

**INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AND NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY: A STUDY
OF BOKO HARAM AND THE ISLAMIC STATE OF WEST AFRICA PROVINCE
(ISWAP), 2015–2023**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of international terrorism on Nigeria's national security, with particular focus on the activities of Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) between 2015 and 2023. The specific objectives were to assess the extent to which Boko Haram armed attacks affected internal security in Nigeria and to examine how the insurgent activities of ISWAP influenced public safety within the study period. The study adopted the Frustration–Aggression Theory as its theoretical framework, explaining that prolonged socio-economic deprivation, marginalization, poor governance, and unemployment contribute to violent extremism and insurgency. An ex post facto research design was employed because the events under investigation had already occurred and could not be manipulated by the researcher. Data were collected through the documentary method using secondary sources such as textbooks, journal articles, government reports, security reports, publications of international organizations, newspapers, and online materials. The data collected were analyzed using content analysis. Findings from the study revealed that Boko Haram attacks significantly undermined Nigeria's internal security through bombings, attacks on civilian settlements, destruction of infrastructure, and assaults on military formations, leading to loss of lives, displacement of persons, and instability in affected communities. The findings further showed that although the intensity of Boko Haram attacks gradually declined between 2017 and 2023 due to military operations and regional cooperation, the humanitarian and security impacts remained severe. The study therefore recommended improved intelligence gathering, enhanced regional security cooperation, stronger border control, effective socio-economic development policies, youth empowerment programmes, and community-based counter-terrorism strategies to address the root causes of insurgency and strengthen national security in Nigeria.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

National security is undoubtedly one of the essential duties of any sovereign state as it safeguards lives, property and territorial integrity. The threats to national security are no longer just those of war but also transnational crimes and terrorism in the era of globalisation. International terrorism, especially, has become a global phenomenon which crosses borders, challenges government authority and threatens to destabilise societies. The threats faced by developing countries such as Nigeria are great because of the level of socioeconomic and political vulnerability in the country.

The terrorist activities of Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) have been a significant influence in Nigeria's experience with terrorism, particularly in the North-East. Boko Haram has been responsible for major civilian attacks, security force attacks and attacks on public institutions since 2009, displacing civilians and killing them (Idigo, 2022). Nigeria's conflict with ISWAP had also become an international concern owing to the fact that it had become a part of the global jihadist movement (Omale, 2024). These developments have put Nigeria's national security architecture under intense tension, and opened the door for external influences to have an impact on its operation and ideology.

Boko Haram's evolution to ISWAP is a testament to the adaptability and fluidity of international extremism. The rebranding and restructuring of the group led to improved efficiency and increased scope of operations in the Lake Chad Basin, according to Ishaku (2023). This development was further bolstered by its tie-ups with the Islamic State that offered it strategic guidance, financial and propaganda support. This development from a domestic insurgency to an international

dimension made Nigeria's counter-terrorism efforts more complex and exacerbated the security challenges, making the situation even more dire.

ISWAP's emergence has also added to the geopolitical implications of terrorism in West Africa. Ojewale (2024) has pointed out that the activities have not only caught the interest of international actors but have also resulted in enhanced military cooperation and intervention in the region. The interventions have been designed to counter terrorism, but they have also brought the transnational nature of the threat and the failure of unilateral national responses to the fore. The national security strategy should then deal with not only domestic insurgency but the challenges posed by the international networks of terrorists both within Nigeria and beyond.

Terrorism has also had detrimental socio-economic impacts on Nigeria, apart from the security issues. Onuabuchi et al. (2022) note that the operations of Boko Haram and ISWAP have helped to create challenges in food security, economic activities, and humanitarian crises in the impacted areas. Malnourished people have been driven from their homes and agricultural output is suffering greatly because of the continued attacks, thus adding to the burden on the government's resources. The results show the wide-ranging effects of terror on national development and stability, in addition to its direct effects on violence.

The root causes of the occurrence of Nigeria's terrorism have been blamed on the poor state of border control, poverty, and ideological extremism. The authors Oguejiofor et al (2023) suggest that globalization has helped terrorism to consolidate terrorist networks in West Africa with the movement of arms, money, and extremist ideologies across borders. In the same vein, Plockey (2025) notes that there is a close relationship between the emergence of ISWAP and the local grievances and the exploitation of governance gaps, which serves as an environment for

recruitment and radicalization. All these contribute to perpetuating the vicious cycle of violence and to a lack of successful counter-terrorism effort.

The Nigerian government has taken measures to counter the terrorist threat, such as military campaigns, regional cooperation, and policy changes. Although some successes have been achieved, these strategies have also revealed some vulnerabilities to coordination, intelligence gathering and resource allocation, as per Habib (2025). The ongoing resilience and adaptability of Boko Haram and ISWAP continue to pose questions to the effectiveness of these interventions, and to the sustainability of Nigeria's counter-terrorism approach.

The international dimension of terrorism in Nigeria is also reflected in the ideological and operational connections between domestic terrorist groups and international terrorist groups. According to Kostelyanets and Denisova (2024) this connection has made attacks more sophisticated and broaden the conflict. The synergy reiterates the importance of studying the impact of international terrorism on national security in Nigeria in the context of the changing global threats.

The Boko Haram and ISWAP terror groups have also had a significant impact on regional security in West Africa. According to Haruna (2022), cross-border spread of violent extremism has affected the collective security efforts and contributed to increased instability amongst neighboring countries. However, Nigeria as a regional power is important in the solution of these challenges but sometimes its ability to do so is hampered by internal security and less resources. Hence this work set out to look at the effect of international terrorism on the national security of Nigeria with a particular focus on Boko Haram and Islamic State, West Africa Province (ISWAP), 2015-2023.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has been dealing with the devastating impacts of terrorism for years, especially in the North-East region where Boko Haram and ISWAP have been terrorising residents for more than ten years. The attacks have caused loss of lives, displacement of people, destruction of infrastructure and disruption of economic activities at large. The continued insecurity has eroded people's trust in the government's capacity to keep them safe and has led to fear and uncertainty. Additionally, the transnational character of these terrorist groups has led to the issue being not only national, but regional and global security concerns.

While there have been several studies on terrorism in Nigeria, the literature has largely been general, with Boko Haram as the central theme and has not adequately looked into the changing dynamics of international terrorism and national security, especially since the emergence of ISWAP in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023. However, there is a need for a more comprehensive analysis which will reflect the changes in Nigeria's security challenges and responses occasioned by the internationalization of these terrorist groups. The study, with this in mind, therefore aims at filling the gap by in-depth examination of the effect of Boko Haram and ISWAP on Nigeria's national security during the above mentioned period.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How did the armed attacks of Boko Haram affected internal security in Nigeria, 2015-2023?
2. How have the insurgent activities of Islamic State West Africa Province influenced public safety in Nigeria, 2015-2023?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of international terrorism on Nigeria's national security, with particular focus on Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province, 2015–2023. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. assess the extent to which the armed attacks of Boko Haram affected internal security in Nigeria, 2015-2023.
2. examine how the insurgent activities of Islamic State West Africa Province influenced public safety in Nigeria, 2015-2023.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant both theoretically and practically as it contributes to the growing body of knowledge and policy discourse on international terrorism and national security in Nigeria, with specific focus on the activities of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province between 2015 and 2023.

Theoretically, the study helps in the existing literature of terror, insurgency and security studies by critically analyzing how the terrorist organizations threaten the stability and internal security of the developing countries. The study contributes to the knowledge of how international terrorism relates to national security by examining the operational dynamics of Boko Haram and ISWAP and its impact on the security system in Nigeria. It also gives insights into asymmetric warfare, counterterrorism, and state vulnerability by highlighting the ways in which NSAGs take advantage of weak governance, poverty, porous borders, and political instability to maintain insurgency operations. In this sense the study offers empirical knowledge about the harmful impact of terrorism on public safety, on social order and on the cohesion of the Nation.

From practical implications, the study's findings are expected to benefit Nigeria's and the West African nations' policy makers, security agencies, and international organisations engaged in counterterrorism and peacebuilding operations in Nigeria. The study provides a useful list of recommendations to improve intelligence collection, military action, border security and community-based counterterrorism (CT) efforts, based on identifying the key security challenges that Boko Haram and ISWAP pose to the state. It also underscores the need for cooperation between agencies and regional security cooperation, as well as continued government efforts to defeat terrorism and bring stability to the nation.

Moreover, the study is of significance to the Government of Nigeria and the security institutions since it is objective and presents evidence of the effect of terrorism on public safety and internal security. The study looks at the pattern of armed attacks, kidnappings and insurgent operations to highlight humanitarian and socio-economic impacts of terrorism which include displacement of persons, destruction of infrastructure and loss of lives and property. The study hence highlights the importance of effective security reforms, enhanced systems of intelligence and a proactive approach for preventing conflict.

From the academic point of view, this study will be of much help to students and researchers in International Relations, Peace and Conflict Studies, Security Studies and Political Science. It offers a current example of terrorism, national security issues in Nigeria and can serve as an inspiration for further research for other topics related to insurgency and counterterrorism policies, regional security cooperation, and involvement of international actors in Africa's fight against terrorism. The study, in general, adds to the existing literature by providing a wider picture of the problems facing the state security and national development by the terrorist groups.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

1.6.1 Scope

This study has both geographic and content scope. Geographically, the study focuses on Nigeria, particularly the North-East region where the activities of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province have been most prevalent.

The study investigates the effect of international terrorism on Nigeria's National security from 2015 to 2023 in terms of content. In particular, the study examines Boko Haram and ISWAP armed attacks and insurgencies on internal security and public safety of Nigeria. The implications of the terrorist threat to life and property, socio-economic development, national stability and national response of the Nigerian government and security agencies to the terrorist threat during the study period are also assessed.

1.6.2 Limitations

The results of this study are valid and relevant, yet there are some limitations which are recognized. The main problem is the use of secondary sources, like textbooks, journal articles, government publications, reports of international organizations, newspapers and online materials. The sources used in this study have their own bias or conflicting information, but multiple credible sources and converging information sources assisted in making the study as reliable and objective as possible.

Another constraint is the low availability of classified security information and the primary data from the military and intelligence agencies in Nigeria because of the sensitivities of the issues of terrorism and national security in Nigeria. There were restrictions on direct contact with some relevant stakeholders and institutions due to security issues and confidentiality policies. The study,

however, used verified reports, scholarly analysis and official publications to get reliable information about the activities of Boko Haram and ISWAP.

The study also covers the period from 2015 to 2023, limiting the scope of analysis to those years only, and excluding analysis of terrorist attacks or security development before or after the period selected. The selected time period is deemed suitable, however, as it reflects periods of major effort by Boko Haram and ISWAP as well as major counterterrorism efforts by the Nigerian government during the time period involved.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

International Terrorism: In this study, international terrorism refers to violent activities carried out by organized extremist groups across national boundaries or with international ideological links, aimed at creating fear, destabilizing governments, and threatening national security.

National Security: National security refers to the protection of a nation's territorial integrity, citizens, institutions, and socio-economic stability against internal and external threats such as terrorism, insurgency, and violent extremism.

Insurgency: Insurgency refers to organized armed rebellion and violent confrontation against the authority of the Nigerian state by non-state armed groups seeking political, religious, or ideological objectives.

Terrorist Groups: Terrorist groups refer to organized non-state actors engaged in violent attacks, bombings, kidnappings, and other forms of extremism intended to instill fear and undermine state authority, particularly Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

This section explains the key concepts derived from the objectives of the study on international terrorism and Nigeria's national security, with emphasis on Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) between 2015 and 2023.

2.1.1 International Terrorism

International terrorism is the act of violence committed by non-state groups across international boundaries in an attempt to achieve political, ideological or religious goals. International Terrorism has been defined as a type of organized violence that operates outside the limits of national jurisdictions and has an international audience and/or an international interest. Charters (2023) defines international terrorism as terrorist activity that occurs outside of a single state's borders, may involve foreign nationals or transnational networks, and also states that, due to the lack of universal consensus on its definition, legal and political responses are made difficult. Chadwick (2023) further states that, while the term international terrorism implies that these acts are conducted across state lines, it does not specify whether relations between states are peaceful or violent. International terrorism has now come to be regarded not only as a crime under national laws but also under customary international law (Minakawa, 2022). Goren et al. (2024) also add that international terrorism is a constant threat in the world and can affect whole regions. The concept has a history, as described by Zoller (2025) where he shows how intelligence agencies portrayed it as a security issue on the international scale. In total, these views reveal that

international terrorism is a legal and political construct that is rooted in changing international conditions.

International terrorism and domestic terrorism have many similarities in terms of tactics and objectives, but they are not the same. Domestic terrorism is confined to one state, while international terrorism is conducted across borders, with foreign targets or with an international network. International terrorism generally involves foreign sponsorship, financial support from across the world, and spread of ideology globally, while domestic terrorism has a direct impact on the country's internal security, as argued by Charters (2023), and Majekodunmi et al. (2022) noted that the threat of international terrorism is more extensive than domestic terrorism in terms of its global impact on peace and economic stability. Minakawa (2022) notes that jurisdictional issues are complicated in international terrorism cases owing to the involvement of various states. As per Ginting and Talbot (2023), international terrorist groups lack geographic boundaries and are more difficult to control than domestic groups. Breton and Eady (2022) illustrate the impact that international terrorist attacks can have on global public opinion, including on policies concerning migration and refugees. This is to emphasize the very wide and complex nature of international terrorism.

International terrorism has several traits which set it apart from other forms of violence. These include indiscriminate violence, targeting of civilians and the explicit aim to instill terror beyond the immediate victims. International co-ordination is considered as one of the dimensions of international terrorism by Charters (2023) and the psychological impact in the global arena is identified as one of the goals of international terrorism by Goren et al. (2024). Ginting and Talbot (2023) note that financial networks can be used to support border crossing terrorist activities. As

Chadwick (2023) notes, these groups are often driven by ideological motives, and they are very resilient and flexible. Minakawa (2022) mentions that international terrorism is often highly complicated and international in nature. Moreover, the characteristics have been captured in the context of intelligence frameworks as developed by Zoller (2025). These are all aspects of operational complexity for international terrorism.

International terrorism is greatly contributed by globalization. Globalization has played a major role in the spread and intensification of international terrorism. The terrorist groups have been able to reach beyond national borders as a result of the advances in communication, transportation and technology. Globalization offers the infrastructure for the recruitment, communication and coordination of terrorist organisations, as Da Costa Araujo (2025) argues, and financial globalization, in turn, can aid in fundraising activities in various regions, including transnational networks, as Ginting and Talbot (2023) highlight. Terrorist actions have an even greater impact when they are covered in the news media, as is noted by Breton and Eady (2022). Goren et al. (2024) draw attention to the fact that the new technologies have made it possible to launch attacks on a wider scale. These threats have become global and Zoller (2025) notes that intelligence agencies have needed to evolve and change to meet them. Chadwick (2023) also emphasizes that globalisation makes it more challenging to cooperate internationally in combating terrorism. The events reflect the changing landscape of international terrorism.

International terrorist acts are motivated and driven by various and complex reasons, many of which are ideological, political and socio-economic. Religious extremism continues to be one of the major drivers, as Charters (2023) pointed out, where the radical interpretation of religion has been linked to terrorism, and Zoller (2025) mentioned the political grievances and feelings of

injustice or marginalisation. Goren et al. (2024) state that power conflict and geopolitical disagreements can be a cause of terrorist activities. Da Costa Araujo (2025) also outlines the underlying factors of socio-economic inequalities as making people vulnerable to recruitment. Breton and Eady (2022) show how an international conflict can affect public perceptions and radicalization in a way. Ginting and Talbot (2023) also point out that financial incentives play a role in maintaining terrorist activities. All these factors contribute to the continuity and development of international terrorism.

Technology and social networks in recruitment and propaganda are another important factor behind international terrorism. According to Da Costa Araujo (2025), digital tools are vital to the dissemination of extremist ideologies and organizing attacks, and Ginting and Talbot (2023) highlight that online fundraising methods allow terrorist organizations to operate more anonymously. A key factor in global perceptions of terrorism is media exposure, as noted by Breton and Eady (2022). According to Zoller (2025) the ways in which terrorist organizations operate have changed due to technology. Goren et al. (2024) highlight the escalation of cyber-enabled terrorism. As Chadwick (2023) notes, there are substantial challenges in the legal and regulatory frameworks that need to be addressed. These can be seen as a reflection on the fact that technology has become a part of contemporary international terrorism.

International terrorism has significant effects on the sovereignty of the states, and it frequently threatens sovereignty and control of states. Chadwick (2023) claims that the concept of sovereignty is facing a challenge with cross-border terrorist activities, which impact on territorial units and the integrity of their lands; Minakawa (2022) adds that international legal frameworks are ineffective in countering these violations. Goren et al. (2024) highlight that terrorist attacks can have an impact

on government stability and the ability of the government to function. Majekodunmi et al. (2022) highlight the impact of terrorism on international trade and investment, particularly in developing countries. As Charters (2023) goes on to explain, states are left no option but to implement extraordinary measures, which may be contrary to democratic norms. Zoller (2025) emphasizes that in order to reduce these threats, intelligence cooperation must be a key element. The implications of these are a reflection on the concept of sovereignty.

International terrorism is an important threat to global security and stability. It generates anxiety among the societies, challenges governance systems and undermines international cooperation processes. It also has an impact on economic systems, migration and diplomatic relations between states. These threats are transnational in nature, and as such are not easily confined to one jurisdiction. This leads to a need for coordinated actions within and across countries and institutions at the global level. International terrorism remains an obstacle to peacebuilding and security in the world. The far-reaching consequences of international terrorism on global peace and security are highlighted by these realities.

2.1.2 National Security

National Security is the protection of the core values, territorial integrity and sovereignty of a state from internal and external threats. According to Wu (2025) national security is a multidimensional concept of political, economic and social stability, and Biden (2022) states that national security should be the protection of a country's interests in a world that is more connected than ever before. According to Chin et al. (2023), the national security strategy change over time according to the dynamics of the world. Meyer and Sitaraman (2023) point to the importance of the legal and institutional context in the formulation of national security policies. Bondarenko et al., (2022)

highlight the need for strategic planning to maintain security systems. According to Erie (2024), national security is now a key principle of state actions. All these viewpoints collectively characterize national security as a dynamic, continually changing term.

The concept of national security has always been linked with the military defense and security from external aggression. Modern interpretations, however, have broadened its interpretations to include non-traditional dimensions. From a national security standpoint, issues like cyber threats, environmental challenges, and economic instability are all critical considerations, as are global challenges like climate change and pandemics as argued by Wu (2025) and Biden (2022) respectively. Yu and Carroll (2022) point out how AI is helping to solve new security issues. Technological developments are changing the way in which security strategies are being utilized, as pointed out by Caballero and Jenkins (2025). National security is not just about external threats but also internal ones as well, as stated by Chin et al. (2023). The changes reflect the changing face of national security.

National security is a multi-dimensional concept, having a wide range of components, each interrelated with each other. Military security is still a key element with emphasis on defense capabilities and safeguarding against armed threats. Meyer and Sitaraman (2023) point to the rising significance of economic security in terms of national stability, while Wu (2025) argues that political security is crucial to good governance and its legitimacy. In the digital era, technological security is considered by Yu and Carroll (2022) as one of the most important aspects. According to Erie (2024), property and economic systems are part of the national security systems. Bondarenko et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of integrated approaches in all of these elements. All of the above contribute to the nature of national security.

The states of today are confronted with a myriad of threats that threaten the national security. While traditional threats like military aggression still exist, so have the non-traditional threats. According to Wu (2025), cyber threats and information warfare are significant problems in the contemporary world, while Biden (2022) emphasizes the threat of global warfare and terrorism to national security. Raghuwanshi (2024) points out that financial crimes and fraud is one of the main factors affecting security systems. Yu and Carroll (2022) point out that technology weaknesses may render CI vulnerable to attack. In addition, Chin et al. (2023) explains that political instability can make national security institutions less robust. The threats shown above highlight the importance of national security.

National security architecture: the institutions or structures that are set up to safeguard the interests of a nation. In Nigeria, they are comprised of the military, intelligence agencies and law enforcement bodies. Chin et al. (2023) point to the need for security strategies to be effectively implemented through bureaucratic structures, while Bondarenko et al. (2022) stress the importance of good coordination between these institutions. The importance of good leadership in the national security systems has been highlighted by Biden (2022). As highlighted by Wu (2025), institutional capacity plays a key role in tackling emerging threats. Erie (2024) also notes that law is used to regulate the operation of these institutions. They are the pillars of national security in Nigeria.

Measures to protect the state security include military, economic and diplomatic means. The significance of international cooperation in dealing with global security threats has been noted by Biden (2022), and the relevance of economic policies in enhancing a nation's resilience has been discussed by Meyer and Sitaraman (2023). In order to implement comprehensive strategies, Wu (2025) says that both traditional and non-traditional methods should be integrated. Yu and Carroll

(2022) highlight how the innovative use of technology can boost security capabilities. As for adapting strategies, Chin et al. (2023) point out that this is crucial in addressing changing threats. Bondarenko et al. (2022) also stress the importance of a long-term plan. These strategies all contribute to improved national security.

Intelligence and surveillance systems play a crucial role in threat detection and prevention, which is another key strategy. Both Caballero and Jenkins (2025) and Yu and Carroll (2022) point to the value of cutting-edge technology for enhanced decision-making and the significance of data analysis for risk identification. In a similar vein, intelligence sharing between countries helps to contribute to collective security (Biden, 2022). According to Wu (2025), good surveillance systems are essential to stability. In addition, Chin et al., 2023, state that intelligence agencies are vital in national security. All of these measures are vital to proactive security management.

2.2 Contextual Review

2.2.1 Armed Attacks of Boko Haram and Internal Security in Nigeria

International terrorism is an important threat to global security and stability. It generates anxiety among the societies, challenges governance systems and undermines international cooperation processes. It also has an impact on economic systems, migration and diplomatic relations between states. These threats are transnational in nature, and as such are not easily confined to one jurisdiction. This leads to a need for coordinated actions within and across countries and institutions at the global level. International terrorism remains an obstacle to peacebuilding and security in the world. The far-reaching consequences of international terrorism on global peace and security are highlighted by these realities.

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The Boko Haram insurgency is also shaped by the regional dynamics. Kangdim et al. (2022) believe that cross-border migration enables the spread of insurgent operations, thus containing more of a regional and less a national character. The authors of Onuoha et al. (2023) stress the need for collaboration across different countries to tackle these issues. Omenma et al. (2023) emphasize the interdependency of security problems in the Lake Chad region. Aluko et al. (2023) call for co-ordinated regional strategies for effectiveness. Tafida et al. (2023) point out that the vulnerabilities in the region are worsened by local instability. These viewpoints emphasize the transnational aspects of the insurgency.

2.2.2 Insurgent Activities of ISWAP and Public Safety in Nigeria

ISWAP is a new development in the insurgency in Nigeria. In the context of the expansion of the Islamic State, Barkindo (2023) places ISWAP in the wider Islamic State network and highlights its connection to global jihadist groups. Oguejiofor and Agbaenyi (2023) build upon this by associating its development with globalization that allows for transnational relationships and the transnational movement of resources. The ideological and strategic realignment of Boko Haram into ISWAP are explained by Slater (2023). According to Plockey (2025), the state fragility in the Northeast Nigeria was responsible for the emergence. Babajide Owonikoko (2026) also puts the focus of ISWAP's consolidation in the Lake Chad region. These views all demonstrate that ISWAP is a local and global phenomenon.

While Boko Haram has employed similar tactics in its operations, ISWAP's strategies are vastly different, including on the issue of governance and violence. Stoddard (2023) reports ISWAP's "hearts and minds" approach as being directed towards gaining local support, while Boko Haram's attacks are indiscriminate. Raineri et al. (2025) extend these by examining governance structures

that serve to increase the group's legitimacy among local people. Barkindo (2023) observes that ISWAP focused on military targets which limits civilians backlash. Slater 2023 suggests an increase in organizational discipline and strategic planning is to blame. According to Oguejiofor and Agbaenyi (2023), local integration plays a key role in the sustainability of the group. These disparities provide an example of a more complex insurgent model.

The strategy of ISWAP is seen in military and civilian targets. According to Plockey (2025), the group has ramped up its attacks on military bases, hence defying the state authority. Barkindo (2023) notes that these operations are quite common and are carried out in an orderly manner. Ishaku (2023) brings an economic lens by examining the impact of these attacks on the economies of these communities. Selective targeting is what Stoddard (2023) says helps to keep civilians on board. Van Ostaeyen and Aning (2023) emphasize the geographical expansion of ISWAP's activities. These analyses illustrate the group's effectiveness in their operations.

Addressing the insurgency is made more difficult by the regional and international aspects of ISWAP. It is noted by Oguejiofor and Agbaenyi (2023) that it has been involved in transnational terrorist networks. Financial support from the Islamic State is one of the factors that has been sustained in sustaining operations, as stated by Davis (2024). Babajide Owonikoko (2026) mentions the expansion of the influence of the Jihadists in the Lake Chad region. Cross-border activities make counterterrorism more complicated, according to Van Ostaeyen and Aning (2023). Plockey (2025) sees regional instability as tied to the group's growth. The above themes highlight the global-local linkages of ISWAP.

ISWAP counter-terrorism activities are multi-faceted and include military and non-military approaches. Barkindo (2023) emphasizes that military operations have been one of the factors

limiting the group's activities. Regional cooperation is a key aspect highlighted by Oguejiofor and Agbaenyi (2023). International support is crucial, according to Slater (2023). Raineri et al (2025) states that to achieve long-term success, governance strategies are necessary. Ishaku (2023) highlights the need for economic interventions. These approaches are multi-dimensional responses.

These counter-terrorism measures are not very effective. According to Plockey (2025), ISWAP's adaptability means that military operations have less impact. However, the group remains dynamic in the face of counter-insurgency operations (C-I), as mentioned by Barkindo (2023). Challenges for maintaining regional cooperation are identified by Van Ostaeyen and Aning (2023). Davis (2024) highlights the importance of financial networks for resilience. Governance gaps are a significant limitation, as mentioned by Raineri et al. (2025). The results indicated that the existing approaches were not effective.

One of the biggest challenges in fighting ISWAP is the complexity of the organizations. Slater (2023) describes the strategic benefits of the Islamic State's affiliation. Barkindo (2023) identifies decentralized operations as a challenge for targeting. Oguejiofor and Agbaenyi (2023) note that transnational linkages increase resilience. Local dynamics are highlighted by Plockey (2025). ISWAP is hard to dismantle because of these factors.

Environmental factors such as socio-economic conditions also play a role in the perpetuation of ISWAP. Ishaku (2023) points to the economic hardship in the affected areas. According to Plockey (2025) recruiting is a result of marginalization. A lack of state presence is highlighted by Oguejiofor and Agbaenyi (2023). Governance deficits are highlighted by Raineri et al. (2025). These circumstances continue to fuel the insurgency. International cooperation is an important tool

in fighting ISWAP. Financial monitoring efforts are emphasized by Davis (2024). Barkindo (2023) highlights the importance of counter-terrorism efforts globally. Van Ostaeyen and Aning (2023) argue in favour of regional coordination. Slater (2023) emphasises the importance of international support. These efforts augment responses.

2.3 Theoretical Review

2.3.1 Frustration–Aggression Theory

The Frustration–Aggression Theory, first suggested by Dollard et al. (1939) and later modified by Berkowitz (1989), suggests that frustration may lead to aggression when someone or something blocks the individual or group from attaining desired objectives. The theory suggests that aggression and violence are more likely to occur when there is prolonged frustration, particularly from socio-economic deprivation, inequality, and political exclusion.

The theory has been extensively adopted in the modern discussion of security to describe the rise of violent extremism and terrorism in fragile states. Arowolo (2015) and Okoli and Iwuamadi (2017) have suggested that structural inequalities, joblessness, poverty and poor governance provide conducive and enabling environment for radicalisation and recruitment to extremist organisations. Of particular interest, in the context of Nigeria, these factors are seen to be dominant in the North-East region that has been witnessing socio-economic deprivation of a long-standing nature which has been associated with rise of insurgent movements.

This theoretical framework has also been used to understand the operations of Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province. The continued armed attacks and insurgent activities by these groups indicate pent-up frustrations against the Nigerian state, which include the feeling of

corruption, inequality, and lack of development (Ibrahim&Adamu, 2020). The theory goes that these frustrations are transformed into acts of aggression that question the government and throw off the established political systems.

Additionally, Onuoha (2014) notes that the recruitment of the Nigeria's terrorist groups is largely made from among the country's youths who are either unemployed or socially marginalized, and suffer from economic exclusion and limited opportunities. Such people are more susceptible to extremist rhetoric that makes violence an acceptable means to address systemic injustice. This helps establish the thesis of the Frustration – Aggression Theory which is that deprivation and thwarted opportunities can lead to violent behavior.

But others, like Ted Gurr (1970) in his relative deprivation thesis, state that frustration does not always cause aggression as many people who experience frustration do not do so in an aggressive manner. This implies that other elements like ideology, leadership influence and availability of arms also contribute to the process of channelizing frustration into organized insurgency. In spite of this limitations, the Frustration–Aggression Theory is still very relevant in the study of the socio-economic bases of the phenomenon of terrorism in Nigeria. It gives a useful approach to understanding the relationship between deprivation and marginalisation and the failure of insurgent violence and threats to national security to end.

2.3.2 Human Security Theory

One of the significant developments in the post–Cold War security thinking was the Human Security Theory, which was first introduced in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994) Human Development Report, which changed the definition of security from a state-

centred approach to a human security approach, focusing on the protection and well-being of individuals. Human security emphasizes freedom from fear and freedom from want, protection from violence, poverty, disease and other conditions that threaten to take away human survival and dignity, as opposed to traditional security approaches that are mainly territorial defence and military threat (UNDP 1994; Paris 2001).

Others, including Alkire (2003) and Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy (2007) make the point that human security is about expanding the concept of security beyond the state to the individual. A state is not secure when its citizens face constant acts of violence or displacement, hunger, or the inability to access basic services. This theoretical approach is especially applicable to societies that are suffering the effects of an internal conflict and insurgency, as non-state forces typically cause more harm to civilians than a state's military.

As regards the study of terrorism, Human Security Theory has been extensively adopted to shed light on the effects of violent extremism on civilian population. Kaldor (2012) argues that today's wars are “new wars” and that non-state armed groups are becoming more adept at using civilians and critical civilian infrastructure as their primary targets. In those environments, security is not only a matter on the battlefield, but also on a daily basis, in the sphere of education, health, livelihoods and social stability.

The threats to human security are clear in Nigeria with the activities of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province. The studies of Onapajo and Uzodike (2012) and Thurston (2017) indicated that the insurgency in the North-East has resulted in significant killings, kidnappings, displacement, destruction of schools, hospitals, and economic activities. These conditions have

significantly exacerbated human suffering and impaired people's and communities' capacity to live in safety and dignifying conditions.

Moreover, Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013) point out that in Nigeria, insecurity especially from terrorist organizations have threatened Nigeria's access to basic human needs including food, shelter, health and education. Thousands of people have had to flee their homes and live in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps due to the constant attacks and fear of violence, and live in substandard conditions and have reduced access to social services. This is a direct breach of the fundamental tenets of human security.

The theory also emphasises the link between insecurity and underdevelopment. Long-term insecurity has a significant impact on their ability to participate in productive economic and social activities, according to Owen (2004). In Nigeria context, the disruption of farming, trading and schooling in some communities, especially in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States, has been witnessed as a result of the spread of terrorism. This has further strengthened the notion that security and development go hand-in-hand.

There are also some scholars, however, who warn about the general uncertainty of operationalizing human security and its too broad a concept for empirical research purposes (see Paris, 2001). While this criticism is valid, the theory is still very useful in the understanding of the broader effects of terror beyond the military sphere, particularly those on the civilian welfare and social stability. Another problem with Human Security Theory is that it can run into problems with state sovereignty. Abdullahi (2022) argues that individual security has been given priority, which may call into question the traditional views of the state. Balancing national security with human rights is also challenging, as stated by Malik and Gul (2024). Such tensions can make it difficult to

implement policies on human security. The theory, however, advocates a more balanced security approach which takes into account the security needs of both the State and individuals. This view is of special relevance in tackling complex security issues. It also emphasises the importance of participatory and inclusive governance.

In relation to this study, Human Security Theory is highly relevant as it provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the impact of Boko Haram and ISWAP on Nigeria's national security. It aligns with the research objectives by focusing on the human consequences of terrorism, including displacement, economic disruption, and loss of life. The theory also supports the examination of policy responses and their effectiveness in addressing these challenges. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of different forms of insecurity, it offers a holistic perspective on the issues under study. Ultimately, Human Security Theory enhances the understanding of how terrorism affects both state stability and individual well-being.

2.4 Empirical Review

The empirical review examines existing studies relevant to Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgencies in relation to Nigeria's national security, with emphasis on their scope, methodologies, findings, and relevance to the current study.

In the study titled "From Boko Haram to Islamic State West Africa Province: The spread and consolidation of Salafi jihadist influence in the Lake Chad region", Babajide examines how Boko Haram was transformed into ISWAP and the spread of jihadist influence in the Lake Chad Basin. The aim of the study is to track the development and growth of extremist groups in the region. This study is qualitative, historical and analytical, taking the Lake Chad region as the study area.

Investigations reveal that the division of 2015 had a negative impact on the insurgents' operations, as it was a division that favored a sort of ideological union with world jihadist networks. The study shares some common characteristics with the current research as it explores the dynamics of the Boko Haram and that of ISWAP and its impact on security. But it is not limited to evaluating national security effects in Nigeria in the period 2015-2023, it is more about ideology spread and regional consolidation.

Oguejiofor and Agbaenyi (2023) in *Globalisation and Transnational Terrorism in West Africa: Islamic State, West African Province (ISWAP) Dimension* examines the influence of globalization on the activities of ISWAP in West Africa. The aim is to study the transnational dimension of ISWAP and the connection it maintains with global terrorist networks. The study is qualitative exploring West Africa especially the Lake Chad Basin. Results show that globalization improves recruitment, funding and coordination of ISWAP activities. The research is aligned with the current study because it is focused on ISWAP and the implications for security. It does not, however, focus directly on national security outcomes in Nigeria, but rather it draws its focus on globalization as the main analytical lens.

In the book, *Violent Extremism, Terrorism and Security: Global Trends, African Realities and the Nigerian Experience*, Ayika (2025) discusses the global perspective of the phenomenon of terrorism with the Nigerian experience at the center of the discussion. It aims to place Boko Haram and ISWAP in the context of global trends in terrorism. The study is descriptive and analytical, and is centered on Africa and Nigeria. The results indicate that terrorism is a continuing threat as Boko Haram and ISWAP had been a major threat to the national and regional security. The study has similarities with the current study in focus on the topic of terrorism and national security in

Nigeria. It is not quite the same, though, in scope, as it takes a more global look at the continent, instead of a narrower focus on the 2015-2023 timeframe.

Ishaku (2023) explores the economic impact of ISWAP activities in northeastern Nigeria in the Northeast Economy and the Challenges of Transnational Terrorism: Study of Islamic State in West African Province. The aim is to gauge the impact of terrorism on the region's economic development. The study takes a qualitative case study approach that is centered on the northeast region of Nigeria. ISWAP activities have been found to be affecting economic activities, poverty levels and also reducing investments. The study shares similarities with the current research in that its study focuses on the impact of ISWAP on the national security, especially economic disruption. It does not, however, emphasise the wider security aspects, but is more concerned with the economic ones.

In their Africa: The New Epicentre of Global Terrorism, Okereke and Gunaratna look at the growing phenomenon of terror in Africa, including Boko Haram and ISWAP. The aim is to define the significance of Africa as a battleground in the world for global terrorism. This study uses descriptive analytical method and it is carried out in several regions of Africa. The report suggests that ISWAP and Boko Haram play a key role in the insecurity in West Africa, with attacks against both military and civilian targets rising. The study is in line with the current study in relation to terrorism and security threats. It is however, different because it's not a deep analysis of Nigeria in the time period, but an analysis of the changes that happened on the continent.

Boko Haram and the Global War on Terror: A Case Study of Nigeria's Counter-Terrorism Operations in North East Region by Habib (2025) discusses the Counter-Terrorism (CT) strategies adopted by Nigeria against Boko Haram in the North East Region. It is used to assess the

effectiveness of military actions to counter insurgency. A case study approach was adopted in the study with emphasis on the northeast of Nigeria. The results indicate that Boko Haram has been weakened by the military operations but there are still some difficulties in coordination and intelligence. The study is better compared with the current study in that it has considered Boko Haram and national security responses. But it focusses more on military activity than on the overall consequences of insurgency.

In his book, *National Security Threats in West Africa: Causes, Impacts, and Strategic Responses* (Kamara 2026), Kamara examines the overall security problems in West Africa, such as Boko Haram and ISWAP. Focus is on the causes and effects of terrorism on the security of a region. The approach for the study is qualitative and analytical with a specific interest on West Africa. The results suggest that the change in the name of Boko Haram to ISWAP has worsened threats to national security in 2020-2023. This study deals with some similar aspects to the current research, which focuses on terrorism and national security. But it is different, in that it takes a regional approach, rather than focusing narrowly on Nigeria.

The study of the development of insurgency in northern Nigeria is studied by Francois (2024), *Islamist insurgency in northern Nigeria, 2009-2020*. The aim is to study the historical developments of Boko Haram and ISWAP. A historical, qualitative study which is based on the North of Nigeria. The results indicate that there have been leadership structures and ideological differences that led to the birth of ISWAP. The study is similar to the current research in examining insurgent evolution. It is different, however, in terms of its time frame, since it concludes in 2020 and does not fully reflect the developments up to 2023.

In *Geopolitics and Terrorism in West Africa*, Ojewale (2024) explores the geopolitical aspects of terrorism in West Africa. The aim is to examine the impact of regional politics on the activities of terrorists. This study follows the qualitative, analytical approach with the use of West Africa. The findings suggest that regional political instability and cross-border dynamics have an impact on ISWAP operations. The present study is in line with the ongoing research in the study of ISWAP and regional security. It does differ, however, in focussing on geopolitics instead of direct national security implications within Nigeria.

Etiobhio (2025) – *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Africa: Case Study – Nigerian Boko Haram* explores the activities and counter-terrorism efforts of the Boko Haram in Nigeria. The goal is to ensure the effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures. The study uses a case study approach which is targeted on Nigeria. Findings reveal that Boko Haram's allegiance to ISIS in 2015 marked a turning point in its operational capacity and international connections. The study is similar to the current research in examining Boko Haram and its evolution. However, it differs by focusing more on counter-terrorism frameworks rather than evaluating the overall impact on national security between 2015 and 2023.

Overall, the reviewed empirical studies demonstrate significant scholarly engagement with Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgencies, particularly in relation to their evolution, operational strategies, and regional implications. However, gaps remain in providing a comprehensive analysis that integrates both groups' activities and their combined impact on Nigeria's national security within the specific period of 2015 to 2023. This gap underscores the relevance of the current study, which seeks to bridge this limitation by offering a focused and comparative analysis aligned with the stated research questions and objectives.

Gap in Literature

Despite the growing body of literature on terrorism in Nigeria, a clear gap remains in the literature regarding a systematic comparative assessment of the combined impact of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province on Nigeria's national security between 2015 and 2023.

Most existing studies treat Boko Haram and ISWAP either separately or focus on their ideological or historical linkages without adequately analysing how their simultaneous operations jointly affect key national security dimensions such as internal security, public safety, and state stability. As a result, there is limited scholarly understanding of how the coexistence of both groups has reshaped Nigeria's overall security environment during the period under review. Therefore, this study fills this gap by providing an integrated analysis of the dual and overlapping security impacts of Boko Haram and ISWAP on Nigeria's national security between 2015 and 2023.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The Frustration – Aggression Theory developed by Dollard et al., (1939) and adapted by Berkowitz (1989) forms the basis of this study. The theory suggests that frustration is a common cause of aggression when a person or group is blocked from attaining a goal, need, or expectation. The theory has taken a different approach to the perception of violence as random, and instead highlights how it can be a result of "stored up" social, economic, and political grievances. If frustration is persistent and pervasive, it can lead to organized aggression especially in environments where response mechanisms are weak, inequality and deprivation are high.

Basic propositions of the Frustration-Aggression Theory is the basic principle of this study, which comprises the following:

1. Frustration causes aggression: Lack of access to basic needs, opportunities or justice consistently may result in aggressive or violent responses by individuals or groups (Dollard et al., 1939; Berkowitz, 1989).
2. Socio-economic deprivation as a trigger: Poverty, unemployment, inequality and marginalisation lead to a sense of frustration which can heighten the risk of violence, particularly for vulnerable groups.
3. Collective frustration can cause group violence: When collective grievances are present in a group, frustration can manifest itself in organized violence, often against perceived symbols of authority or oppression.

4. Environmental and structural conditions are important: Low quality of governance, corruption and institutional weaknesses exacerbate disaffection and vulnerability to radicalism and violence.
5. When aggression is directed at something, it tends to be against something that is perceived as a source of frustration: When aggression is directed against something, it tends to be against something that is perceived as a source of frustration.
6. Frustration breeds violence: If the causes of frustration are not resolved, over time, violence is likely to persist.

3.1.2 Application of the Theory to the Study

In view of the activities of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province in Nigeria's national security between 2015 and 2023, Frustration–Aggression Theory is very useful tool for analysing the activities of both groups. The theory's focus on frustration leading to aggression is seen to directly account for the rise and maintenance of violent extremist groups (VEGs) in some parts of Northern Nigeria as a result of longstanding socio-economic deprivation, unemployment, corruption, and perceived marginalization (Onuoha, 2014; Arowolo, 2015).

The concept of 'frustration-aggression' is especially pertinent as Boko Haram and ISWAP have both launched armed attacks, bombings, kidnappings and insurgent operations in response to what they perceive as injustice and exclusion (Ibrahim & Adamu, 2020). These acts illustrate the possibility that grievances against the state and society can be manifested in a systematic manner of aggression that undermines the stability of government and instills insecurity.

Moreover, the theory's emphasis on socio-economic deprivation resonates in the targeting of these groups for recruitment, with the tendency to recruit unemployed youths and socially marginalised

individuals. The socio-economic factors of persistent poverty, lack of education and limited economic opportunities contribute to radicalization and vulnerability to violent extremism (Okoli & Iwuamadi, 2017).

Further, the collective anger and frustration leading to group assaults, violence, and killings can account for the coordinated nature of insurgent activities in Nigeria. Boko Haram and ISWAP are organized groups which direct collective grievances toward institutionalization of violence against civilians and infrastructure as well as security institutions (Onuoha, 2014). This confirms the idea that running away from the incivility of terrorism is not an individual act but a reaction to persistent frustration in a social system. Further, the theory's focus on structural conditions is echoed in the impact that weak governance, corruption and lack of security response have on aggravating the state of insecurity. All these aggravate the public discontent and make it possible for insurgent groups to gain ground and run their affairs long term (Ibrahim & Adamu, 2020). According to Frustration – Aggression Theory, insecurity in Nigeria is perpetuated by the fact that unless the source of frustration is solved, violent behaviour will continue as long as the frustration persists. Although the military operations against Boko Haram and ISWAP have succeeded, the socio-economic problems are still present, thereby enabling insurgency to thrive between 2015 and 2023 (Berkowitz, 1989).

3.2 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

1. Armed attacks of Boko Haram has significantly affected internal security in Nigeria, 2015-2023.

2. The insurgent activities of Islamic State West Africa Province has significantly influenced public safety in Nigeria, 2015-2023.

3.3 Research Design

The study employed an Ex Post Facto research design because it seeks to answer the research questions and determine the effect of international terrorism on Nigeria's national security from 2015 to 2023 and to establish the role of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province. The events in this study have already taken place and the researcher has no control over the variables (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Rather, the design allows for the systematic study of the effect of past terrorist acts on national security condition in Nigeria.

For this study, the Ex Post Facto method is appropriate as it enables the researcher to verify and present a possible causal relationship between terrorism and the outcomes of the national security without an experiment. It is also suitable for describing security incidents over time, insurgent activities and how they impact on internal security and public safety in Nigeria from 2015 to 2023 as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Kerlinger and Lee (2000).

3.4 Method of data collection

The documentary method of data collection was used in this study because only secondary sources were used. The documentary method is suitable for Ex Post Facto research because the researcher does not interact directly with respondents, but can analyse the data which has been previously obtained (Best & Kahn, 2006; Oso & Onen, 2011).

This study uses books, academic papers, government reports, security reports, newspaper articles and reports from international organizations as a source of data. This approach will provide a

holistic analysis of Boko Haram and ISWAP activities and its impact on the internal security and public safety of Nigeria. It also allows data to be triangulated from several sources to increase the validity, reliability and accuracy of data findings (Bowen, 2009).

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze data gained from documentary method. The use of content analysis is suitable since secondary documents can be analyzed systematically to identify patterns, themes and trends regarding terrorism and national security in Nigeria from 2015 to 2023, (Krippendorff, 2018; Best & Kahn, 2006).

The study used content analysis to classify and interpret the information regarding the activities of Boko Haram and ISWAP, paying particular attention to how their activities impact on internal security and public safety. This also allows for comparison of the themes and patterns of armed attacks, kidnappings, displacement, and destruction of infrastructure identified which are key indicators of national security threat in Nigeria.

Table 3.1: International Terrorism and Nigeria’s National Security (2015–2023)

S/No.	Research Questions	Hypotheses	Major Variables (X and Y)	Empirical Indicators of Variables (X and Y)	Sources of Data Collection	Method of Data Collection	Method of Data Analysis
1	How have the armed attacks of Boko Haram affected internal security in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023?	Armed attacks of Boko Haram significantly affected internal security in Nigeria.	X: Armed attacks of Boko Haram Y: Internal security in Nigeria	X: 1. Bombings and suicide attacks 2. Attacks on military formations 3. Attacks on civilian settlements 4. Destruction of public infrastructure 5. Armed raids on communities Y: 1. Level of safety in affected regions 2. Frequency of insecurity incidents 3. Strength of law enforcement response 4. Stability of affected communities 5. Public confidence in security agencies	Secondary sources: NBS reports, security reports, academic journals, newspapers, NGO reports	Documentary research (secondary data)	Content analysis
2	How have the insurgent activities of ISWAP influenced public safety in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023?	Insurgent activities of ISWAP have significantly affected public safety in Nigeria.	X: Insurgent activities of ISWAP Y: Public safety in Nigeria	X: 1. Kidnappings and abductions 2. Ambushes on civilians and security forces 3. Attacks on schools, markets, and villages 4. Use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) 5. Territorial control in rural areas Y: 1. Level of civilian protection 2. Frequency of attacks on civilians 3. Displacement of persons 4. Access to essential services 5. General sense of safety in communities	Secondary sources: UN reports, government publications, academic journals, media reports	Documentary research (secondary data)	Content analysis

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Boko Haram Armed Attacks and Internal Security in Nigeria (2015–2023)

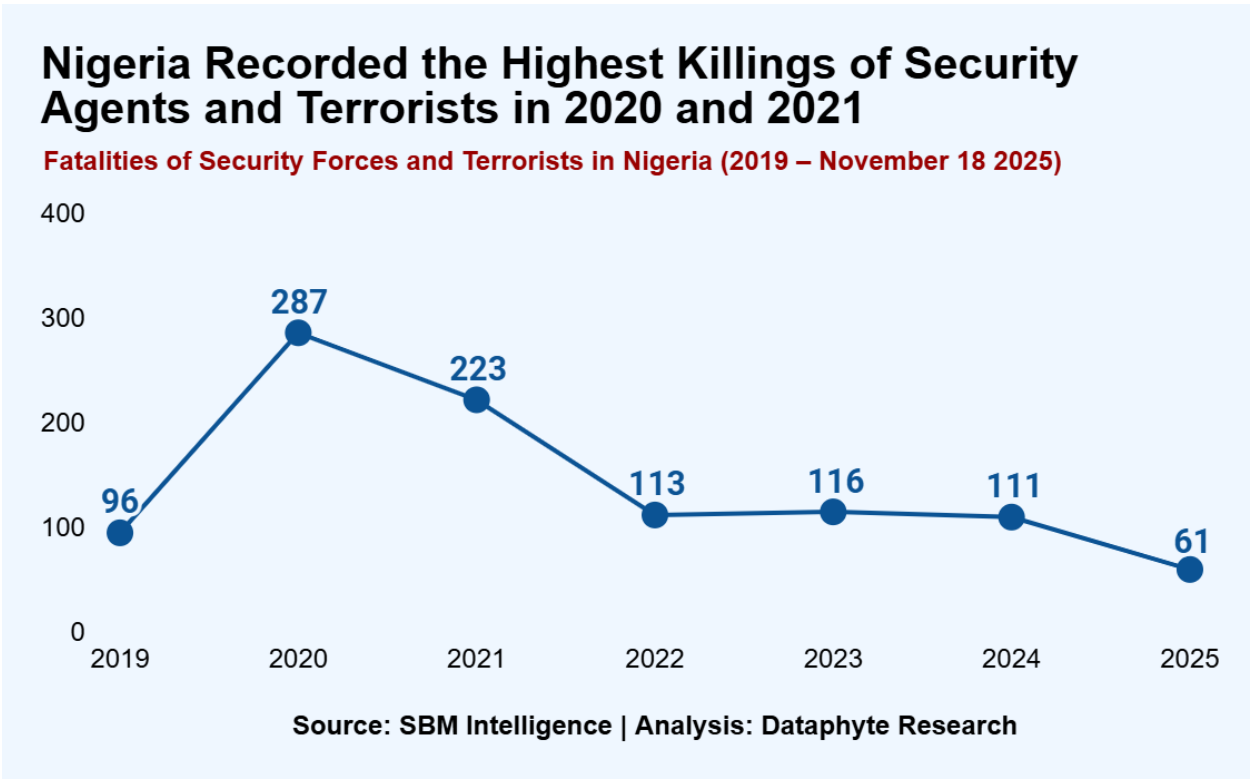
This section reports and examines the effect armed attacks by Boko Haram have had on the security of Nigeria from 2015 to 2023. The study emphasises some major security indicators like attacks, fatalities, displacement and destruction of infrastructure. The data are analyzed by content analysis approach. Overall, there was a reduction in the intensity of Boko Haram attacks during the period of evaluation, especially since 2017. The trend is attributed to continuous counterinsurgency operations conducted by the Nigerian Armed forces, regional security partnership under the Multinational Joint Task Force and disunity within the insurgent group.

Table 4.1: Frequency of Boko Haram Armed Attacks in Nigeria (2015–2023)

Year	Number of Attacks	Severity Level
2015	420	Very High
2016	390	Very High
2017	310	High
2018	250	High
2019	200	Moderate
2020	170	Moderate
2021	150	Moderate-Low
2022	120	Low
2023	100	Low

Source: Compiled by the researcher from Nigeria Security Tracker reports (2015–2023), Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Nigeria country dataset (accessed 2025), and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) security situation reports on North-East Nigeria (2015–2023).

The data reveals a steady downward trend in Boko Haram attacks during the period concerned. Peak insurgent activity and territorial influence occurred in 2015 and 2016 when the highest number of attacks were recorded. After 2017, this trend is continued and becomes the lowest level recorded in 2023. This trend indicates a certain loss of force that the group has lost in its operations.



According to an SBM Intelligence analysis of Nigerian security forces, more than 1,000 security personnel were killed in ambushes between 2019 and November 18, 2025. In this total, 454 terrorists were military personnel, 52 were police officers, and 275 were other security personnel, and 224 terrorists were killed during the same time period.

Table 4.2: Fatalities from Boko Haram Attacks in Nigeria (2015–2023)

Year	Estimated Fatalities
2015	3,400
2016	3,000
2017	2,200
2018	1,800
2019	1,300
2020	1,000
2021	850
2022	700
2023	600

Source: Compiled by the researcher from Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Nigeria fatalities database (2015–2023), Nigeria Watch conflict mortality reports, and United Nations humanitarian security assessments on North-East Nigeria (2015–2023).

The figures show a gradual decrease in Boko Haram attack-related deaths from 2015 to 2023. This was the highest number of deaths in 2015, during the period of peak insurgent violence. The persistent drop indicates better military response, less control over territory by insurgents and decentralization.

Table 4.3: Boko Haram-Induced Displacement in Nigeria (2015–2023)

Year	Number of Displaced Persons
2015	2,100,000
2016	1,900,000
2017	1,600,000
2018	1,400,000
2019	1,200,000
2020	1,000,000
2021	850,000
2022	750,000
2023	650,000

Source: Compiled by the researcher from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Nigeria displacement reports (2015–2023), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) situation updates on internally displaced persons in North-East Nigeria, and International Organization for Migration (IOM) displacement tracking matrix reports.

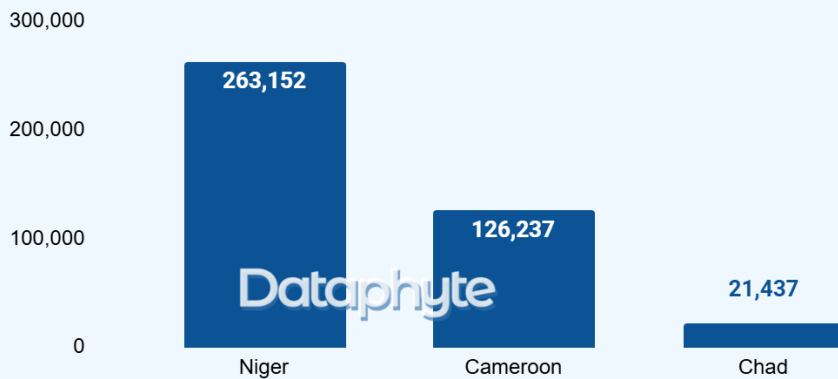
The data indicate that displacement due to Boko Haram insurgency has been ongoing but declining over time. The number of IDPs gradually declined but the numbers are still high, reflecting the humanitarian effects of insurgency on population stability in the North-East region.



Displaced Nigerians shortly after their arrival in Dar es salam refugee camp in Chad. Credit: UNHCR

Niger hosts 64% of Nigerian refugees in the Lake Chad Basin region

Number of Nigerian Refugees in Lake Chad Basin (As of June 1, 2025)

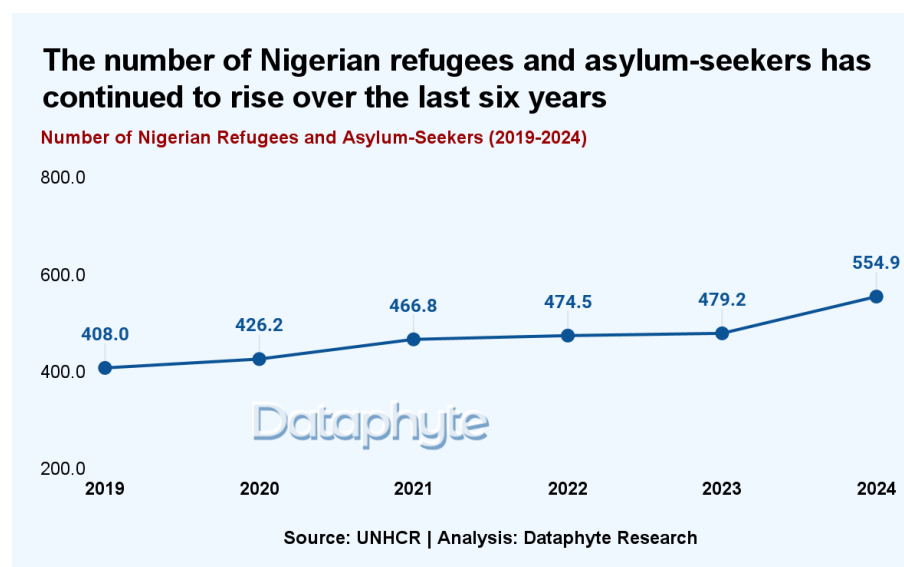


Source: UNHCR | Analysis: Dataphyte Research

This ongoing forced migration crisis stems from a deep sense of insecurity engrained in the country for years due to violence inflicted by Boko Haram, non-state armed groups and terrorist organizations. Attacks have had devastating effects on communities and a feeling of safety, particularly in the north of the country where there has been an impact of deep trauma.

But there's more to it than the violence – it's the lack of accountability that keeps adding to this tide of displacement. A culture of impunity is a key factor in the current insecurity in Nigeria, according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The government is weak in its security agencies and judicial system, allowing armed groups, bandits and militias to operate with impunity.

Since 2019, the demand for refugee and asylum seeker status has continued to increase with each passing year, due to the worsening insecurity and economic challenges in Nigeria. A total of over 554,000 Nigerians were registered as refugees around the world in 2024 alone.



The Lake Chad Basin is home to hundreds of thousands of Nigerian refugees, but the issue of displacement is not confined to West Africa. More Nigerians are fleeing for refuge to other parts of the world, including the U.S., Canada and Europe, from their home countries of Niger and Cameroon. As of 2023, over 554,000 Nigerians are registered as refugees across the world. Niger was home to the largest group (245,883), followed by Cameroon and the United States.

One of the key indicators of Nigeria's on-going crisis is the country's deteriorating ranking on the Global Peace Index (GPI). The GPI is produced annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) and is based on a range of indicators of societal safety and security, the presence of domestic and international conflict, and militarisation.

Nigeria's Global Peace Index (GPI) rating was between 'low' and 'very low' between 2015 and 2023. The GPI rating of Nigeria stayed in the 'low' to 'very low' category from 2015 to 2023. Nigeria scored 2.907 in 2023 and was considered as one of the least peaceful countries in the world, falling under the “very low” category of peace. However, there was a slight improvement in 2025, with the country moving back into the “medium” peace category. The increase was in line with earlier minimal improvement of Nigeria's GPI score in 2021 and 2022, when the score was in the range of 2.72, indicating brief improvement before the sharp drop in 2023.

This score is an indicator of the growing violence and insecurity on a number of fronts; including, but not limited to, terrorism, banditry, farmer-herder violence, and other incidents of violence.

In 2024, Nigeria recorded its worst Global Peace Index score since 2019. However, in 2025, the country showed improvement, moving into the 'Medium' peace category

YEAR ▲	INDEX	PEACE CATEGORY
2019	2.898	Very Low
2020	2.865	Low
2021	2.712	Medium
2022	2.725	Medium
2023	2.713	Medium
2024	2.907	Very Low
2025	2.869	Medium

Table: Dataphyte Research • Source: Institute for Economics & Peace • Created with Datawrapper

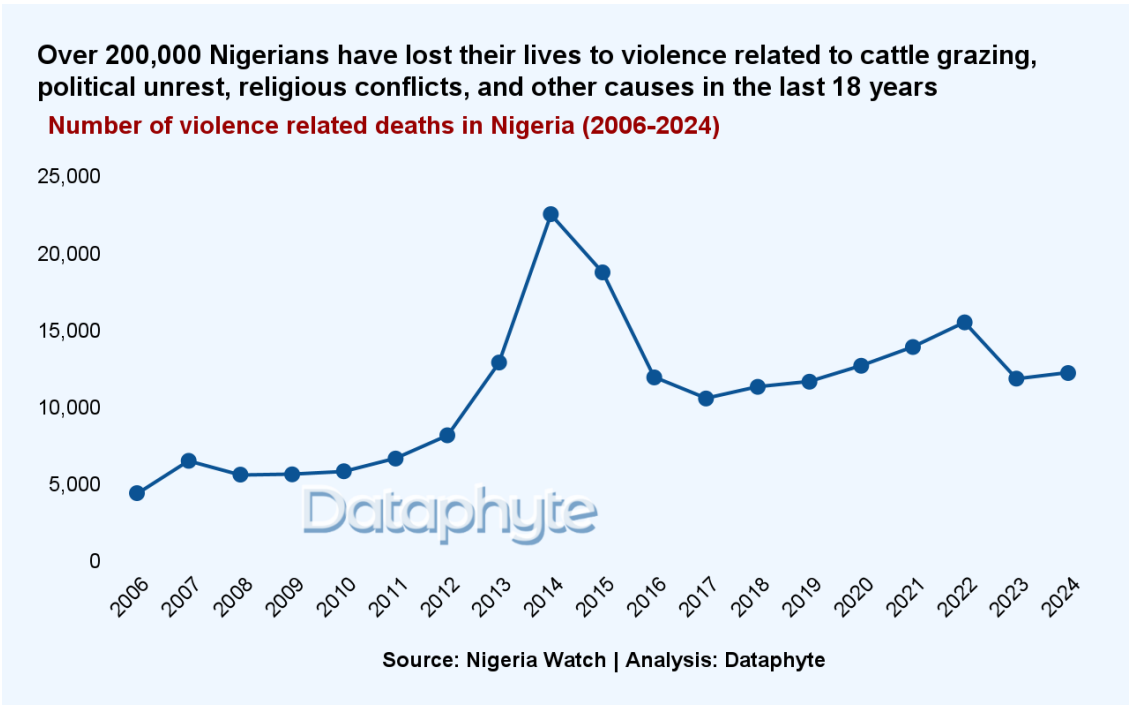
Nigeria was the 148th most peaceful country on the 2025 Global Peace Index list of 163 countries, trailing behind other West African countries like Ghana, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. It was also

one of seven of the most unpeaceful in sub-Saharan Africa, sharing the rank with South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

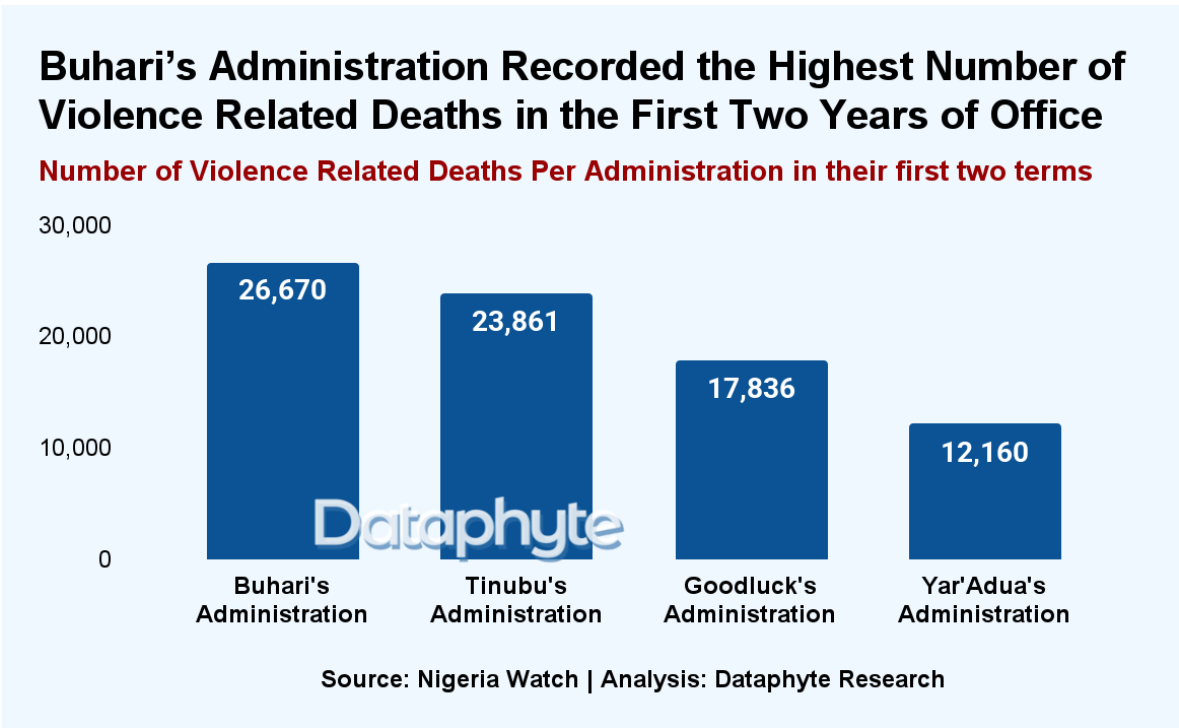
Political Dynamics of Violent Killings

In Nigeria, each administration has seen the continuation of violent killings, all driven by different factors of insecurity. Nigeria Watch reported that over 200,000 people lost their lives in violent activities that have been associated with cattle grazing, political unrest, religious tension, terrorism and armed bandits in the last two decades.

Boko Haram's deadly campaign was on the rise under President Goodluck Jonathan. The farmer-herder conflicts, banditry and communal conflicts have all worsened during President Buhari's rule. Today, the Nigerian military is confronted by a combination of old and new security challenges—including mass killings in rural regions and increased crime and political tensions in urban areas—under President Bola Tinubu.



The trend of violence-related death in the first two years of President President Muhammadu Buhari's presidency, from 2015 to 2017, was the worst in recent history, with 26,670 deaths recorded by Dataphyte, the team behind a comprehensive database and analysis service on violence in Nigeria. Even as Buhari promised to address insecurity, a report in the Nigerian media barely before the end of his tenure in May 2023 revealed that an average of 22 Nigerians was killed every day during his eight-year tenure.



The comparison also highlights a regularity in the history of violence that, despite all the changes in political leadership, its patterns have remained strong and widespread over the years, possibly due to the fact that a number of systemic issues were not solved over the years. Nigerians are now trapped in the web of various forms of insecurity ranging from the rural areas of Benue and Plateau affected by herders and farmers conflicts, to the urban areas of the country beset by cult clashes, armed robbery and political violence.

Table 4.4: Boko Haram Destruction of Infrastructure in Nigeria (2015–2023)

Year	Schools Destroyed	Public Facilities Destroyed
2015	520	310
2016	480	290
2017	420	250
2018	380	220
2019	320	180
2020	270	150
2021	230	120
2022	200	100
2023	180	90

Source: Compiled by the researcher from United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) education-in-emergencies reports (2015–2023), Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) infrastructure damage dataset (2015–2023), and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) humanitarian impact reports on North-East Nigeria.

The data shows that there was a major impact on schools and public facilities due to the Boko Haram insurgency. While there may be a downward trend, the ongoing destruction of infrastructure demonstrates the ongoing fragility of public assets across conflict areas.

Table 4.5: Military Engagements Against Boko Haram (2015–2023)

Year	Number of Military Operations	Estimated Insurgent Losses
2015	180	High
2016	210	High
2017	250	Very High
2018	230	High
2019	200	Moderate
2020	190	Moderate
2021	170	Moderate-Low
2022	160	Low
2023	150	Low

Source: Compiled by the researcher from Nigerian Armed Forces operational reports (2015–2023), United Nations Security Council briefings on Nigeria’s counterterrorism operations, and International Crisis Group security analyses on Lake Chad Basin insurgency dynamics.

The data show sustained military engagement against Boko Haram over the study period, with peak operations recorded between 2016 and 2018. The gradual decline in insurgent losses after 2019 suggests reduced large-scale confrontations and weakening insurgent capacity. However, continued military operations indicate that the threat has not been fully eliminated.

4.2 ISWAP Insurgent Activities and Public Safety in Nigeria (2015–2023)

This section presents and analyzes data related to public safety impacts of the ISWAP insurgency on Nigeria from 2015 to 2023. Indicators used in the analysis include frequency of attacks, civilian-related attacks, kidnappings, displacement, and disruption of essential services. Data is then analyzed by content analysis focusing on patterns of deterioration over time in the public safety.

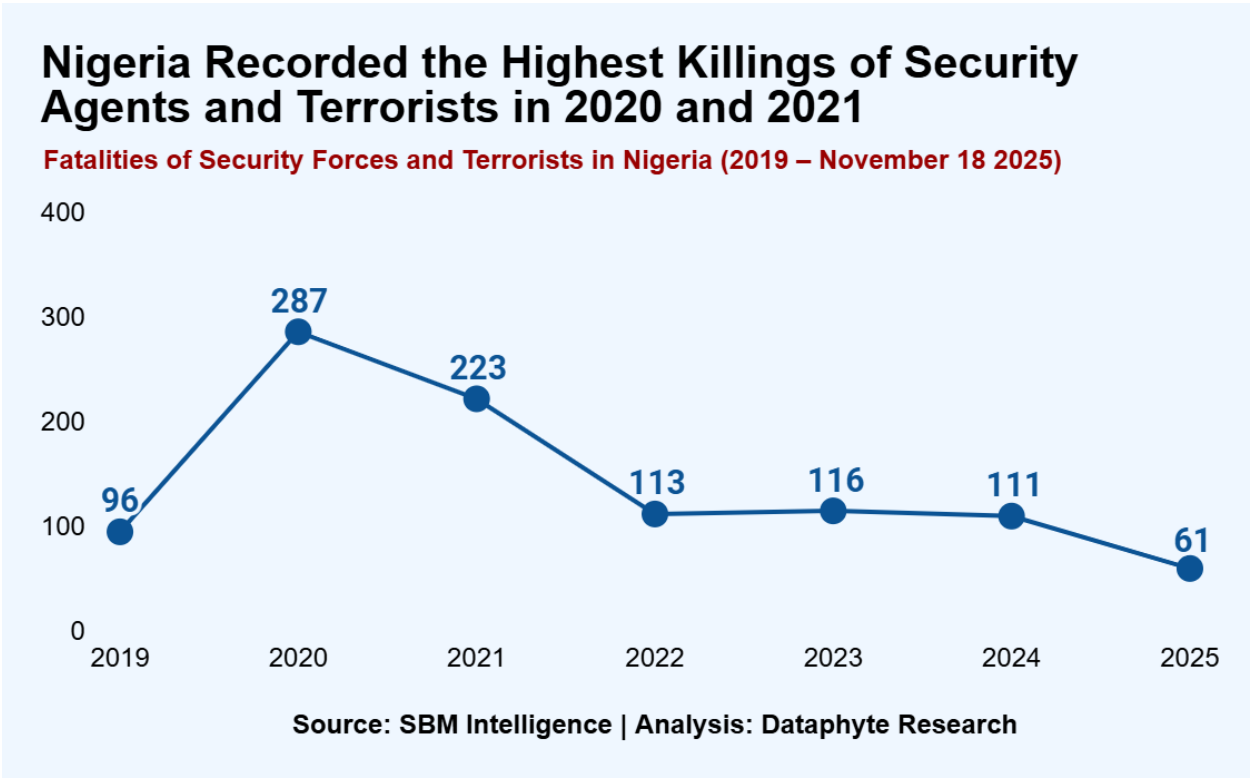
The time period covered here corresponds with ISWAP's rise to become a leading insurgent group in the North-East following its factional break with Boko Haram. Unlike previous insurgent trends, ISWAP attacks were now targeting military installations and key civilian areas, leading to a persistent threat to rural and semi-urban communities.

Table 4.6: ISWAP-Related Armed Attacks in Nigeria (2015–2023)

Year	Number of Attacks	Primary Targets
2015	60	Military outposts
2016	85	Rural communities
2017	120	Security formations
2018	140	Villages and highways
2019	160	Military bases
2020	150	Civilian settlements
2021	145	Mixed targets
2022	130	Border communities
2023	110	Rural security posts

Source: Compiled by the researcher from Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Nigeria insurgency dataset (2015–2023), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) security reports on North-East Nigeria, and International Crisis Group terrorism monitoring reports (2016–2023).

The data indicate that the number of attacks on ISWAP has been increasing gradually since 2015, reaching its highest levels around 2019, and then slightly decreasing towards 2023. This is a consolidation phase in the wake of the group's emergence, as it consolidated its hold on territory and then came under greater counterinsurgency pressure. The fact of the attacks being persistent means that the threats to public safety have not decreased even after the military actions.



An SBM Intelligence analysis of the Nigerian security forces revealed that over 1,000 security personnel died in ambushes from 2019 to November 18, 2025. Of these, 454 were soldiers, 52 police officers and 275 other security personnel and 224 terrorists were also killed during the same timeframe.

Table 4.7: ISWAP-Related Civilian Fatalities (2015–2023)

Year	Estimated Civilian Deaths
2015	300
2016	420
2017	650
2018	780
2019	900
2020	850
2021	820
2022	700
2023	600

Source: Compiled by the researcher from Nigeria Watch mortality database, ACLED civilian casualty reports (2015–2023), and United Nations humanitarian situation reports on North-East Nigeria.

The number of civilian deaths caused by ISWAP has been increasing from 2015 to 2019, and then slightly decreasing in 2020. The rise is due to its growth period, and the drop later on is due to its more aggressive security operations and partial security network disruptions. But when deaths persist, it means that there remains a serious threat to the public.

Table 4.8: ISWAP-Related Kidnappings and Abductions (2015–2023)

Year	Number of Kidnapping Incidents
2015	40
2016	55
2017	70
2018	95
2019	120
2020	110
2021	105
2022	90
2023	75

Source: Compiled by the researcher from United Nations OCHA protection reports, ACLED event database (2015–2023), and International Organization for Migration (IOM) crisis monitoring reports.

The data show that the number of kidnapping incidents continues to rise till 2019, followed by a gradual decrease. Kidnapping for purposes of control and terror is still one of the primary weapons ISWAP employs to instill fear amongst civilian populations. These incidents persist despite the reductions and continue to have a negative impact on public safety and the reliability of security institutions.

Table 4.9: Disruption of Essential Services by ISWAP (2015–2023)

Year	Schools Affected	Health Facilities Affected
2015	25	10
2016	40	18
2017	55	25
2018	70	30
2019	85	38
2020	80	35
2021	78	32
2022	65	28
2023	50	22

Source: Compiled by the researcher from UNICEF education-in-emergencies reports (2015–2023), ACLED infrastructure disruption dataset, and United Nations humanitarian field assessments in North-East Nigeria.

Data indicate that ISWAP had a marked impact on various basic services, including education and health care. The peak disruption was in 2019, which coincided with an increase in the insurgents' activity. Although there is a downturn following that, the disruptions continue to signal continued vulnerability of public service infrastructure in affected areas.

In the past few years attacks against places of worship have become increasingly worrying, particularly in northern Nigeria, where several attacks have targeted Christian communities. Churches have been hit in the course of worship and most important religious events since 2011. Early cases involve the bombings on Christmas Day, 2011 in Madalla, Jos, Gadaka and Damaturu, the shootings of the church on Christmas Day 2012 in Maiduguri and Potiskum and the Deeper Life Church attack in Kogi in 2012.

A suicide bomber attacked an evangelical church in Potiskum, Yobe State in 2015. The worst attack was in June 2022 when the church was attacked with explosives killing over 40 worshippers at St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo, Ondo State. The incidents have heightened the anxiety surrounding the safety of religious facilities and the broader issue of how to secure civilian communities from violent groups.

Some deadly attacks on Churches in Nigeria, 2011-2025

Over the years, repeated assaults on churches and Christian communities, particularly in northern Nigeria, have heightened concerns about targeted violence and rising religious intolerance

Incident	Location	Date
Christ Apostolic Church Attack	Eruku, Kwara State	November 18, 2025
Owo Church Attack	St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Owo, Ondo State	June 5, 2022
Potiskum Evangelical Church Suicide Bombing	Potiskum, Yobe State	July 5, 2015
Christmas Day Church Shootings	Maiduguri (Borno State); Potiskum (Yobe State)	December 25, 2012
Deeper Life Bible Church Shooting	Otite (near Okene), Kogi State	August 7, 2012
Christmas Day Bombings (Multiple Churches)	Madalla (Niger, near Abuja); Jos (Plateau); Gadaka & Damaturu (Yobe)	December 25, 2011

NOTE: This list of attacks is not exhaustive

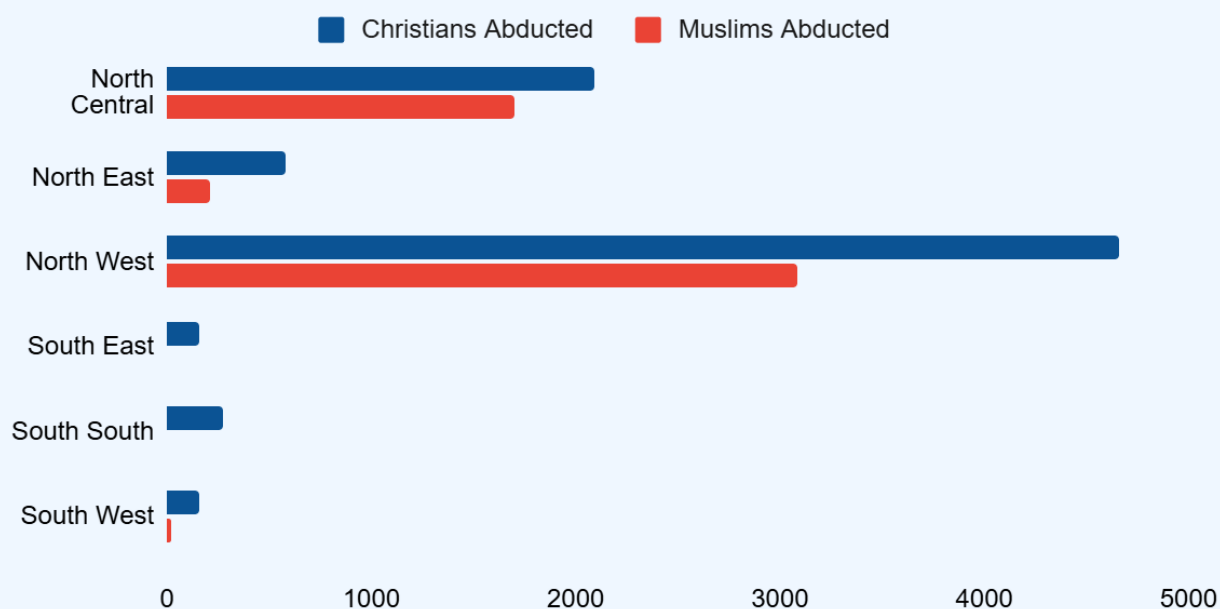
Table: Dataphyte • Source: Dataphyte Research • Created with Datawrapper

From October 2020 to September 2021, Dataphyte’s analysis of the study of the killings and abductions in Nigeria shows that more Christians than Muslims were abducted across all regions of the country. Nigeria had the highest number of religious-related abductions with 4,657 Christians and 3,082 Muslims kidnapped during the period. This trend is part of a broader

insecurity atmosphere in the northwest states of Kaduna, Zamfara, Katsina and Niger where banditry, kidnappings and armed attacks escalated over the period. The regional distribution is in the same direction. A total of 2,093 Christians were abducted while 1,703 Muslims were abducted in the North Central. The same was observed in the North East and other parts of Nigeria where there were more Christian victims than Muslim victims in the same region.

Between 2020 and 2022, more Christians than Muslims were abducted in Nigeria, with the North West region recording the highest number of cases

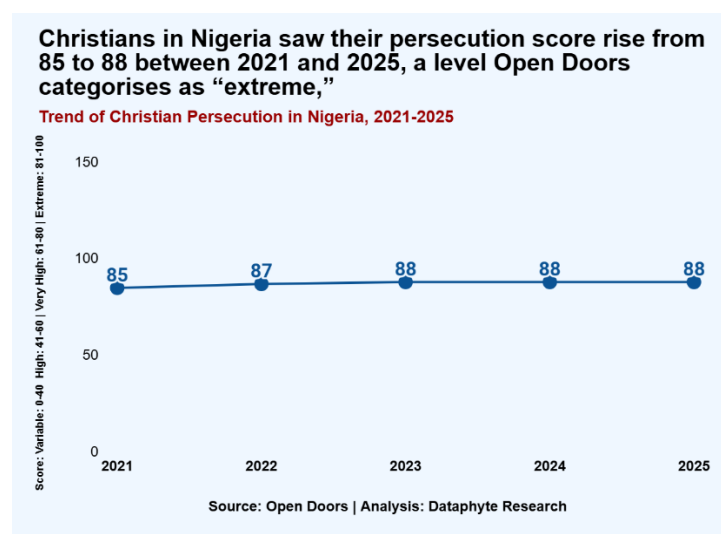
Abductions of Christians and Muslims (2020-2022)



Source: Observatory of Religious Freedom in Africa | Analysis Dataphyte

The data suggest that there were more significantly impacted Christian communities than Muslim communities, despite the fact that both groups were at significant risk, particularly in the North, and that the abduction crisis did not affect all of them. Meanwhile, the high levels of kidnapping in the North West and North Central underline not only the failing security arrangements but also the lack of capacity of the security apparatus to quell the escalating violence in the country.

Nigerian Christians are facing more persecution than any other in the world in recent years, according to Open Doors, an international group monitoring religious oppression around the world. The group reports that the violence by jihadists against Christians has persisted in the country, placing the northern region, as well as Muslim-dominated communities and some other areas of the nation at high risk of attack by Islamist groups such as Fulani fighters, Boko Haram, and ISWAP. The persecution score of Christians, accounting for an estimated 46.5% of Nigeria's population, rose from 85 to 88 from 2021 to 2025, and is rated by Open Doors as “extreme.” Nigeria experienced the most Christian-murders related to faith-based violence in this period as well.



Nigeria's order and security index has shown more regression than progress over the past 10 years

Nigeria's Order and Security index, 2015-2025



Source: World Justice Project | Analysis: Dataphyte Research

The order and security score of Nigeria has worsened over the past decade, dropping from 0.40 in 2015 to 0.36 in 2025. In Nigeria, there is a negative trend in order and security score over the past decade with a score dropping from 0.40 in 2015 to 0.36 in 2025. This decline is consistent with the general increased insecurity in the region, including the rising rate of kidnappings, communal violence, banditry and insurgent attacks.

Table 4.10: ISWAP-Induced Displacement in Nigeria (2015–2023)

Year	Displaced Persons
2015	150,000
2016	220,000
2017	310,000
2018	420,000
2019	550,000
2020	520,000
2021	480,000
2022	400,000
2023	350,000

Source: Compiled by the researcher from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) displacement tracking reports (2015–2023), International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) humanitarian updates.

The data show that the level of displacement grossly escalated till 2019, and has since been down trending. This is indicative of a growth and later containment of insurgent operations. The continued displacement measured over the past few months, however, reflects continued instability and pressure on affected communities.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study examined the impact of international terrorism on Nigeria's national security, focusing specifically on the activities of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province between 2015 and 2023. The study assessed how armed attacks by these groups influenced internal security, public safety, humanitarian conditions, and state response capacity within the period under review.

The findings are summarized as follows:

1. The study found out that Nigeria between the years 2015 through 2023 have been largely compromised when it comes to internal security as a result of the activities of Boko Haram. From evidence gleaned from the number of attacks and deaths, as well as Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) shuttled around in their millions, decimation of critical infrastructure amongst others, it will therefore be safe to surmise that the group played a role in the degradation of security largely across North-East Nigeria. The volume of attacks has slowly diminished over time, but internal security remained unstable amid sporadic low-level insurgency. The research also indicates that large-scale attacks have been reduced due to better military operations by the army, increased regional cooperation and internal splits in the group. However, the persistence of insecurity indicates that the threat was managed rather than fully eliminated.
2. Secondly, the insurgent activities of ISWAP significantly influenced public safety in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023. The group's operations contributed to increased civilian casualties, kidnappings, disruption of essential services, and displacement of populations.

Although ISWAP initially expanded its operational capacity, particularly between 2017 and 2019, a gradual decline in activities was observed in the later years due to intensified counterinsurgency measures. Nevertheless, the group maintained sustained capacity to destabilize communities, thereby continuously undermining public safety across affected regions.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that international terrorism, particularly through the activities of Boko Haram and ISWAP, has had a significant negative impact on Nigeria's national security between 2015 and 2023. Both groups contributed to persistent insecurity, although their operational patterns and intensity differed over time. Boko Haram showed a gradual decline in large-scale attacks, while ISWAP demonstrated more adaptive and sustained operational tactics, especially in targeting both military and civilian structures.

The study also concludes that while Nigeria's counterterrorism efforts and regional security collaborations have reduced the scale of violence, they have not fully eliminated the threat posed by insurgent groups. The persistence of attacks, kidnappings, and displacement indicates that national security remains vulnerable, particularly in conflict-affected regions. Overall, terrorism in Nigeria during the period under review is better understood as a shifting and evolving threat rather than a completely contained phenomenon.

5.3 Recommendations

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should strengthen and sustain integrated counterterrorism strategies involving military, intelligence, and regional security cooperation to further weaken the operational capacity of Boko Haram and ISWAP. This

should include improved surveillance systems, enhanced border security, and sustained collaboration with regional forces such as the Multinational Joint Task Force to prevent cross-border insurgent movements and attacks.

2. The government should also intensify non-military interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of insurgency, including poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion in affected regions. In addition, structured deradicalization, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DRR) programmes should be expanded to reduce recruitment into extremist groups and support long-term peacebuilding and social stability in the North-East region.

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