Original Article

An Examination of Insurgency and Terrorism in Nigeria: Analysing the National Security Framework

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria, focusing specifically on the impact of Boko Haram on the national security framework. Using a mixed-method research approach, it combines qualitative interviews with key stakeholders and quantitative data on metrics such as attack frequency, casualty rates, and displacement figures from 2010 to 2023. The findings reveal systemic gaps between military strategies and their effectiveness, highlighting Boko Haram's resilience and adaptability. Key factors such as corruption, poor governance, and socioeconomic deprivation in northeastern Nigeria, including poverty and unemployment are identified as drivers of extremism. The study concludes that Nigeria's security response has achieved limited success due to an overemphasis on military tactics and insufficient socio-political reform. Recommendations include investment in long-term development projects, improved intelligence operations, and regional cooperation. The paper contributes to the academic literature by offering a context-specific, multi-dimensional model for counterterrorism policy in fragile states such as Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Insurgency and terrorism represent significant threats to the peace, stability, and development of nations worldwide, with sub-Saharan Africa increasingly serving as a focal point for violent extremism. Nigeria, as the most populous country and largest economy in Africa, has experienced considerable impact from terrorism, notably due to the emergence of Boko Haram in the northeastern region established in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf, Boko Haram originally emerged as a religious revivalist movement promoting Sharia law and Islamic principles. Following a violent confrontation with Nigerian security forces in 2009 that resulted in the death of its leader, the group evolved into a lethal insurgent organisation accountable for mass atrocities, kidnappings, and the destabilisation of entire communities (Thurston, 2017; Onuoha, 2014). The Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in over 35,000 fatalities and displaced more than 2.5 million individuals, contributing to one of the most severe humanitarian crises in West Africa (UNHCR, 2023; IDMC, 2022). The conflict has not only resulted in significant human casualties but has also critically weakened Nigeria's national security framework, revealed profound structural deficiencies in governance, and diminished the legitimacy of state institutions.

Despite the counterinsurgency efforts, including Operation Lafiya Dole and the formation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), the insurgency has continued to evolve, resulting in a network of localised and transnational jihadist groups, most notably the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (Akinola, 2019; Ewi & Salifu, 2017). Nigeria's counterterrorism responses exhibit characteristics of being reactive, fragmented, and deficient in strategic depth and community engagement. The persistence of insurgency in Nigeria cannot be divorced from its underlying drivers. Scholars and policy analysts have pointed to systemic corruption, socio-economic deprivation, ethno-religious marginalization, and the alienation of local populations from the security architecture as key enablers of violent extremism (Aina & Okoli, 2023; Agbiboa, 2015). The northeastern region, the origin of Boko Haram, consistently ranks lowest across all human development indices, including education, health, income, and infrastructure, thereby creating an environment conducive to the proliferation of radical ideologies (UNDP, 2021). The challenges are exacerbated by inadequate coordination among Nigeria's security and intelligence agencies, which are frequently hindered by inter-agency rivalry, insufficient funding, and logistical shortcomings (Okereke, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2022). Failure to address these foundational issues results in military victories being transient, perpetuating cycles of insurgency.

This paper seeks to conduct a critical analysis of Nigeria's national security framework concerning the Boko Haram insurgency. This research uses more than 300 peer-reviewed articles, policy reports, and empirical datasets to examine the evolution of terrorism in Nigeria, the structural and institutional limitations of the state's security apparatus, and the regional and international aspects of counter-terrorism efforts. The paper advocates a reconfiguration of Nigeria's security paradigm, emphasising a shift from a militaristic perspective to encompass sociopolitical reforms, inclusive governance, and people-centered security strategies. This analysis contributes to academic discussions regarding insurgency, state fragility, and post-conflict reconstruction in fragile democracies. Nigeria's national security framework consists of various institutions responsible for safeguarding the state's sovereignty and internal stability. The entities comprise the Armed Forces of

Nigeria (Army, Navy, and Air Force), the Nigeria Police Force, the Department of State Services (DSS), the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC). Critics contend that, despite the multi-agency framework, the system suffers from a lack of cohesion, characterised by overlapping mandates, insufficient accountability, and inadequate inter-agency collaboration (Okereke, 2020; Eme & Anyadike, 2013). The National Security Strategy (2019) identifies essential priorities, including counterterrorism, intelligence enhancement, and critical infrastructure protection. Nonetheless, implementation has faced challenges stemming from politicisation and insufficient funding (NIS, 2019; ICG, 2022). Moreover, military responses frequently emphasise kinetic measures at the expense of non-kinetic strategies, resulting in notable deficiencies in tackling the ideological and socioeconomic factors that contribute to extremism (Alao, 2013; Obamamoye, 2016). Systemic corruption further diminishes the effectiveness of the framework, impacting procurement, logistics, and intelligence operations (Transparency International, 2020). Although the framework's design is theoretically robust, its implementation has significant flaws and is susceptible to exploitation by insurgent networks.

Nigeria's national security framework consists of a multi-layered structure that incorporates various state institutions tasked with the protection of citizens, maintenance of public order, and preservation of national sovereignty. The framework is regulated by various policy documents, including the National Security Strategy (NSS) 2019, the Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST), and regional agreements such as the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Overlapping mandates, institutional rivalry, corruption, and inadequate accountability mechanisms consistently compromise the operational effectiveness of Nigeria's security architecture, despite its thorough design. The Nigerian Army has frequently been used for internal policing in regions affected by insurgency, banditry, and communal conflicts, which obscures the constitutional distinctions between military and civil security operations (Alao, 2013; Hoffmann & Vlassenroot, 2014). This arrangement has resulted in a phenomenon known as the 'militarisation of civil space', where armed forces serve as primary responders to domestic crises, frequently lacking adequate training in human rights engagement (Amnesty International, 2015). Underfunding, insufficient professionalism, and outdated crime-fighting methods persistently plague the Nigerian Police Force, traditionally tasked with internal security (CLEEN Foundation, 2018). The police-citizen ratio is significantly lower than the UN-recommended standard of 222 per 100,000, resulting in policing efforts that are both insufficient and reactive (Ajayi, 2017). Intelligence agencies, including the DSS and NIA, have faced criticism for their siloed operations and inability to share actionable intelligence in real-time with frontline military units (ICG, 2022; Ewi & Salifu, 2017). The absence of a centralised command-and-control coordination centre, like the one in the U.S. is a significant issue.

The 2019 National Security Strategy identified terrorism, organised crime, and cyber threats as primary risks to national sovereignty and stability. The proposal emphasised community engagement, capacity building, and technology-driven intelligence gathering as essential solutions; however, implementation has been hindered by insufficient political will, funding limitations, and bureaucratic obstacles (NIS, 2019; Akinyemi & Olaopa, 2021). Too much money has been spent on military strategies, which has made it hard to use important non-violent methods like strategic communication, psychosocial rehabilitation, and conflict mediation. Reports from Transparency International (2020) indicate pervasive corruption within the defence procurement process, frequently resulting in the misallocation of funds intended for weaponry and soldier welfare.

Although, the Nigeria's national security framework is designed to be a comprehensive system for threat prevention and crisis response, its operational and institutional deficiencies have significantly hindered its effectiveness in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency. Reforming the framework necessitates institutional realignment and a change in basic assumptions towards integrated security governance, which combines hard power with developmental and diplomatic strategies. A shift of this nature requires a foundation of transparency, oversight, and ongoing investment in security sector reform.

Nigeria's National Security Framework: Challenges and Limitations

The challenges faced by the Nigerian state in effectively countering insurgency are rooted in a combination of institutional, strategic, and operational factors that have persisted over time. The primary limitation is the lack of a cohesive national counterterrorism strategy that effectively integrates military, intelligence, and socio-political efforts. Security agencies frequently function in isolation, characterised by fragmented communication and restricted intelligence sharing between the army, police, and intelligence services (Eme & Anyadike, 2013; ICG, 2022). The absence of constructive collaboration diminishes operational responsiveness and leads to duplicated efforts and inefficient resource utilisation. Misappropriation has compromised defence budget allocations and arms procurement processes, thereby undermining the operational capacity of frontline troops (Transparency International, 2020). Former National Security Adviser Sambo Dasuki was accused of misappropriating billions of dollars designated for military equipment, redirecting them to political campaigns and personal accounts (BBC, 2015). Soldiers frequently experience deficiencies in essential equipment, inadequate compensation, and demoralisation—factors that significantly undermine counterinsurgency operations (Ajayi, 2017; Okereke, 2020).

Additionally, the reliance on excessive force and the inadequate human rights practices of security agencies in conflict areas represent another significant limitation. Security forces have faced allegations of conducting extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, and damaging civilian property during counterinsurgency operations (Amnesty International, 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2016). Without sufficient training in asymmetric warfare, civilian engagement, or counter-radicalization strategies, numerous military and police personnel perform their duties (Alao, 2013; Omilusi, 2016). The gap is especially harmful in conflict zones marked by high civilian density and intricate ethnic-religious dynamics. Furthermore, military operations exhibit a significant over-centralisation of command, restricting operational discretion for field commanders who possess greater familiarity with local contexts (Olonisakin, 2019).

The transformation of Boko Haram from a Salafi Islamic reformist group to a transnational terrorist organisation exemplifies a significant shift in Nigeria's contemporary security landscape. The group was established in 2002 in Maiduguri, Borno State, by Mohammed Yusuf, who opposed the secular characteristics of the Nigerian state and promoted the implementation of strict Sharia law (Thurston, 2017). Boko Haram, originally non-violent, attracted followers among the unemployed, uneducated, and marginalised youth in northeastern Nigeria (Paden, 2015). After Yusuf died in police custody in 2009, the group, led by Abubakar Shekau, resorted to violence, targeting government facilities, civilians, and religious institutions (Zenn, 2014). Their tactics evolved to encompass suicide bombings, mass kidnappings, and targeted assassinations, which disrupted life throughout the Lake Chad Basin (UNICEF, 2020). Boko Haram subsequently fragmented into factions, particularly the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which aligned itself with transnational jihadist movements (Olonisakin, 2019). Researchers argue that a detrimental combination of economic

hardship, governance failures, and religious exploitation facilitated the group's emergence (Loimeier, 2012; Agbiboa, 2014). Boko Haram currently represents the repercussions of disregarding early warning indicators of extremism and the inadequacies of post-conflict reconciliation strategies in the region. The organisation was established by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in Maiduguri, Borno State. It operates under the name Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, a Salafi-influenced movement that critiques Western influence and alleged governmental corruption. Yusuf's teachings appealed to disaffected youth and unemployed university graduates who were disillusioned by state failure and systemic inequality (Thurston, 2017; Loimeier, 2012). The group peacefully began its activities, establishing mosques, schools, and welfare initiatives while advocating against secularism and Western education, which it labelled as 'haram' (forbidden). In July 2009, tensions between Boko Haram members and law enforcement escalated, resulting in a violent clash. During a security operation, law enforcement apprehended and extrajudicially executed Mohammed Yusuf, killing its members. The death of the individual catalysed the group's radicalisation, resulting in its reorganisation under Abubakar Shekau's leadership, which was characterised by a commitment to extreme violence and alignment with global jihadist ideologies (Onuoha, 2014; Zenn, 2014).

This transition signified the evolution from a religious sect to a violent insurgent movement. By 2010, Boko Haram focused its attacks on police stations, churches, schools, markets, and government facilities in northeastern Nigeria. Under Shekau's leadership, the group employed increasingly violent methods, such as suicide bombings, mass abductions, and beheadings. The 2014 abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok attracted worldwide attention and elicited condemnation from international entities, highlighting the Nigerian state's failure to secure its territories (UNICEF, 2020; BBC, 2014). From 2010 to 2015, Boko Haram gained control over extensive areas in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, instituting its tax systems, judicial processes, and administrative structures. The group's capacity to maintain territorial control has led to comparisons with the Islamic State (ISIS). In 2015, Boko Haram pledged allegiance to ISIS, subsequently rebranding itself as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (Felter, 2021). The division of Boko Haram into rival factions, led by Shekau and Abu Musab al-Barnawi, has further complicated the dynamics of the conflict. Shekau's faction prioritised brutality and indiscriminate violence, whereas ISWAP asserted a focus on military targets and community outreach, seeking to garner popular support in areas with a limited or exploitative state presence (Zenn & Pieri, 2018). The internal rivalry led to tactical diversification and complicated Nigeria's military strategy. Both factions continued to leverage grievances related to unemployment, poverty, and corruption for recruitment purposes.

Several scholars contend that the emergence of Boko Haram was not merely a consequence of religious ideology but rather a reflection of enduring state fragility in northern Nigeria. Prolonged underdevelopment, ineffective governance, and neglect by successive administrations have fostered an environment conducive to radicalisation (Adebayo, 2014; Walker, 2012). The inadequacy and misconduct of law enforcement created a security void that facilitated Boko Haram's establishment within rural and semi-urban communities. In numerous cases, communities perceived Boko Haram as a lesser threat in comparison to corrupt political elites and exploitative security forces (Agbiboa, 2015).

Finally, Boko Haram's rise demonstrates how extremist violence can emerge when ideological fervour aligns with systemic injustice. The movement's durability reflects not only its strength but also its capacity to offer an alternative governance and justice framework in the context of state absence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted a mixed-method approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with government officials, community leaders, and security experts. Quantitative data included longitudinal figures on terror-related casualties, attacks, and internal displacement from 2010 to 2023, sourced from the Nigeria Security Tracker and UNHCR reports.

NVivo software was used to code and analyse qualitative themes, while SPSS was employed for statistical analysis. The regression model evaluated the effect of insurgency indicators (e.g., attacks and displacement) on agricultural output. This comprehensive approach allowed triangulation of findings to improve validity. The revised methodology clarifies analytical alignment with the study's objectives and strengthens reproducibility.

Theoretical Approach

This analysis is guided by a theoretical framework that combines two related ideas from conflict and security studies: asymmetric warfare theory and structural conflict theory. These frameworks are particularly relevant for analysing the dynamics of insurgency and counterinsurgency in fragile states, like Nigeria. Asymmetric warfare theory elucidates how weaker non-state actors employ unconventional tactics to confront the superior military capabilities of state forces. Arreguín-Toft (2001) posits that these groups can achieve success by eschewing direct confrontations in favour of guerrilla warfare, suicide bombings, and ambush tactics. Boko Haram illustrates this model by transitioning from conventional warfare to assaults on vulnerable targets, employing hit-and-run strategies, and using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to increase casualties while reducing risk. The group's operational base in challenging terrains, such as the Sambisa Forest, and its use of porous borders have enabled it to evade Nigerian and multinational forces (Kilcullen, 2009; Zenn, 2014).

Structural conflict theory, based on the works of Johan Galtung (1969) and subsequent scholars, like Cramer (2006), argues that societal violence frequently results from systemic inequities, marginalisation, and institutional failures. In the case of Boko Haram, structural violence is evident through chronic poverty, youth unemployment, regional underdevelopment, and the inability of state institutions to deliver basic services or ensure inclusive governance (Akinyemi & Olaopa, 2021). These grievances create conditions of frustration and political disillusionment that extremist groups exploit to establish legitimacy and recruit followers. Additionally, radicalisation theory informs the analytical framework of this study. Radicalisation theory, grounded in social psychology and criminology, posits that engagement in violent extremism, both individually and collectively, occurs through a gradual process influenced by ideological exposure, social networks, and conducive environments (Borum, 2011).

Boko Haram's strategies, which include religious indoctrination and economic incentives, align with the theoretical stages of cognitive opening, ideological adoption, and behavioural commitment (Hafez & Mullins, 2015). This study uses these frameworks to uncover the material and ideational foundations of the insurgency, positioning Boko Haram as not only a religious extremist group but also as a manifestation of deeper structural dysfunction and adaptive tactical manoeuvres. The integration of structural conflict and asymmetrical warfare theories offers a comprehensive understanding of the inadequacy of militarised responses. It highlights the necessity for long-term solutions that incorporate systemic reforms, socioeconomic investment, and community-based interventions. This framework is important for creating policies that shift from quick fixes to long-term solutions that tackle both the immediate problems and the root causes of insurgency in Nigeria.

The theoretical framework posits that enduring socio-economic disparities in northern Nigeria are the root of the factors facilitating the Boko Haram insurgency Northern Nigeria consistently ranks at the bottom of all human development indices, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure. (UNDP 2021). Youth unemployment and underemployment rates in the northeast are markedly elevated relative to other regions, fostering conditions conducive to radicalisation and insurgent recruitment (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Mustapha (2012) indicates that Boko Haram has capitalised on socioeconomic vulnerabilities by providing financial incentives, identity, and purpose to marginalisation. Corruption and inadequate governance at federal and state levels have exacerbated poverty and diminished trust in democratic institutions (Ibeanu & Momoh, 2016). Additionally, resource scarcity driven by climate change, especially competition for farmland and water, has exacerbated communal conflicts and compelled populations to align with violent groups for protection and survival (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014; Raleigh et al., 2015). The ineffectiveness of government initiatives like the Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP) and the Northeast Development Commission (NEDC) in alleviating poverty has exacerbated existing grievances (Arogundade, Adebisi & Ogunro, 2020) Therefore, a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy should incorporate inclusive economic reforms and equitable resource distribution as fundamental elements of national security policy.

FINDINGS

This study uncovered a series of significant findings that shed light on the effectiveness, gaps, and unintended consequences of Nigeria's national security framework to the Boko Haram insurgency.

Firstly, Boko Haram's resilience and adaptive capacity stem from its ability to evolve tactically, ideologically, and organisationally. The group has demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to reconfigure its methods, from mass territorial occupation to guerrilla-style hit-and-run attacks, as security pressure intensifies (Zenn, 2019; Campbell, 2021). In this sense, Boko Haram mirrors other insurgencies globally that adjust strategies in response to state pressure, making total military defeat elusive.

Secondly, the study finds that Nigeria's security institutions remain reactive, heavily centralized, and poorly coordinated. Despite the existence of multi-agency coordination bodies like the National Security Council and the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), institutional rivalries persist between the military, intelligence agencies, and police. This has led to duplication of operations, gaps in intelligence sharing, and turf wars that undermine a coherent counterinsurgency strategy (Eme & Anyadike, 2013; Okereke, 2020).

Thirdly, there is overwhelming evidence that socio-economic deprivation in the northeast, particularly among youth, remains a critical driver of radicalization. Interviews with former Boko Haram recruits and displaced community members indicate that economic despair, coupled with political exclusion and perceived state neglect, provide fertile ground for extremist ideologies. Participants indicated that their attraction to the group stemmed not only from religious motivations but also from assurances of financial assistance, security, and a sense of purpose.

Fourthly, although military actions have diminished Boko Haram's capacity to maintain territorial control, the Nigerian government has not effectively addressed the governance void in areas that have been liberated from conflict. Local governments remain weak, underfunded, or absent, creating a vacuum that insurgents have repeatedly exploited. The slow pace of reconstruction, lack of public services, and continuing insecurity hinder meaningful returns of displaced persons and expose communities to renewed cycles of violence (UNDP, 2021).

Fifth, although soft power responses like the Safe Corridor initiative represent innovative attempts at deradicalisation, they suffer from transparency deficits and lack comprehensive monitoring frameworks. Stakeholders in communities often expressed frustration that repentant insurgents were being reintegrated without clear accountability or reconciliation processes, raising justice concerns and potentially inflaming intercommunal tensions (Ikelegbe & Umukoro, 2016).

The study highlights the limited role of civil society and traditional institutions in formal counterinsurgency planning. While these actors have been instrumental in peacebuilding, early warning, and deradicalisation, they remain underused and underfunded. Not including them in national security discussions weakens local involvement and the long-term success of efforts. Effective counterinsurgency must therefore be multidimensional, integrating security, governance, and social inclusion as foundational pillars. Moreover, the study finds that frequency and intensity of violent incidents attributed to Boko Haram have fluctuated over the past decade. Data analysis reveals significant peaks in violence corresponding to major attacks and military operations. Casualty rates, including both fatalities and injuries, are also analysed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the human toll of the insurgency. The data indicates that despite periodic successes by Nigerian security forces, Boko Haram has maintained the capability to launch high-casualty attacks, underlining the persistent threat they pose.

Boko Haram Incident Attacks

Year	Number of Attacks	Fatalities	Injuries
2010	50	500	300
2011	80	700	500
2012	150	1500	1000
2013	200	2200	1500
2014	250	3000	2000
2015	220	2600	1700
2016	200	2500	1500
2017	180	2100	1400
2018	100	1000	700
2019	120	1100	800
2020	75	800	600
2021	90	850	650
2022	85	900	620
2023	70	700	500

Source: *National Bureau of Statistics*

The table shows that from 2010 to 2023, the data reveals a general upward trend in the number of violent incidents and casualties during the early years of the Boko Haram insurgency, peaking around 2013-2015. This period corresponds with Boko Haram's most intense campaign of violence, including major attacks and territory seizures. The subsequent decline in violent incidents and casualties after 2015 reflects the Nigerian military's increased counter-insurgency efforts and international cooperation through the MNJTF. However, despite these efforts, the data indicates that Boko Haram remains capable of significant attacks, as evidenced by the periodic spikes in violence and casualties.

The insurgency has resulted in the displacement of millions of people, creating a significant humanitarian crisis. Data on displacement figures,

including the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, is analysed to understand the scale and trends of displacement. The challenges faced by displaced populations, including access to basic services and protection, are also examined. The data shows a correlation between peak periods of violence and spikes in displacement, highlighting the direct impact of insurgent activities on civilian populations.

Number of Displacement of Internally Displaced Persons

Year	Number of IDPs	Number of Refugees
2010	300,000	50,000
2011	450,000	70,000
2012	800,000	150,000
2013	1,200,000	250,000
2014	1,500,000	300,000
2015	1,800,000	350,000
2016	2,000,000	400,000
2017	1,900,000	380,000
2018	1,800,000	350,000
2019	1,600,000	320,000
2020	1,500,000	300,000
2021	1,400,000	290,000
2022	1,350,000	280,000
2023	1,300,000	270,000

Source*: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*

The table shows that displacement figures show a steady increase from 2010 to 2016, with the number of IDPs and refugees peaking around 2016. This period aligns with Boko Haram's territorial expansion and the intensification of the conflict, leading to massive displacement. After 2016, the data shows a gradual decrease in displacement figures, which can be attributed to successful military operations reclaiming territories and the stabilization of some affected areas. However, the persistent high numbers of IDPs and refugees indicate ongoing instability and insecurity in the region**.**

The economic impact of Boko Haram's insurgency is analysed through data on agricultural production, trade, and infrastructure. The disruption of economic activities has had severe consequences for the livelihoods of people in northeastern Nigeria and the broader region. Data on food security, market prices, and infrastructure damage is used to assess the economic toll of the insurgency. The findings reveal significant declines in agricultural output and market disruptions, leading to increased food insecurity and poverty in the affected areas.

Impact of Boko Haram's Insurgency

Year	Agricultural Output (tons)	Market Prices (index)	Infrastructure Damage (millions of naira)
2010	5,000,000	100	50
2011	4,800,000	105	70
2012	4,500,000	120	100
2013	4,200,000	130	150
2014	3,800,000	150	200
2015	3,500,000	160	220
2016	2,500,000	180	250
2017	3,000,000	160	200
2018	3,500,000	140	150
2019	3,700,000	130	120
2020	4,000,000	130	100
2021	4,200,000	125	90
2022	4,300,000	120	80
2023	4,500,000	110	70

Source: *Federal Ministry of Agriculture*

The table shows that the economic data highlights the severe impact of the insurgency on agricultural output, market stability, and infrastructure. Agricultural production shows a significant decline from 2010 to 2016, corresponding with the peak of the insurgency. Market prices and infrastructure damage also reflect the disruption caused by the conflict, with notable increases in market prices and infrastructure damage costs during the same period. The gradual recovery in agricultural output and stabilization of market prices from 2017 onwards suggest some economic recovery, although infrastructure damage remains a significant challenge.

To further understand the relationships between different variables, inferential statistics such as correlation and regression analyses were conducted to explore the factors influencing agricultural output. The independent variables included the number of attacks, displacement figures, and infrastructure damage costs.

Correlation Matrix Table (2010–2023)

Variables	Attacks	Casualties	Displacement
Attacks	1	0.85	0.68
Casualties	0.85	1	0.75
Displacement	0.68	0.75	1

Regression Summary Table (Dependent Variable: Agricultural Output)

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	p-value
Attacks	-0.35	0.11	< 0.05
Displacement	-0.25	0.09	< 0.05
Infrastructure Damage	-0.45	0.13	< 0.01
R^2	0.64		

DISCUSSION

These results validate qualitative interview insights, which emphasize how rural insecurity disrupts farming cycles and forces mass migrations. The discussion critically compares findings with previous studies on conflict economics and security policy, aligning with the literature while highlighting Nigeria's unique policy gaps. Correlation coefficients ($r = 0.85$ between attacks and casualties; $r = 0.68$ between attacks and displacement) suggest a strong association between insurgency activities and humanitarian impacts. Regression analysis revealed that attacks, displacement, and infrastructure damage significantly reduced agricultural productivity ($p < 0.05$).

Central to this, the study's findings indicate multiple implications for theory and practice regarding Nigeria's national security strategy. The presence of insurgency, despite heightened militarisation, supports the validity of asymmetric warfare theory and structural conflict models. Boko Haram's continued existence, even when up against a stronger military, shows that just winning battles isn't enough to solve problems caused by poor governance, economic inequality, and issues related to identity. Furthermore, the fragmented structure of Nigeria's security framework highlights the risks associated with disjointed security governance. The absence of horizontal and vertical coordination among security agencies has hindered real-time intelligence sharing and the execution of joint missions. This compromises the state's capacity to sustain a cohesive approach in counterinsurgency efforts (Okoli, 2020; Ewi & Salifu, 2017). The militaries are overstretched, along with an overreliance on conventional warfare strategies, has been ineffective against the insurgents' evolving tactics. The socio-economic dimension is also critical. Poverty, exclusion, and unemployment persist as drivers of radicalisation, highlighting the necessity of integrating development into a security strategy. This necessitates substantial investments in education, infrastructure, and youth employment, as well as enhanced governance and service delivery in marginalised areas (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2021).

Regarding community trust and legitimacy, the study indicates that human rights violations by security forces, such as torture, unlawful detentions, and destruction of civilian property, diminish the state's moral authority. Such abuses unintentionally support insurgent propaganda and hinder civilian cooperation (Amnesty International, 2015). Addressing this issue necessitates the implementation of disciplinary mechanisms alongside the integration of accountability frameworks into all security operations. The omission of civil society, traditional leaders, and women from formal counterterrorism discussions represents a significant oversight. These groups possess localised knowledge, hold moral legitimacy, and sustain social networks that are essential for peacebuilding and early warning systems. Integrating them into security planning may improve the effectiveness and legitimacy of state interventions (Aina & Okoli, 2023). The findings also prompt normative enquiries regarding reconciliation and transitional justice. Deradicalization programs are essential; however, they require the integration of credible justice mechanisms to address victims' grievances and ensure accountability. In the absence of this balance, reintegration efforts risk failure and the resurgence of hostilities, particularly in communities that have experienced significant losses and trauma (Ikelegbe & Umukoro, 2016). The Nigerian government's counterterrorism strategy must transform into a comprehensive approach based on justice, inclusive governance, and socioeconomic equity. Only at that point can security initiatives achieve sustainability and genuine transformation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the complex interplay between Boko Haram's insurgency and Nigeria's national security strategy. It demonstrated that while military operations have achieved tactical victories, they have not addressed the underlying causes of extremism. Key drivers such as poverty, unemployment, and political exclusion continue to fuel instability. The findings highlight the importance of a multi-dimensional approach, combining robust military engagement with inclusive development, governance reforms, and community-based counter-radicalization. The integration of statistical and qualitative insights enhances policy relevance. Policymakers should prioritize adaptive security strategies and long-term investment in affected regions.

The study uses theoretical frameworks from asymmetric warfare and structural conflict theory, supported by empirical data from official reports, academic literature, and field research to elucidate the complex dimensions of Nigeria's security crisis. Key findings indicate that Boko Haram's resilience is not merely a function of tactical prowess but is fundamentally linked to systemic state failures, including economic inequality, governance shortcomings, and youth marginalisation. The insurgency exploits these vulnerabilities to enhance its ideological influence and broaden its recruitment base. The responses of the Nigerian state, characterised by significant military deployments and regional coordination, have been reactive and fragmented, lacking a focus on long-term structural reform.

The reliance on militarised strategies without adequate investment in human security, community engagement, and governance reform has constrained the effectiveness of counterinsurgency initiatives. Programs like Operation Safe Corridor illustrate innovative soft-power strategies; however, their effectiveness is limited by insufficient transparency, inadequate community engagement, and the lack of transitional justice mechanisms. The study highlights the necessity of regional and international cooperation in addressing cross-border threats. For initiatives like the Multinational Joint Task Force to be effective, it is essential to maintain operational coherence, secure funding, and ensure political will among member states. Furthermore, security dialogues and implementation frameworks should incorporate local stakeholders such as traditional leaders, religious institutions, civil society organisations, and women's groups. Nigeria's journey towards sustainable security necessitates a redefinition of national security that transcends state-centric militarisation. This study thus offers a grounded contribution to conflict resolution and national security policy in Nigeria.

Recommendations

A comprehensive national security framework should incorporate inclusive governance, equity, justice, and human development as fundamental components of counterterrorism efforts. Policies must address the fundamental causes of insurgency by focusing on poverty alleviation, educational reform, political inclusion, and accountability. A people-centred approach will mitigate extremist narratives and restore public trust in state institutions, which is essential in a prolonged struggle against terrorism. Future policy should prioritise resilience building, civilian oversight of security institutions, and the rehabilitation of conflict-affected areas through intentional post-conflict reconstruction. A coordinated, evidence-based, multi-stakeholder strategy is essential for Nigeria to transition from fragile security to enduring peace and democratic stability. Also, a multi-faceted approach for the Nigerian government and international bodies to address both the symptoms and root causes of the insurgency, emphasizing sustainable socio-economic development, enhanced intelligence operations, and regional collaboration.

Limitations and Future Research

This study acknowledges several limitations, including potential inadequacy in data collection

and the limitation of available data in conflict zones. Future research should aim to address these limitations by incorporating a wider range of data sources and employing more robust data collection methodologies. Further research is suggested to explore the long-term effects of counter-insurgency measures on community resilience and the potential for integrating technological solutions in intelligence-gathering.

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