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THE DYNAMICS OF TERRORISM IN NIGERIA: TRENDS, DRIVERS, AND REPERCUSSIONS

Ma Jinlong
Institute of African Studies,
Zhejiang Normal University, China
apollomax520@gmail.com

Absract
The paper examines the evolving trends, drivers, and multifaceted repercussions of terrorism in Nigeria. This study adopts a two-pronged approach, combining quantitative insights from the global terrorism datasets with qualitative findings from the literature review. The study finds that, currently, Nigeria continues to face significant terrorist threats, including intensified religious violence in the northeast, persistent bandit attacks in the northwest, rising Fulani militants activities in the north-central region, and a resurgence of separatist unrest by the IPOB in the southeast. Terrorist activities in Nigeria showed a concerning shift toward higher lethality despite a reduction in the number of incidents. In addition, the evolving use of tactics, including reliance on shootings and kidnappings, combined with a growing preference for light weaponry, highlights a strategic adaptation by these terrorist groups to maximize their impact. Political corruption, poor governance, economic instability, ecological threats, and religious and ethnic conflicts are the driving factors behind the prevalence of terrorist activities. These have resulted in severe humanitarian and economic impacts.Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach, focusing on governance reforms, economic stabilization, and enhanced security measures to mitigate the underlying drivers of terrorism and restore societal resilience.

Key Words: Nigeria, Terrorism, Religious extremism, Weak governance, Ecological threat

Introduction

Terrorism has emerged as one of the most pressing global security challenge, exerting profound social, political, and economic consequences. In Africa, Nigeria has been a focal point of concern due to the persistent and evolving nature of its terrorist threats. Groups such as Boko Haram, ISIS-West Africa Province (ISWAP), and other extremist actors have not only destabilized Nigeria but have also impacted the broader West African region, highlighting the need for comprehensive studies on this issue.

From 2007 to 2016, the total economic cost of terrorism in Africa is at a minimum US$119 billion with Nigeria's economy losing up to $97 billion, the total economic impact of refugees and IDPs to Nigeria, was US$75 billion over the ten year period, an average of 0.73% of GDP（United Nations Development Program, 2019）.

In recent years, terrorism in Nigeria has entered a new phase characterized by significant shifts in tactics and geographic reach. According to Global Terrorism Trends and Analysis Center (GTTAC) (GTTAC, 2024), in 2023, 3,270 casualties caused by terrorist incidents in Nigeria. The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) (IEP, 2024) reports that Nigeria is ranked 8th out of 163 countries in 2023, three of the 20 most fatal terrorist attacks have occurred in Nigeria, accounting for 15%. Moreover, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (IDMC, 2025), as of 2023, there are about 3.34 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to conflict and violence in Nigeria.

These new dynamics include the increasing sophistication of attacks, and the intersection of terrorism with issues such as banditry and communal violence. Understanding the drivers of these changes, ranging from socioeconomic inequalities and weak governance to ideological motivations and ecological threats, is critical to grasping the full scope of the problem.

This paper aims to explore the trends, drivers, and repercussions of terrorism in Nigeria, with a special focus on the new dynamics shaping the country's security landscape in recent years. By examining the evolution of terrorist activities and the underlying factors contributing to their persistence, this study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. The findings of this research will contribute to the ongoing discourse on counterterrorism, offering insights for policymakers and stakeholders seeking to address this multifaceted challenge effectively.

Methodology

This study adopts a two-pronged approach to investigate the trends, causes, and consequences of terrorism in Nigeria.

The first component involves summarizing the new terrorism trends in the country, drawing on data and reports from theGTTACand The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED).ACLED collects information on the dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of armed conflict around the world, which is crucial for understanding detailed spatial patterns of terrorism-related events in Nigeria. GTTAC, on the other hand, offers granular event-based data that tracks incidents of Terrorism, allowing for detailed spatial and temporal analysis of terrorism activities, including perpetrators, weapons, targeted facilities/locations, and tactics. This enables a more localized and context-specific understanding of terrorism in Nigeria. By triangulating these datasets, the study cross-validates trends and offers a more robust analysis of the causes and consequences of terrorism in Nigeria.

The second component involves a critical review of existing scholarly works, policy reports, and case studies to analyze the root causes and broader impacts of terrorism in Nigeria. This review synthesizes recent literature on a variety of factors that contribute to terrorism, including economic disparities, governance failures, religious extremism,andcological stress. The literature review also explores the social and economic consequences of terrorism, such as the displacement of populations, disruption of local economies, polarization of communities, and regional instability. This review is based on the most recent and relevant publications, with a preference for studies from the last 5-10 years. Only peer-reviewed articles and credible reports from reputable institutions are included to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

The methodology integrates quantitative insights from the GTTAC and ACLED datasets with qualitative findings from the literature review.This combination allows for a holistic understanding of terrorism in Nigeria:

The quantitative analysis provides empirical evidence of the trends, tactics, and dynamics of terrorist activity in Nigeria, highlighting patterns such as the rise or decline of specific groups, shifts in attack locations, and the correlation between terrorist activity and broader socio-political factors.

The qualitative analysis from the literature review complements the data by offering a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of terrorism and the socio-economic and political consequences of violent extremism in Nigeria. This synthesis helps to link empirical data with broader theoretical and policy discussions on terrorism.

Together, these two components form a comprehensive framework for analyzing terrorism in Nigeria, ensuring a nuanced and evidence-based perspective. By combining both empirical data and theoretical insights, the study is able to not only describe the trends of terrorism but also identify the root causes and long-term impacts on Nigerian society.

Trends in Terrorist Activities in Nigeria

In 2023, Nigeria recorded 435 terrorist incidents resulting in 2,797 deaths, accounting for 13% of global terrorism deaths (21,615) and 23% of terrorism deaths in Africa (12,051) for the year(GTTAC, 2025). This indicates, compared to 2019 a 5% decrease in terrorist incidents but a 1% increase in fatalities; when contrasted with Nigeria's 2022 data, terrorist incidents dropped substantially by 31%, yet fatalities rose by 4%. (GTTAC, 2025).

Nigeria remains threatened by various terrorist groups, including the ISIS-West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram in the North East (NE),militant groupsin the North West (NW), Fulani militants in the North Central (NC), and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South East (SE). Furthermore, according to Table 1, 22% of the terrorist incidents in 2023 could not be attributed to any specific organization. Most incidents occurred in Borno and Yobe of the NE, Zamfara and Kaduna of the NW, Niger, Benue, and Plateau of the NC, and Anambra of the SE. The NE, NC, and NW experienced the highest death tolls (ACLED, 2024).

Table 1: Activity Statistics of Major Terrorist Group in Nigeria, 2023

Terrorist Group	Number of Attacks	Percentage of Total Incidents
Zamfara Militants	110	25
Fulani Militants	106	24
ISWAP	56	13
Boko Haram	48	11
IPOB	25	6
Ansaru	1	<1%
Unknown	96	22
Total	435 incidents resulting in 2,797 fatalities.[1]	

Source: Authors compilation (2025).

Compiled from: GTTAC Data Portal (2025).

The types of tactics, weapons, and targets used in terrorist incidents have evolved, as shown in Tables 2 and 4.

Specifically, common types of tactics used in terrorist attacks in 2023 include shootings (60%), kidnapping (31%), and ambush (5%).It is worth noting that sometimes these tactics are used in a mix (ACLED, 2024). In terms of weapons commonly used in attacks, Firearm has been the main weapon from 2019 to 2023, but in 2022 and 2023, the frequency ranking of light weapons (such as small arms and swords) rises, while the frequency ranking of heavy weaponry falls (see Table 2).

[1]According to GTTAC methodology, an incident may involve multiple perpetrators, therefore, the total number of attacks by all perpetrators does not necessarily equal the total number of incidents (GTTAC, 2025). Please refer to GTTAC Codebook, https://gttac.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023_GRID_Codebook_V2.pdf

Table 2: Trends in Weapons Used in Terrorist Incidents, 2019–2023

Year	Top 5 Frequently-used Weapons
2019	1. Unclear Firearm, 2. Unclear Incendiary, 3. Small Arms, 4. Blades/Swords, 5. Non-Suicide IED
2020	1. Unclear Firearm, 2. Unknown Weapon, 3. Heavy Weaponry, 4. Full- Automatic, 5. Blades/Swords
2021	1. Unclear Firearm, 2. Unknown Weapon, 3. Heavy Weaponry, 4. Full- Automatic, 5. Blades/Swords
2022	1. Unclear Firearm, 2. Small arms, 3. Unknown Weapon, 4. Non-Suicide IED, 5. Heavy Weaponry
2023	1. Unclear Firearm, 2. Blades/Swords, 3. Unknown Weapon, 4. Unclear Incendiary, 5. Non-Suicide IED

Source: Authors compilation (2024).

Compiled from: GTTAC Data Portal (2024).

In terms of targeted facilities/locations of terrorist incidents, nearly half of the incidents in 2023 targeted private property. Other frequently targeted targets included Agriculture-Food (9%), Law Enforcement (4%), and other unknown targets (9%). In addition, Private Property, National, Public Places, and Land Transport have been the main targets in the past five years, but in the past two years, especially in 2023, among the top five targets for terrorist incidents, Agriculture-Food and attacks without specific targets are increasingly ranked high (see Table 3). This suggests that people may face heightened food security and broader, unknown security threats.

Table 3: Trends in Targeted Facilities/Locations in Terrorist Incidents, 2019–2023

Year	Top 5 Targeted Facilities/Locations
2019	1. Unknown, 2. Private Property, 3. National, 4. Land Transport, 5. Public Places
2020	1. Private Property, 2. National, 3. Public Places, 4. Land Transport, 5. Unknown
2021	1. Private Property, 2. National, 3. Land Transport, 4. Unknown, 5. Law Enforcement
2022	1. Private Property, 2. Unknown, 3. Public Places, 4. Land Transport, 5. National
2023	1. Private Property, 2. Agriculture-Food, 3. Unknown, 4. Public Places, 5. Land Transport

Source: Authors compilation (2024).

Compiled from: GTTAC Data Portal (2024).

Regional Patterns of Violence and Conflict in Nigeria

Terrorist activities in Nigeria exhibit distinct regional characteristics, including intensified religious violence in the NE, persistent bandit violence in the NW, widespread Fulani militant activities in the NC, and a resurgence of separatist unrest in the SE.

ⅰ. Intensified Religious Violence in the North East

The NE remains the most affected region, with ISWAP and Boko Haram being the main perpetrators, with the former now being the dominant terrorist group in Borno State. ISWAP

ranked fourth in 2023 for terrorist incidents, with 56 attacks (GTTAC, 2025). The top three perpetrators were Zamfara militants, Fulani militants, and unidentified groups. While terrorist incidents linked to ISWAP declined by 45% compared to 2022, fatalities increased sharply. ISWAP accounted for 13% of all incidents but caused 909 deaths, representing 32% of the year's total fatalities, making it Nigeria's deadliest terrorist organization(GTTAC, 2024). The group has also expanded its operational range, launching its first attack in the northwestern Jigawa State in April 2023 (Meir AmitIntelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2023). Regarding its targets, private property, national, and public places remained the primary focus.Tactically, shootings, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and kidnappings continued to be ISWAP's main methods. However, property damage decreased while bombing incidents rose (GTTAC, 2024).

Boko Haram, on the other hand, has faced significant setbacks due to itsconflict with the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), which has weakened its operational capacity and leadership. However, after two years of relative silence, Boko Haram's attacks and kidnappings surged in 2023. The group ranked fifth in terrorist incidents, with 48 attacks, a slight increase from 2022. However, Boko Haram caused 722 deaths in 2023, accounting for 11% of all incidents, making it the second deadliest group after ISWAP (GTTAC, 2025). Its primary targets are civilians and rival armed groups (non-state actors), with new targets in Agriculture-Food, and Public Places. In terms of tactics, shootings, kidnappings, and IEDs remained dominant, but there was an increase in executions and a decrease in ambushes and bombings (GTTAC, 2024).

Despite claims by the Nigerian government that Boko Haram has been almost degraded, and significant progress made by the African Union-led Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in combating Boko Haram, civilians still face terrorist attacks and violence based on religious identity—both between different religious groups and within the same religious community.(Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) , 2024).

ii. Persistent Bandit Violence in the North West

Zamfara militants, locally referred to as "bandits", have emerged as the dominant force behind terrorist activities in the NW, driven by structural socio-economic disparities, economic incentives tied to illegal gold mining operations, and security vulnerabilities exacerbated by governance deficits (Pulse, 2016 ;Ojewale, 2024). The group has consolidated its power through control over mineral resources and transnational criminal networks, with its operations evolving from traditional banditry to systematic violence exhibiting distinct terrorist characteristics (Okoli & Ngom, 2023). Their insurgent activities date back to Nigeria's colonial period, and they are now deeply entrenched in northern Nigeria. Analysts estimate that Zamfara militants may number as many as 100 loosely connected groups, with sizes ranging from 10 fighters to over 1,000, totaling more than 30,000 fighters, most of whom are based in Zamfara state (Healy& Anastasio, 2023). In Zamfara, Kaduna, and Katsina States, where these "bandits" are active, terrorism incidents such as robbery (targeting agriculture-food), kidnapping, disappearances, and localized attacks are common.

In 2023, Zamfara militants were responsible for 110 terrorist incidents, accounting for 25% of the total, resulting in 349 deaths (GTTAC, 2024). While the Zamfara militants remained one of the primary perpetrators of terrorist incidents in 2023, there was a significant decline in both the number of attacks and fatalities compared to 2022 (GTTAC, 2024). Their primary targets were private property, but Agriculture-Food, Education, and Religious Sites emerged as new targets. Tactically, kidnappings and shootings remained prevalent, with a decline in IED use and an

increase in extortion (GTTAC, 2024). The group has also expanded its operations from the NW to the NC, including Niger, Benue, Plateau States, and the Federal Capital Territory. In line with this, the Federal Government of Nigeria has officially declared bandit groups operating in any parts of the country as Terrorists (Federal Ministry of Justice of Nigeria, 2022).

iii. Rising Fulani Militant Activities in the North Central

In NC of Nigeria, farmer-herder conflicts have escalated into broader clashes and crimes, complicated by the combination of militant herders and jihadist-style banditry, showing clear signs of terrorism. In recent years, jihadist Fulani herders have killed thousands of Christians. The desertification of land has further exacerbated the crisis (Kunle & Murtala, 2022)\.In 2023, Fulani militants were responsible for 106 incidents, ranking second among terrorist perpetrators, accounting for 24% of the total incidents and causing 602 deaths, which represented 19% of the year's fatalities. Compared to 2022, the number of incidents rose by 80%, and deaths increased by 68%.Their main targets remained private property, agriculture-food, and land transport, with new targets including religious sites and educational institutions. Shootings and kidnappings remained their primary tactics (GTTAC, 2024).

iv. Resurgence of Separatist Unrest in the South East[2]

The IPOB, led by Nnamdi Kanu, has been calling for southeastern independence. The group has incited separatist violence, leading to deaths and economic paralysis in southeastern regions such as the major trading hub of Onitsha in Anambra State (Asadu, 2022). In 2015, Kanu was arrested by the Nigerian government on charges including terrorism and incitement. After being acquitted by a local appellate court in October 2022, the Nigerian Supreme Court overturned this decision in October 2023, reinstating terrorism charges against Kanu, with his trial expected to resume in 2024. In 2023, at least 25 incidents related to IPOB resulted in 51 deaths (GTTAC, 2024). Separatist terrorism in the SE has become increasingly complex, with "unknown gunmen" often posing as Biafran separatists to commit gang violence, including kidnappings for ransom and armed robbery (Okoli, 2022).

Drivers of Frequent Terrorism in Nigeria

The drivers of frequent terrorism in Nigeria are complex and multifaceted. This phenomenon stems not only from Nigeria's longstanding issues of political corruption, economic instability, and poverty but also from deep-rooted religious, ethnic, and political conflicts. Weak governance and inadequate security forces have created opportunities for extremist groups and local militants to thrive. Furthermore, ecological threats have intensified resource conflicts. The interplay of these factors has made Nigeria's terrorism problem more challenging to resolve.

i. Political Corruption and Governance Deficiencies Hinder Counterterrorism Efforts

Political corruption, characterized by the abuse of power for personal gain, bribery, and mismanagement of public resources, has severely weakened counterterrorism efforts.According to Transparency International's 2023 report, Nigeria's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) scored only 25 points, ranking 145th out of 180 countries, below the Sub-Saharan African average of 33 points (Transparency International, 2024). Corruption permeates the government and security sectors, leading to inequitable resource distribution and ineffective enforcement, which undermines counterterrorism measures. Mismanagement and embezzlement of resources

[2]This article discusses the separatist movement led by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as a terrorist activity based on the following reasons: First, in 2017, the Nigerian government designated it as a terrorist organization under the *Nigeria Terrorism Act*; second, its activities employ terrorist methods; and third, its actions pose threats to civilians.

result in insufficient funding and equipment for anti-terrorism operations, limiting the ability of police and military forces to combat terrorist activities effectively. Vice President Kashim Shettima and the governor of Borno State have stated that corruption is closely tied to insecurity in northern Nigeria and the nation as a whole(Matazu 2024). The Igbo socio-cultural organization Ọhanaeze Ndigbo, has criticized the federal government for failing to restructure Nigeria and introduce a state policing system, which hampers efforts to combat growing attacks (Ugwu, 2023). Distrust between local and federal governments further impairs counterterrorism operations. Some local governments accuse the federal government of compromising with terrorists and therefore refuse to implement or deliberately undermine federal actions. Conversely, the federal government accuses local governments of politicizing security issues for political gain. Additionally, corruption and governance failures erode public trust in the government, reducing popular support and participation in counterterrorism efforts (Oguntola,2023).

ⅱ. Economic Instability Fuels Fertile Ground for Terrorism

According to a 2023 World Bank report, while reforms in Nigeria's real sector offer hope for growth, inflation continues to rise to historic levels due to price and monetary policy adjustments.Inflation has historicallybeen high and persistent in Nigeria—in 13 out ofthe past 15 years, inflation was higher than 9 percent,the ceiling of the CBN's target range—reflecting thecombination of loose fiscal and monetary policies,structural supply constraints, and external shocks. Butthe inflation rate rose to 27.3 percentinflation rose to reach 27.3 percent(yoy) in October 2023. This has hindered access to food, energy and other necessities, exacerbating multidimensional poverty and economic inequality (World Bank, 2023). These conditions increase public dissatisfaction and disappointment, making people more susceptible to the influence and recruitment of extremist groups.

a) Poverty and Unemployment: Economic instability has led to higher poverty and unemployment rates. In 2023, the nationalunemployment rate was 5.4% or 4,792,296 persons (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024), leaving many young people without access to quality education or job opportunities. This creates a recruitment pool for extremist organizations.

b) Regional Inequalities: Economic instability has exacerbated regional disparities and deepened divisions.While some areas are rich in resources, others remain impoverished. However, even in resource-rich regions, residents continue to face severe poverty. For instance, the Niger Delta, a major oil-producing region in the country, holds approximately 90% of Nigeria's oil reserves. Despite contributing 80% of government revenue, around 70% of the population in this region lives on less than one dollar per day (Global Maritime Crime Programme of UNODC, 2021). The oil industry's prosperity has attracted foreign investment and labor, but this concentration of resources has led to a significant underinvestment in the northern agricultural regions. Furthermore Meanwhile, while oil-producing states contribute substantial revenue to the federal government, they only receive 13% of the resource revenue (Nwankwo, 2015). In contrast, the impoverished northern states, which lack natural resources, depend heavily on federal transfers. Additionally, the Niger Delta bears the severe consequences of oil pollution, but funds allocated for environmental remediation have been misappropriated, resulting in limited progress (Obi, 2023). These disparities intensify social tensions, particularly among disaffected youth who feel a sense of relative deprivation and political frustration, leading to unrest and conflict that extremist groups exploit (Meagher & Mustapha, 2020).

c) Impact of Corruption: Corruption and governance failures have hindered Nigeria's economic potential. Corruption undermines economic growth and public trust, creating a

perception of social injustice (Alonge, 2012). This provides opportunities for extremists to promote their ideologies, claiming they can offer better governance and social order (Botha, 2021).

iii. Ecological Threats Intensify Resource Conflicts

The IEP(IEP,2023) reports that Nigeria faces multiple catastrophic ecological threats, including food insecurity, population growth, and water scarcity. Nigeria is one of the countries most affected by terrorism and ecological threats, underscoring the link between environmental degradation and conflict.

In the NE of Nigeria, Lake Chad once provided abundant resources to local communities. However, the influence of extremist groups such as ISWAP and Boko Haram has exacerbated resource conflicts in the region. These groups occupy villages and impose taxes, further escalating tensions. The continued shrinkage of Lake Chad has worsened the situation. Although the MNJTF has attempted to combat terrorism in the region, the situation remains dire.

In the NW and NC regions, farmer-herder conflicts are also closely linked to ecological threats. Climate change and desertification have intensified disputes over land and water resources, as well as disagreements over grazing routes, resulting in thousands of deaths. In the South-South (SS) region, environmental degradation from oil extraction has damaged livelihoods, increasing social unrest.

Ecological threats have heightened resource conflicts in Nigeria, and in the context of economic instability, these conflicts have become more frequent and intense, posing severe threats to social stability and economic development. Poor governance further exacerbates resource conflicts.

iv. Religious and Ethnic Tensions Threaten Social Stability

Nigeria's religious and ethnic diversity is often the "subtext" of terrorist incidents. Religious divisions and ethnic conflicts, intertwined with extremist infiltration, political corruption, and economic instability, exacerbate the complexity and severity of terrorism in Nigeria.

In 2023, a Muslim butcher was beaten to death by religious extremists for alleged blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad (Abdulsamad, 2023), exposing violence within religious communities. Simultaneously, Boko Haram and ISWAP carried out dozens of attacks targeting Christians in the east and northeast, highlighting severe interfaith violence.

One significant incident in 2023 was the Plateau State Massacre, where at least 140 Christians were killed in a terrorist attack linked to disputes over resources. "Fulani jihadists" were blamed for the attack (Casper, 2023). Analysts suggest that the presence of Fulani jihadists reflects the government's long-term neglect, land seizures, and lack of economic opportunities (Clarke, 2024). These incidents illustrate how religious and ethnic factors influence acts of violence and terrorism in Nigeria, revealing the interplay of political corruption, economic instability, and social grievances.

The Repercussions of Intensified Terrorism on Nigeria

Terrorism poses a severe threat to fundamental human rights, political stability, and economic development in Nigeria. It disrupts social order, undermines public safety and trust, and weakens the legitimacy and capacity of the government. Consequently, combating terrorism has become one of Nigeria's top priorities to maintain political stability, foster economic growth, and ensure social security.

ⅰ. Exacerbation of Humanitarian Crises

The problem of terrorism in Nigeria has aggravated humanitarian crises and led to dual violations of human rights. Terrorist groups and armed factions continuously attack civilians across the country, causing massive casualties and displacement. Between 2019 and 2023 alone, Nigeria experienced at least 2,526 terrorist incidents, resulting in at least 14,672 deaths nationally (GTTAC, 2024), counterterrorism efforts by the government and military have also led to further human rights abuses. For example, drone strikes by the military have caused civilian casualties, and there have been reports of mistreatment of detainees by security forces. Notably, security forces have been accused of conducting secret forced abortion programs, though the government has vehemently denied these claims (Reuters, 2022). They highlight the complex and dire humanitarian and human rights challenges that Nigeria faces.

ⅱ. Disruption of Political Stability

Terrorism undermines political stability in Nigeria in many ways.

Firstly, it threatens democratic processes and the legitimacy of government. Terrorist organizations frequently attack electoral infrastructure, materials, and officials during elections. Such actions hinder voter registration and participation and spread disinformation on social media to incite violence, reducing voter turnout. In the run-up to the 2023 general elections, 109 election-related deaths were reported, with election violence concentrated in key battleground states such as Lagos (Omolaoye, 2023). Terrorist exploit controversies surrounding election results to incite violent protests, challenge government legitimacy, and expand their influence, threatening regional peace and stability.

Secondly, terrorism exacerbates religious, ethnic, and regional divisions and rivalries. Groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP target Christians and certain Muslim sects, leveraging religious extremism to further their political agendas. Meanwhile, in the NW and NC regions, terrorism disguised as banditry targets farmers and ethnic minorities, exacerbating social tensions and eroding community cohesion.

Additionally, the IPOB, originally a legitimate self-determination movement, has evolved into an armed separatist campaign. By capitalizing on nationalist sentiment, it poses a threat to political stability. These challenges reveal the extent to which terrorism disrupts Nigeria's political stability, necessitating comprehensive and strategic responses.

ⅲ. Constraints on Economic Development

Terrorism has a detrimental impact on Nigeria's economic growth. Between 2007 and 2019, the economic cost of terrorism in Nigeria amounted to $142 billion, with losses in 2019 alone accounting for 2.4% of the country's GDP (Sasu, 2023). Terrorism directly causes damage to private property and public infrastructure, affecting infrastructure construction and economic operations, such as transportation, communication, and electricity supplies.

In addition, terrorism indirectly affects economic development by reducing foreign direct investment, raising unemployment, increasing food insecurity, etc., affecting the development of various industries in Nigeria, especially agriculture, trade, and tourism. This economic instability has also contributed to social unrest and political unrest, creating a vicious circle that has limited Nigeria's overall development.

Conclusion

Terrorist activities in Nigeria showed a concerning shift toward higher lethality despite a reduction in the number of incidents. Groups like the Zamfara militants, Fulani militants, ISWAP, and Boko Haram dominated the threat landscape, targeting civilians and critical sectors such as agriculture and food security. The evolving use of tactics, including a reliance on shootings and kidnappings, combined with a growing preference for light weaponry, highlights a strategic adaptation by these groups to maximize their impact. Regions such as the NE, NW, and NC zones remain the epicenters of violence.

The proliferation of terrorism in Nigeria stems from multiple interwoven factors, including political corruption, economic instability, ecological threats, and religious and ethnic divisions.

Terrorism in Nigeria poses a severe and multifaceted challenge that impacts the country's humanitarian situation, political stability, and economic development. The persistent violence by extremist groups and armed factions exacerbates human rights abuses, as seen in large-scale civilian casualties, displacement, and alleged military misconduct. Counterterrorism efforts have often fallen short due to governance issues and have, at times, resulted in additional violations of human rights.

Recommendation

Addressing terrorism in Nigeria requires a holistic and coordinated approach that goes beyond military action. Combating corruption and improving governance are essential to restoring public trust and enabling effective resource allocation for counterterrorism. Strengthening economic stability through investment in education, job creation, and poverty alleviation will help reduce the socioeconomic conditions that make individuals vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups.

Furthermore, addressing religious, ethnic, and regional divides through dialogue and inclusive policies is vital to fostering unity and preventing terrorist groups from exploiting societal divisions. A comprehensive strategy combining political reforms, economic growth, and community-based interventions is imperative to break the cycle of terrorism and build a more stable and prosperous Nigeria.

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