom.int/dtm

The 2022 report by HRW describes the difficult situation in these camps and claims that aid groups stopped providing food rations, leaving families hungry. “Many displaced people in Maiduguri said they suffered severe hunger after agencies including the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Borno State Emergency Management Authority (SEMA) stopped providing monthly food rations and cash transfers for food” (HRW 2022). Finding shelter is also a big challenge for displaced people, they can either join overly crowded government camps or resort to building tents and other temporary structures. The report describes the situation in informal camps in Maiduguri. “In some informal camps in Maiduguri, private landowners have given permission to displaced people to build structures consisting mostly of thatch or tarpaulin for temporary shelter. People live independently in these camps, which are not organized or supported by the government. Humanitarian agencies, however, sometimes provide one-off support to some informal camps by constructing latrines or donating thatch and tarpaulin to enable displaced persons to build shelters”.

These disruptions to social life and communities can have long lasting consequences, hindering economic development, social cohesion, and cultural vibrancy. The Boko Haram terrorism in northern Nigeria has unfolded as a devastating humanitarian crisis. Millions are displaced, struggling with hunger, inadequate shelter, and disease. The loss of life, estimated in the hundreds of thousands, exposes the urgent need for international intervention to protect civilians, deliver aid, and find a lasting solution to the violence.

According to Musa (2019) “the conduct of soldiers only worsens the security situation for ordinary people”. He elaborates saying “I identified two factors as responsible for the problems: The first was a lack of military professionalism. Soldiers often intimidate and coerce civilians. They also engage in corruption and extortion, especially at military checkpoints. Some soldiers also subject civilians to psychological and emotional abuse. Yet others engage in blatant and flagrant acts of sexual and gender-based violence. The second factor I identified was the fact that the command-and-control structure of the military is at odds with the way society operates” .

4.4.2 Education Opportunities

There is an impeding education crisis, in Nigeria as a result of kidnappings and school closures by the government due to security concerns related to terrorist activities in the North. A 2024 Amnesty International report affirm that “Nigeria has failed in its responsibility to protect people from various abuses committed by Boko Haram and Islamic States West African Province (ISWAP) as well as unknown gunmen as many schools remain closed.

4.4.2.1 School closure

“Recent attacks on schools, particularly in the North-East and North-West regions in 2021, have led to learning disruptions for over 1.3 million children, necessitating precautionary school closures” (UNICEF, 2024). Nigeria's counterterrorism efforts, while crucial for safety, come at a cost to education. Military operations in the Northeast, despite human rights concerns, are a response to groups like Boko Haram who have targeted schools and education. This violence has displaced thousands, forced school closures, and left many children afraid to attend classes. The government's struggle to protect civilians creates a vicious cycle - counterterrorism disrupts education, making children more vulnerable to extremist recruitment in the long run.

A report by SBM (2024) on education in Nigeria, brings to light the total number of kidnapped students which is 2,190, the kidnapped staff which is 19 and the total number of facilities affected by armed groups. The report also suggests that the current number of out of school children which is 10 million is likely to rise in the aftermath of the continuity of terrorist activities and security measures that dictate the closure of schools.

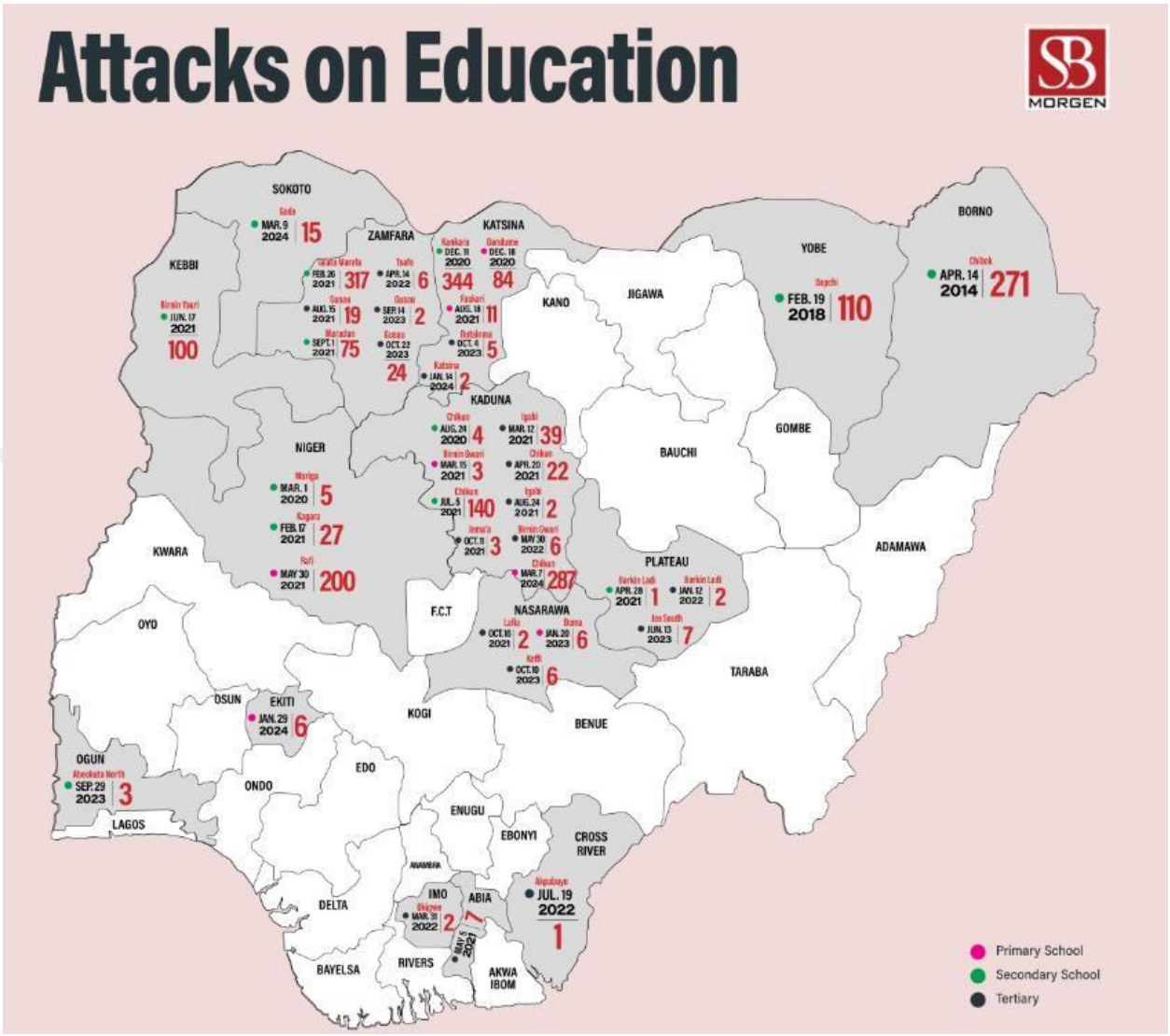


Figure 6: Map showing attack on education at different levels (primary, secodary and tetiary)

Source: SBM Intelligence (2024)

School closures and displacement, are two side effects of counterterrorism strategies and operations in Nigeria. Boko Haram attacks and the military responses to them have led to numerous school closures across the Northern region of Nigeria. In May 14th 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls from a boarding school in Chibok. This horrific event, along with numerous subsequent attacks on schools by the group, instilled fear and led to widespread school closures

across northern Nigeria. This came as a security measure taken by the Nigerian government in an attempt to divert potential attacks on schools. A UNICEF report from 2013 estimates that over 2,000 schools have been closed due to the insurgency. The report also highlights that the infrastructure of schools is damaged "In northeast Nigeria, at least 496 classrooms have been destroyed and 1,392 classrooms have been damaged but repairable" (UNICEF, 2013).

"In the last 10 years, conflict-related violence has led to more than 1,680 children abducted while at school and elsewhere; 180 children killed due to attacks on schools; an estimated 60 school staff kidnapped and 14 killed; and more than 70 attacks on schools, according verified reports by the United Nations." The threat of kidnappings of students is heavily affecting children's education and that more than 1 million children don't want to go back to school do to dear and anxiety and identifies that 11,500 schools are closed due to the attacks in the region according to Policy Weekly by Nextier (UNICEF, 2024). Although the Nigerian government has made significant progress in its approach to protecting children and their education opportunities, these efforts fall short and many children remain unsafe and unable to access education opportunities.

A January 2024 report by UNICEF Nigeria claims that "A recent evaluation indicates that, on average, only 43% of the Minimum Standards for Safe Schools are being met in about 6,000 assessed schools. This finding particularly highlights challenges in ensuring the safety of school infrastructure and in mitigating risks such as violence, conflict, and natural hazards". Military operations aimed at disrupting and capturing Boko Haram often involve heavy shelling and airstrikes. UNICEF's representative in Nigeria, Peter Hawkins, expressed concern over rising school violence in the North-west and North-central regions. These attacks, including abductions of students and teachers, have deterred many children, especially girls, from attending school. He highlighted that these regions alone have seen over 1,400 school children abducted and 16 killed since late 2020, contributing significantly to Nigeria's high number of out-of-school children, with girls being the most affected (The Cable, 2022). Figure 6 shows the number of school drop outs by region due to the impact of terrorism and counterterrorism in Nigerian.

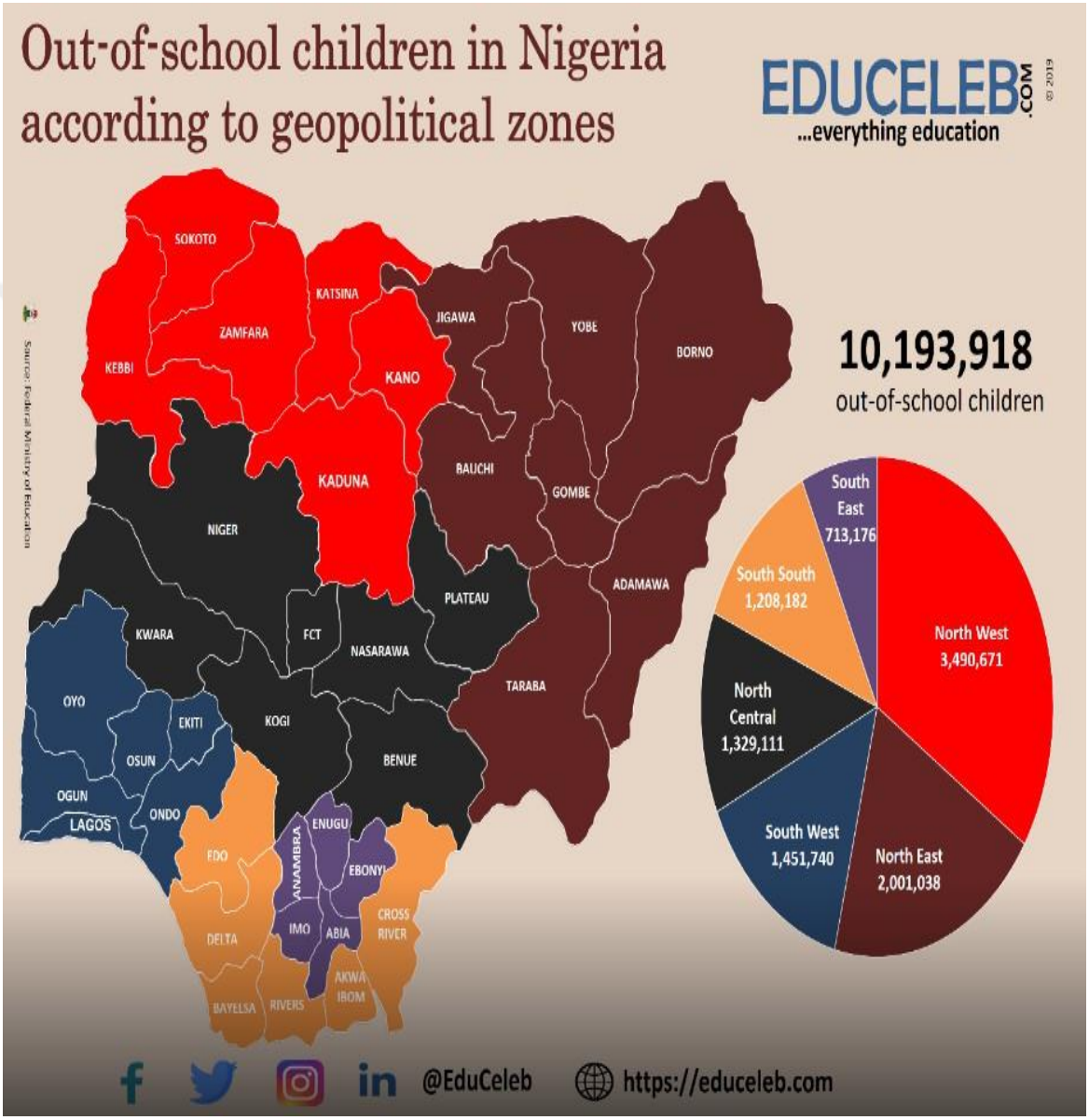


Figure 7: Map showing school dropout according to geo-political zones in Nigeria.

Source: http://educeleb.com

4.4.2.2 Psychological trauma

Increased militarization in schools, and being exposed to terrorist attacks first hand creates a traumatic experience for students. “Our results show that conflict exposure decreases school enrolment. Interestingly, the effect is larger for students who are no longer of mandatory school-age, i.e. those for whom school is no longer compulsory and free. We also find that conflict reduces the number of years of education completed, with the effect being larger for male students” (Bertoni et al., 2019). In response to Boko Haram attacks, the Nigerian government has stationed military personnel in schools located in high-risk areas. While intended to provide security, the presence of armed soldiers can create a tense atmosphere, intimidating students and teachers.

4.4.2.3 Shortage of staff

Teacher shortages due to the violence associated with the terrorism discourages qualified teachers from working in high-risk areas. This has led to a shortage of teachers, particularly in northern Nigeria, which in turn reduces the quality of education available to children who remain in school. Teachers have not been spared from the violence. Boko Haram has targeted teachers they view as promoting Western education. In 2018, a group of teachers were brutally murdered in Gubio, Borno state, sending a chilling message and deterring others from pursuing the profession in these areas.

The military operations and activities can displace entire communities, forcing families to escape and disrupting children's education. Prioritizing safety through counterterrorism efforts disrupts children's education, potentially making them more susceptible to extremist groups in the long run. The country is caught in a vicious cycle of violence, displacement, and a growing number of out-of-school children. Urgent solutions are needed to address the root causes of terrorism while ensuring safe access to education for all Nigerian children. This requires a multifaceted approach that tackles not only the security threats but also invests in rebuilding schools, supporting displaced families, and creating a more secure environment for educators.

4.4.3 Political stability and security

Political stability and security are directly linked to in-field military operations and how they are carried out. As the Commander in Chief, the President appears as the first figure of government and its success or failure. The implementation of counterterrorism strategies is one of the presidential responsibilities. Meaning political decisions directly impact military decisions and in other words military operations and counterterrorism strategies.

4.4.3.1 Distrust in government

The military and the government are two institutions that effect each other. One of the issues that is elated to the impacts of counterterrorism on political stability is the misconduct of military personnel and the abuse of power they demonstrate. For average Nigerian citizens, all government bodies are intertwined and represent the government power. When official entities demonstrate an unethical behaviour or an abuse of power it will directly reflect on the general image of the government and lead to resentment among citizens. In the long term this can mean that people could be easily attracted and recruited into terrorist groups instead of cooperating with the government to tackle the issue.

According to Animasawun (2013) military abuses in Borno State were confirmed by residents who alleged threats, killings of civilians, and burning of houses by the military Joint Task Force (JTF) in response to Boko Haram attacks. An example is the Baga Massacre in which more than 200 civilians were reportedly killed in a military raid on Baga town in April 2013. Human rights concerns are associated with a lot of counterterrorism military operations in Nigeria. NGOs like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the UN Secretary-General all condemned such abuse of power and civilian casualties. Counterterrorism strategies impact the human security of citizens and this can directly impact political stability and security. People will no longer feel safe to go about their daily lives and what is more is that they will no longer trust officials and he government as a whole as the party responsible for their security and safety. “Security providers, including the Nigerian military, police, and community-based militias, seeking to extend control over contested territories, have also been implicated in civilian harm” (CSIS, 2020).

The excessive use of harsh military force is also another problem, Security forces often target civilians suspected of aiding Boko Haram, leading to innocent deaths. Increased security measures like checkpoints and patrols aim to suppress Boko Haram activity. These tactics disrupt daily life in the North, creating frustration and resentment. The security forces deployed in the north often come from different regions of Nigeria and that this cultural and ethnic disconnect creates a communication gap and a lack of sensitivity towards the local population. (Elkaim, 2012). The security forces' brutality and lack of understanding further alienate the people, potentially pushing them towards Boko Haram. The Nigerian government's failures as a significant factor in the rise of Boko Haram. Corruption, lack of opportunity, and a heavy-handed security approach all contribute to the problem.

4.4.3.2 Corruption in government

The role of the Nigerian government in counterterrorism strategies has been criticized by scholars (Elkaim, 2012). In relation to the role of the government and Boko Haram, the group would not have been successful without the failings of the Nigerian government. Poverty, unemployment, and lack of education are the root causes of terrorism and the government neglected people in the north which created frustration and fueled violent extremism.

Issues of corruption impact the Nigerian government and counterterrorism effectiveness tremendously. Three main negative impacts of corruption on the success of counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria are, that corruption hindered effective action against Boko Haram, it benefited some at the expense of others and it weakened the overall response to terrorism. The disproportionate allocation of funds to counter-terrorism (Osemwende, 2024). The responses to Boko Haram activities were widely ineffective and violent without showing proper training and equipment on the military level. Politicians and military officials misused funds for personal gain and that the focus of military spending was neglecting rehabilitation efforts. This created an environment of public distrust and helped to further fuel support for extremist groups. Corruption leads to undermining the effectiveness of the armed forces and law enforcement initiatives. It limited economic development and job creation opportunities thus contributing to grievances exploited by Boko Haram.

Due to the high cost of some counterterrorism strategies, politicians may choose to use indiscriminate violence instead of selective violence which involves the use intelligence to identify, localize and kill or detain the terrorist. The politicians would rather use indiscriminate violence which is inexpensive and involves the hurt or death of innocent civilians. Politicians are uninterested in spending money in protecting the civilians as they would rather keep it in the pocket (Knoechelmann, 2014).

4.4.3.3 Legal system inadequacy

Issues with the legal system in Nigeria are directly impacting the outcomes of counterterrorism strategies. Nigerian law makes it difficult to definitively label Boko Haram as a terrorist organization, hindering legal action against its members. Even with arrests, convictions are hard because simply being a member isn't enough for a sentence. This legal ambiguity allows terrorists to regroup and launch new attacks. To counter this issue law enforcement tries to recuperate through harsh tactics however this leads to human rights abuses and cases of extrajudicial killings. Most of these measures are not effective and on the contrary lead to alienating the population from the government in the short and long term.

4.4.3.4 Actions employed by the government to bridge gaps in counterterrorism stragtegies

The approach of President Buhari to counterterrorism and how his approach aimed at bridging past shortcomings. Under Buhari’s mandate, the military command center was moved from Abuja the country's capital to Maiduguri where Boko Haram is centered. This helped to centralize operations close to the source of the threat and made the overall approach and countermeasures more effective for speedy interventions and closeness. President Buhari’s replacement of the National Security Advisor as well as the heads of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The new appointees are individuals from the region affected by Boko Haram's activities, making them more familiar with the group's operations, strength, and support base. (Suleiman, 2015). This change is vital for implementing more effective and region-specific counterterrorism strategies. President Buhari's actions are aimed at addressing past shortcomings in Nigeria's security approach, including allegations of infiltration, extrajudicial killings, and inaction against

Boko Haram raids under previous administrations. By replacing key personnel and centralizing operations, Buhari seeks to improve the overall effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies.

President Jonathan's Boko Haram counterterrorism approach was characterized by an over reliance on military force instead of addressing the root causes. (Afoaku, 2017) Conventional military tactics proved inadequate against terrorism under Jonathan's presidency. Reactive decision-making policies like declaring a state of emergency were not well planned and backfired. Overall, during this presidency, the military forces were compromised they did not have sophisticated equipment like Boko Haram and there was leaked sensitive information by military insiders. This emphasized a short-term approach over long-term objectives and success. The violence caused by Boko Haram in Nigeria has led to a severe humanitarian crisis, with over 2 million people displaced. This crisis brings about significant hurdles such as food scarcity, inadequate housing, and safety worries for those affected. Communities and education are disrupted, and religious minorities are targeted.

The Nigerian government's counterterrorism efforts through the National Counterterrorism Strategy (NACTEST) have achieved many successes yet continue to face challenges and raise concerns. While it seeks to tackle root causes and uses soft power methods, it grapples with issues in execution, human rights violations, and an excessive reliance on military might. Addressing these challenges and striking a balance between security and civil liberties is crucial for effective counterinsurgency strategies. The loss of more than 38,000 lives due to terrorist acts and the subsequent demand for aid underscore the seriousness of the situation. Furthermore, the social, psychological, and religious consequences include psychological trauma, heightened social tensions, susceptibility to abduction and exploitation, and disruptions to education. On a political level, Boko Haram's insurgency has affected national security, policy choices, and democratic processes, leading to increased militarization, human rights violations by the government, and threats to national unity. The diverse impacts emphasize the need to comprehensively and effectively address terrorism in Nigeria.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective counterterrorism in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach. While dismantling terrorist groups and addressing security threats are vital, fostering community engagement and promoting peace building initiatives are equally important. Civil society organizations with their local expertise and community trust play a crucial role in countering extremist narratives and fostering resilience. Rehabilitation and reintegration programs offer opportunities to steer young people away from radicalization and give former extremists a chance to reintegrate into society. The Nigerian government's counterterrorism strategy, NACTEST, outlines a five-step plan to combat Boko Haram and terrorism. While NACTEST has noble goals, a closer look reveals a complex picture. The analysis of NACTEST reveals both positive aspects that align with its objectives and significant challenges that hinder its effectiveness.

On the positive side, NACTEST recognizes the importance of addressing the root causes of terrorism, such as poverty and lack of education, which aligns with its "Forestall" objective of preventing terrorism. Additionally, initiatives like emergency hotlines and post-attack support programs demonstrate efforts to "Prepare" the population for potential attacks and lessen their impact. However, the analysis also identifies challenges that undermine these objectives. For instance, deradicalization programs aimed at preventing future violence are hampered by poor prison conditions. Furthermore, monitoring religious institutions, while falling under the "Forestall" objective, raises concerns about religious freedom and potentially alienates certain groups. Similar challenges exist with other objectives. The "Secure" objective aims to strengthen security measures, but corruption and inadequate resources hinder border security and military operations. More importantly, human rights abuses by security forces erode public trust, which is crucial for effective counterterrorism. The "Identify" objective that focuses on investigating and prosecuting terrorists is challenged by weaknesses in the legal and financial systems that allow terrorists to exploit loopholes. Likewise, limitations in emergency response systems and mental health services undermine the "Prepare" objective. Finally, even the "Implement" objective, which emphasizes coordination, faces hurdles due to difficulties in information sharing between agencies and a lack of transparency in international partnerships.

In conclusion, while NACTEST has a well-rounded approach that acknowledges the importance of preventative measures and soft power, significant challenges in implementation, human rights concerns, and limitations in effectiveness prevent it from fully achieving its objectives. Overcoming these obstacles and finding a balance between security and civil liberties is crucial for long-term success in countering terrorism in Nigeria.

Policy recommendations to combat terrorism and Boko Haram in general can include, enhancing intelligence gathering and counter IED tactics. To professionalize the military, intelligence, and police, instead of counting on local citizens to capture terrorists. The Nigerian government can also consider a defection program to reduce Boko Haram forces. On the military level, the government must continue security operations but ensure accountability and cultural sensitivity by employing people who are local and properly training them to work harmoniously within the force. Cooperation and integration of local officials into security efforts and collaboration with neighboring countries for border control, as the border issues concern can be effectively managed through cooperation. The Nigerian government must also allocate the proper protection and care to civilians who have been directly impacted by terrorist attacks. By providing comprehensive assistance to IDPs (food, healthcare, education, income. Ensure safe return of IDPs only when conditions allow and respect international law regarding displaced persons.

On a political and governance level, we can recommend that the government strengthen local governance in the Northeast. Federal ministries need to take ownership of reconstruction efforts. For example, the Ministry of Education can improve school access, quality, and safety while the Ministry of Agriculture gives support to farmers with inputs, market access, and mine clearance. Moreover, focusing on addressing root causes as the basis for all counterterrorism strategies and more importantly, allocating the necessary funds to carry out and implement programs and create opportunities. Improving literacy rates in the North can help combat poverty and offer job opportunities. In addition, reformulating government investment in the North can improve infrastructure and living standards. Finally, empowering traditional Muslim leaders to counter Boko Haram's religious narrative, raise awareness, and counter extremist ideologies and radicalization processes.

To improve Nigeria's counterterrorism efforts, future research could delve into the links between extremism and socio-economic factors. This could involve studies examining the link between poverty, unemployment, and radicalization, particularly among vulnerable youth. Additionally, research on the effectiveness of deradicalization programs in Nigeria is crucial. Analyzing success stories and areas for improvement can guide the development of more targeted interventions to tackle the root causes of terrorism and promote the reintegration of ex-militants into communities. Examining the role of social media platforms and online propaganda in recruitment strategies used by terrorist groups can also be highly valuable and an up-to-date topic. This can inform the development of counter-narratives and online interventions to disrupt radicalization efforts, especially with cybersecurity issues and threats. By focusing on these areas, future research can provide valuable insights to strengthen Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy and build long-term resilience against violent extremism.

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