

**INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND GLOBAL TERRORISM IN THE TWENTY-
FIRST CENTURY: A CASE STUDY OF THE BOKO-HARAM INSURGENCY IN
NIGERIA, 2020-2025**

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JULY, 2026

TITLE PAGE

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BY

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**A PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES,
GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, UGWUOMU NIKE, ENUGU.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.Sc.), DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS,**

**SUPERVISOR:
DR. CHIEDOZIE ALEX OGBONNIA**

JULY, 2026

DECLARATION

I, Ogbodo, Somtochukwu Christoper hereby declare that this work was written by me and has not been submitted or received anywhere for the purpose of acquiring a degree in International Relations or any other programme.

Ogbodo, Somtochukwu Christoper
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Date

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this project titled: “International Security and Global Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century: A case Study of the Boko-Haram Insurgency in Nigeria, 2020-2025” has been read and approved as meeting the requirements of the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike, Enugu for the award of Bachelor of Science Degree in International Relations.

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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to God Almighty for His grace, guidance and protection throughout the period of this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I return all glory, honor, and adoration to the Almighty God, the Author and Finisher of my faith, for the gift of life, wisdom, strength, and perseverance throughout this academic journey.

I express my deepest gratitude to my project supervisor Dr. Nicholas A. Onyia, for his invaluable guidance, constructive criticism, patience, and consistent academic mentorship. His dedication to excellence and scholarly shaped this work immensely.

To my supervisor DR. Chiedozie Alex Ogbonnia. This is more than academic supervision. It is direction and patience and for every correction you made, thank you sir.

I also wish to acknowledge the Head of Department Prof. Sam Ugwuozor, for his leadership and commitment to the academic growth of students in the Department of Business Administration.

My sincere appreciation goes to the distinguished Head of Department, Dr. Ugwuozor Samuel, whose scholarship I greatly admire. I am also thankful to the Dean of the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Assoc. Prof. John Odo, and to my lecturers: Dr. N.C. Mbaeze, Dr. (Mrs) Ifedi F., Mr. Okonkwo Willy O., Rev. Fr. Ikenna Ogbuka, Mr. Onyishi A.U. Rev. Sr. Dr. Umeh Lucy, and I also acknowledge the support of Mr Kingsley Ezechi, my esteemed mentor during this project writing. I will forever remain grateful and Mrs. Chioma, Secretary of the Department of Political Science and International Relations.

Special appreciation goes to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Emeka Daniel Ogbodo for their unrelenting prayers, financial support, encouragement, and unconditional love throughout this academic journey. To my sisters: Chidimma, Chigoziri, and Munachi Ogbodo, thank you for your support and prayers.

Sincerely appreciate my beloved Aunt Nnenna for her unwavering care and support throughout my academic journey. My heartfelt gratitude also goes to Mrs. Njideka C. Mbadugha and Mrs. Nneka Faustina for their assistance.

I am equally grateful to my friends, coursemates, and everyone who contributed to the successful completion of this project, especially Emelie, Arinze, Innocent, Diamond, Chimaobim, Chimdal, Michael Jeffery, Christabel, Mitchell, Anita, Tessa, Cheryl, Princess, Oluomachukwu, Xavier, Richard, Frank, and many others. Thank you all, and may God bless you abundantly.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
AU	African Union
BH	Boko Haram
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISWAP	Islamic State West Africa Province
JAS	Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
NACTEST	National Counter-Terrorism Strategy
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

ABSTRACT

This study looked at international security and global terrorism in the present century through a close study of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria between 2020 as well as 2025. The study checked how the insurgency shaped international security relations of Nigeria and cooperation, the success of counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria, as well as the effect of the insurgency on regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin. The study used documentary and ex post facto Research designs as well as used secondary data from ACLED, IOM, UN OCHA, MNJTF records, official security documents, along with peer-reviewed academic sources. Data were studied through documentary content analysis and thematic analysis shaped by Realism Theory as well as Securitisation Theory. The results show that Boko Haram and ISWAP kept operational capacity, deepened humanitarian insecurity, as well as raised Nigeria to international security along with legal review. The study also found that counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria created tactical gains but did not defeat in a full way the insurgency, while the crisis both made it stronger and put pressure on MNJTF-led regional cooperation. The study ends with the view that the insurgency was controlled more than defeated and advises stronger diplomatic coordination, firm MNJTF resource promises, as well as improved joining of security along with humanitarian responses.

Keywords: *Boko Haram, international security, global terrorism, counterterrorism, ISWAP, Nigeria, Lake Chad Basin, MNJTF, securitisation theory, documentary analysis*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

International security now serves as one of the strongest concerns in the world order of the present century. As Adhikari (2024) explains it, international security means the actions that states and international organisations use to protect shared survival as well as shared safety against threats that cross borders. Because earlier ideas of security focused on the state alone, present day international security now includes non-state actors and cross border threats as well as asymmetric warfare as main areas of concern (Beti, 2024). For this reason, states now change how they understand security and how they plan security systems as well as how they act against threats. This shift is easy to see in places where state capacity is low because armed non state groups use governance gaps for effect. For this reason Africa with sub Saharan Africa as a key example has become a major space for these threats which makes study of international security in this setting both useful and needed.

Scholars often explain global terrorism as the main security danger of the present century. As Calleja (2021) states, transnational terrorism moved from the side to the centre of international security debate after the events of September 11 2001 which changed how states and multilateral bodies describe threats as well as build responses. Terrorism is a wide term that can mean a planned repeated use of violence against civilians or state actors to reach political aims or ideological aims or religious aims (Andric and Kovac, 2021). Over time this form of violence has changed in pattern as well as size as well as reach. Because many current terrorist organisations do not stay inside set borders they use weak governance and poverty as well as social grievances as tools for recruitment along with finance together with long term

campaign support across many legal areas. Because of this cross border character older state based security models now appear not enough which drives a need to rethink how states and international actors address global terrorism.

In this wider world setting Boko Haram formed in north east Nigeria during the early 2000s as a radical Islamist sect that rejected Western education and state governance. The group began under Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri and its belief system rested on a strict literal reading of Islamic law as well as a rejection of the Nigerian state along with its institutions (Igboin, 2022). What started as a local religious movement changed into a more violent path after the unlawful killing of Yusuf in 2009 which led Boko Haram into a full insurgency under Abubakar Shekau. Igboin (2022) describes this path as small fires causing large fires which shows how slow growth created deep radicalisation and serious harm. Because the group aimed to build an Islamic caliphate in northern Nigeria its violence carried a clear ideological identity which set it apart from common criminal conflict or ethnic conflict and raised it to a national as well as international security threat.

The operational shift of Boko Haram shows growth in tactical skill and wider geographic spread as well as inside splits. In its early stage the group focused on local attacks against police stations and churches while later it moved into large military attacks as well as suicide bombings along with mass abductions with the best known case being the 2014 kidnapping of 276 Chibok schoolgirls together with a period of territorial control that matched Belgium in size (Albert, 2021). When Abubakar Shekau died in 2021 this moment shaped a major change because it led to movement fragmentation and it also supported the rise of Islamic State West Africa Province ISWAP as the leading faction (Albert, 2021). Braimah et al. (2024) explain that data based checks of attack patterns show continuing operational capacity after 2020 with an insurgency that changes tactics when military pressure increases. Because of this

pattern counterterrorism efforts have faced added difficulty while the threat has remained active into the 2020 to 2025 period studied.

The humanitarian as well as social-economic results of the Boko Haram insurgency have been serious. Uduo and Obagi Akpet (2025) record very high death levels and displacement levels with millions pushed from homes across the Borno Adamawa as well as Yobe corridor. Omogunloye et al. (2023) use map based evidence to show the scale of displacement linked to Boko Haram attacks between 2009 and 2021 while also showing a direct as well as measurable link between insurgent violence along with population movement. Awosusi (2017) also shows the public health side of the crisis as an overlooked global health threat with major damage to health infrastructure across the Lake Chad Basin. Alongside these harms the economy has faced losses through damage to schools and farms as well as markets while fear has also reduced foreign investment which has deepened development problems in the already at risk north east. Since these impacts reach Cameroon and Chad as well as Niger the crisis has also taken on a cross border form.

Despite continued military action and regional cooperation Nigeria counterterrorism response has created mixed results. Saka et al. (2024) review Nigeria counterterrorism operations and describe an uneven path that includes intelligence gaps as well as weak coordination along with uneven political will. Omobuwajo (2021) states that Boko Haram has shown deep limits in Nigeria foreign policy structure through weak diplomacy and multilateral limits as well as security coordination problems. Although the Multinational Joint Task Force MNJTF has created a regional platform for Lake Chad Basin response its performance has faced limits from resource shortage and sovereignty concerns as well as uneven operational practice (Oluwadare, 2016). Because these gaps remain while the insurgency continues after 2020 and changes form the need for this study becomes clear. On this basis the study examines

international security and global terrorism in the present century with a direct focus on the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria from 2020 to 2025.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The continuing Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria serves as one of the largest threats to international security and regional stability in sub Saharan Africa within the present century. Since the shift into a full insurgency in 2009 the crisis has caused large human loss. Uduo and Obaji-Akpet (2025) show that Boko Haram campaigns have led to several thousands of deaths and they have forced millions of people to leave their homes. This includes the highest displacement levels remaining in Borno and Adamawa as well as Yobe states in north east Nigeria. Omogunloye et al. (2023) present geospatial mapping evidence that supports a direct link between insurgent attacks along with population movement with more than 2.4 million people in an internal way displaced at the highest point of the crisis. Awosusi (2017) also describes the public health damage as a neglected global threat while pointing to damage to health facilities and schools as well as markets across the Lake Chad Basin. Akingbade et al. (2021) use spatio-temporal analysis to show that Boko Haram attacks caused a strong breakup to education in northern Nigeria between 2009 along with 2020 with many schools destroyed or left unused. These figures point to a humanitarian crisis with international scale which calls for serious academic attention.

Answers to the insurgency have taken several forms yet they remain not enough. The Nigerian government started large military operations which included Operation Lafiya Dole while it also worked with regional partners through the Multinational Joint Task Force MNJTF to reduce Boko Haram capacity across the Lake Chad Basin (Jumare and Sama'ila, 2020). Okunade and Ogunnubi (2022) describe coordinated humanitarian actions by international actors which include the United Nations and non governmental organisations with the aim of supporting displaced persons as well as restoring basic services in shaped communities. Albert

(2021) notes that the targeted killing of Abubakar Shekau in 2021 was treated as a major gain within a decapitation strategy against the insurgency. Even so Saka et al. (2024) show that these actions have followed an uneven path with repeated operational problems and weak intelligence as well as poor civil military coordination. Omobuwajo (2021) also states that Nigeria diplomatic as well as multilateral actions have been weak which has shown deep structural limits in the foreign policy framework of the country. Despite these actions Braimah et al. (2024) show that Boko Haram kept strong operational capacity through the 2020 to 2025 period with data-led projections that show continued ability to carry out attacks. The present situation therefore shows a security setting where the insurgency continues while humanitarian conditions stay serious and regional cooperation remains below the level needed for a clear response. With this background the study seeks to study international security and global terrorism in the present century with a direct focus on the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria from 2020 to 2025 through answers to the following research questions.

Although academic writing has grown on Boko Haram, major gaps remain in the existing studies. Many studies study the pre-2020 phase of the insurgency or treat counterterrorism, humanitarian effects and regional cooperation as separate issues. Fewer studies give direct attention to the 2020 to 2025 period when ISWAP strengthening, continued displacement, ICC review and Niger as well as Chad related MNJTF pressures changed the crisis. This creates a gap in explaining how the insurgency shaped international security relations of Nigeria and cooperation, how effective the counterterrorism response became, as well as how regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin changed within the same period. This study therefore addresses the gap by combining these three issues within one documentary analysis framework.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. How has the Boko Haram insurgency shaped international security relations of Nigeria and cooperation from 2020 to 2025?
- ii. How effective have counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria been in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency from 2020 to 2025?
- iii. How has the Boko Haram insurgency shaped regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin from 2020 to 2025?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to study international security and global terrorism in the present century with a direct focus on the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria from 2020 to 2025. In specific terms, the study aims to:

- i. Check how the Boko Haram insurgency has shaped international security relations of Nigeria and cooperation from 2020 to 2025.
- ii. Judge how effective counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria have been in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency from 2020 to 2025.
- iii. Study how the Boko Haram insurgency has shaped regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin from 2020 to 2025.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Theoretical Significance: This study is important in theory because it adds to academic writing on international security, global terrorism and African insurgencies. It uses Realism Theory and Securitisation Theory to explain both the material security response of the Nigerian state as well as the way Boko Haram was framed as an existential threat. This makes the study useful to researchers who study non-state armed groups, securitisation processes and regional collective security in Africa.

Practical Significance: The study is in practice significant to policy makers, government institutions and security agencies because it provides evidence based ideas that can improve counterterrorism legal framework of Nigeria, operational planning as well as diplomatic engagement. The Nigerian Armed Forces, the MNJTF, humanitarian organisations and international bodies such as the United Nations can also use the findings on displacement, security cooperation as well as humanitarian effects to design better coordinated responses across the Lake Chad Basin.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study examines international security and global terrorism with a direct focus on the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria from 2020 to 2025. The study uses Nigeria as the main geographic unit while it also refers to the wider Lake Chad Basin which includes Cameroon and Chad as well as Niger because the insurgency crosses national borders. From an ideological view the study centres on Islamist extremism as shown through the doctrine of Boko Haram. From a methodological view the study uses a documentary research design and an ex post facto research design while it draws on official government reports as well as United Nations documents along with academic journal articles together with verified secondary data sources. This choice fits the non survey nature of the study because the analysis depends on existing documented evidence.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study faced several limits, and each was handled to reduce its effect on the research. The first limit was time pressure, which could have reduced the depth of long term trend review; this was tackled by focusing the analysis on the clear 2020 to 2025 period. The second limit was lack of real time main data from conflict areas in north east Nigeria; this was addressed through verified secondary sources such as UN reports, IOM data, ACLED records

and peer reviewed journals. The third limit was financial pressure and small access to some paid databases; this was handled through open access repositories, institutional library resources as well as official government publications. The fourth limit was the risk of using one type of evidence; this was tackled through triangulation across academic, humanitarian, security and regional organisation documents.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

International Security: International security has roots in realist international relations theory and it means shared actions that states use to prevent conflict as well as keep world order (Adhikari, 2024; Beti, 2024). For this study it means the capacity of Nigeria to control the Boko Haram threat within a global security framework.

Global Terrorism: Global terrorism comes from security studies writing and it means planned violence against civilians or states for political ends or ideological ends (Calleja, 2021; Andric and Kovac, 2021). In this study it points to Boko Haram transnational violent campaign.

Insurgency: Insurgency is explained in political violence writing as an organised armed rebellion against an established authority (Kuzmanovic and Blagojevic, 2022). This study applies the term to describe the armed campaign of Boko Haram against the Nigerian state from 2020 to 2025.

Counterterrorism: Counterterrorism refers to strategies and policies as well as operations used by states to prevent along with detect together with respond to terrorist activity (Durham, 2021). In this study it means Nigeria military and diplomatic as well as legal responses to Boko Haram.

National Security: National security comes from Westphalian state theory and it means a state ability to protect citizens as well as sovereignty along with territorial integrity against inside threats together with outside threats (Beti, 2024). This study applies it to efforts of Nigeria to protect the north east from insurgent violence.

Radicalisation: Radicalisation is a process where individuals or groups take up extreme ideological positions that support violence (Winter and Feixas, 2019). In this study it means the ideological conditioning that shapes Boko Haram recruitment and supports continued membership.

Regional Security Cooperation: Regional security cooperation means shared security arrangements between states inside a defined region in order to face shared threats (Bala and Tar, 2021). This study applies it for the MNJTF and related frameworks that address Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 International Security

International security as a concept has changed a great deal since the end of the Cold War because it has moved from a state centred view to a wider framework that includes transnational threats and non state actors as well as human security parts. Adhikari (2024) explains international security as shared actions used by states and international organisations to support mutual survival as well as stability along with protection from threats that cross national borders. This explanation moves away from the older Westphalian idea that security is only about territorial defence because present day threats such as terrorism and pandemics as well as climate related instability need cooperative multilateral responses. Beti (2024) adds to this view by placing national security inside the wider structure of international law and sovereignty while arguing that an inside security capacity links with its international duties as well as outside engagements. Within the African context international security has taken shape through the spread of non-state armed groups across porous borders which makes normal bilateral security arrangements not enough for real protection. Oluwadare (2016) shows this point through his study of Boko Haram activities across Nigeria and Niger as well as Chad along with Cameroon because his analysis explains how one insurgent group can weaken a whole subregion at the same time. The Lake Chad Basin crisis gives an example of how weaknesses in international security at national level can take on regional as well as global parts within a short period. For this study international security means the capacity of Nigeria and the shared capacity of Lake Chad Basin states to prevent as well as manage along with resolve the Boko Haram insurgency through a cooperative international framework which makes it the main conceptual lens for examining together with explaining the study findings.

2.1.2 Global Terrorism

Global terrorism is one of the most discussed yet most important ideas in present day international relations and security studies. Calleja (2021) shows transnational terrorism as a key feature of the present century global security setting because it can use open borders and digital communication systems as well as ideological networks to change how states judge security risks across the world. Terrorism is often explained as the planned use of violence as well as intimidation as well as coercion against civilian or state targets to reach political and religious or ideological aims. At the same time its global part points to the ability of such groups to plan and fund as well as carry out actions across more than one national jurisdiction. Building on this point Andric and Kovac (2021) give a clear typology of present day terrorism by separating religious forms and nationalist forms as well as ideological forms along with state sponsored forms while stating that each type shares a common feature which is attacks on non combatants to create fear together with force behavioural change or political change. Within this typology Boko Haram sits in the religious ideological category because it draws a justification for violence from a radical explanation of Islamic doctrine that rejects Western governance and education. Igboin (2022) adds to the wider global terrorism discussion by showing that Boko Haram moved from a local sect to a transnational insurgency in a way that matches patterns seen in other global terrorist organisations including Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. Rapanyane and Sethole (2021) continue this line of analysis by studying Boko Haram financing as well as mobilisation strategies. This is because their work shows that the group used recognised terrorist financing methods with global reach to sustain its campaign. For this study global terrorism is used as a working concept that means the transnational violent campaign carried out by Boko Haram and its partner group ISWAP against Nigerian state institutions as well as civilian populations along with regional security frameworks between 2020 together with 2025.

2.1.3 Insurgency

Insurgency as a concept holds a special place in the wider literature on political violence because it differs from usual war and terrorism through its organised as well as kept as well as in political terms driven nature. Kuzmanovic and Blagojevic (2022) define insurgency as a complex type of political violence where an organised non-state group challenges the authority of an established government through armed resistance and guerrilla tactics as well as attempts to build alternative governance or ideological legitimacy within the population. This definition shows the two sided nature of insurgency as both a military as well as political issue since armed violence works as a tool for weakening state authority while the insurgent group also tries to gain public support or at least gain compliance. Boko Haram shows this two sided nature in its northeastern Nigerian strongholds because it uses serious violence while also offering basic justice and social services as well as ideological community building in areas under its control. Igboin (2022) explains the ideological and organisational structure of the Boko Haram insurgency by showing how it built the main features of a full scale insurgent movement through a step by step development after the death of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009. Stoddard (2019) adds deeper analysis by separating the competing factions within the Boko Haram insurgency with attention to the rise of ISWAP because this work shows that factionalism is a common feature of mature insurgencies across the world. Albert (2021) also examines leadership decapitation as a counterinsurgency tool by arguing that the death of Shekau in 2021 changed the shape of the insurgency but did not end it. For this study insurgency means the organised as well as kept armed campaign of Boko Haram against the Nigerian state and the civilian population between 2020 as well as 2025 while including its factionalist dynamics along with territorial ambitions across the Lake Chad Basin.

2.1.4 Counterterrorism

Counterterrorism as a concept covers the full range of actions that states and international organisations use to prevent terrorist activity, break terrorist networks, and respond to terrorism through military together with legal including diplomatic as well as intelligence based social-economic measures. Durham (2021) places counterterrorism inside the wider frame of international humanitarian law and sanctions regimes because effective counterterrorism policy must balance security needs with legal duties as well as human rights obligations to avoid damaging the governance legitimacy it aims to protect. This pressure between security success and legal compliance becomes stronger in the Nigerian context because military counterterrorism operations have faced repeated criticism for human rights violations against civilian populations in the northeast. Attah (2016) records this pressure in a direct way by showing how the Boko Haram campaign of sexual terrorism showed major gaps in the Nigeria anti terrorism legal framework while pointing to the weakness of existing law for dealing with the full scope of the insurgency. Saka et al. (2024) build on this critique through a judgement of Nigeria operational counterterrorism strategies because they identify intelligence failures and weak civil military coordination as well as uneven political commitment as the main reasons for the uneven path of Nigeria counterterrorism record. Omobuwajo (2021) also states that the counterterrorism structure of Nigeria has lost strength due to diplomatic failures and small multilateral engagement as well as heavy reliance on military solutions instead of politics along with developmental approaches. Bala and Tar (2021) add a regional view by studying how West African states have tried to build cooperative counterterrorism frameworks including the MNJTF to address shared insurgent threats. For this study counterterrorism is used as a working concept that means the combined military and diplomatic as well as law making along with regional cooperative measures used by Nigeria

together with its Lake Chad Basin partners to address the Boko Haram insurgency between 2020 including 2025.

2.1.5 Human Security

Human security as a concept came from the 1994 United Nations Development Programme report because it marked a shift from state centred security to a people centred frame that puts safety and dignity as well as wellbeing of individuals as well as communities first. Aning and Lartey (2019) define human security in the African governance context as a framework that joins freedom from fear with freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity while arguing that these three pillars connect in a strong way as well as strengthen each other within developing nations. This view challenges the older realist claim that national security equals territorial defence because it treats human suffering and poverty as well as displacement along with exclusion as central security concerns that need state action together with international attention. The Boko Haram insurgency has created one of the most serious human security crises in present African history. This is because its campaigns caused mass displacement and damage to livelihoods as well as breakdown of basic services along with a wide climate of fear across northeast Nigeria. Awosusi (2017) records the public health side of this human security failure by describing the aftermath of Boko Haram violence in the Lake Chad Basin as an overlooked global health threat linked to the damage to hospitals together with the spread of communicable diseases including the breakdown of immunisation programmes. Omogunloye et al. (2023) add map based evidence on the human security results of displacement by showing the spatial concentration and the scale of population movement caused by insurgent attacks. Njoku and Sidhu (2021) also link human security failures to Boko Haram recruitment appeal with focus on multidimensional poverty and exclusion because their analysis shows that human insecurity works as both an outcome as well as a cause of the insurgency. For this study human security means protection of civilian lives and livelihoods as

well as dignity in northeast Nigeria along with the Lake Chad Basin from direct together with indirect effects of the Boko Haram insurgency between 2020 including 2025.

2.2 Thematic Review

2.2.1 Boko Haram Insurgency International of and Nigeria Security Relations and Cooperation

Braimah et al. (2024) use data driven analysis to show that the Boko Haram insurgency kept steady operational capacity in Nigeria after 2020 since attack frequency and casualty data show that the threat has not been contained or removed even with continued military pressure. Their findings also show that predictive modelling of insurgency paths points to continued vulnerability in the northeast of Nigeria which suggests that the state security structure has not adjusted enough to the changing nature of the threat. This empirical evidence therefore shows Boko Haram as a continuing and adaptive challenge to Nigeria national as well as international security standing rather than a shrinking security issue.

Uduo and Obaji Akpet (2025) give a wide assessment of the national security framework of Nigeria in relation to the insurgency because they state that security institutions have not been structurally ready to handle a threat with the complexity and scale of Boko Haram. Their analysis shows serious gaps in law making frameworks and inter agency coordination as well as operational capacity which together reduce the ability of Nigeria to build an effective security response. These institutional weaknesses then help the insurgency to last beyond what a stronger security structure could have allowed.

Igboin (2022) studies the ideological side of Boko Haram impact on Nigeria security structure by showing that the religious framing of the group has made counterinsurgency harder through political sensitivity linked to military engagement within Muslim communities in the northeast. His results show that Nigeria security responses have moved between heavy handed

military action and restraint driven by political motives while neither path has created strategic success. This ideological difficulty therefore becomes a structural weakness in Nigeria security structure that Boko Haram has used through consistent exploitation.

Oluwadare (2016) places the Boko Haram insurgency inside the wider subregional security framework by showing how cross border operations weakened Nigeria bilateral security relationships and also weakened the collective security structure of the Lake Chad Basin. His study explains that Boko Haram expansion into Cameroon and Chad as well as Niger created a security gap that showed the limits of the capacity of Nigeria to project security leadership outside its own borders. This subregional condition then changed the character of Nigeria international security obligations and relationships in a basic way.

Albert (2021) looks at leadership decapitation strategies within Nigeria security response by arguing that the killing of Abubakar Shekau in 2021 became a tactical gain yet it also created a strategic complication for Nigeria security structure. His results show that the death of Shekau helped speed up strengthening of ISWAP as the strongest faction which created a more disciplined and more sophisticated opponent that has been harder for Nigerian security forces to face. Albert therefore ends that decapitation strategies carry symbolic value yet they have not solved the core security challenge created by the insurgency.

Njoku and Sidhu (2021) give strong empirical evidence that multidimensional poverty is the main structural driver of Boko Haram recruitment appeal in northeast Nigeria because chronic underdevelopment and unemployment as well as exclusion from Nigeria economic mainstream shape how the group attracts and keeps members. Their findings push back against explanations that rest only on ideology by showing that material lack creates social conditions where extremist ideas gain acceptance within communities. This poverty radicalisation link therefore cannot be solved through military means alone since it needs a broad developmental response that can reduce the drivers of vulnerability.

Danguguwa et al. (2024) look again at Boko Haram formation and radicalisation through social movement theory by identifying political opportunity structures as well as mobilising networks along with ideological framing as three linked mechanisms through which the group built insurgent capacity. Their analysis shows that Boko Haram used weak state presence in the northeast and the availability of disaffected youth as well as a strong religious story to build a movement that could keep armed resistance. These findings therefore suggest that radicalisation is a structural and organisational process as much as it is an individual psychological process.

Rapanyane and Sethole (2021) study Boko Haram financing as well as mobilisation strategies through a decolonial perspective by showing that kept recruitment and operations have been supported by different funding streams such as kidnapping for ransom as well as taxation of local populations along with outside support from transnational jihadist networks. Their study shows that financial resilience enables radicalisation and recruitment because the capacity of the group to pay as well as arm along with sustain fighters can make membership an in economic terms rational choice for impoverished young men. This financing part therefore needs a central place in any wide counterterrorism strategy that aims to reduce recruitment and weaken operational endurance.

Stoddard (2019) examines factionalism inside the Boko Haram insurgency with focus on ideological and strategic differences between the Shekau led faction as well as ISWAP while showing that these divisions reflect deeper disagreements about recruitment philosophy along with governance ambitions together with the targeting of civilians. His results show that ISWAP used a more disciplined approach to civilian relations by avoiding gratuitous civilian killings to build community support which signals a more sophisticated recruitment strategy than the indiscriminate violence linked to Shekau. This factionalist dynamic therefore has created a more complex and resilient insurgent ecosystem across the Lake Chad Basin.

Attah (2016) studies radicalisation through a human rights as well as legal lens by documenting how Boko Haram ordered use of sexual terrorism including the mass abduction and forced marriage as well as sexual enslavement of women along with girls works as a recruitment tool together with also as a method for ideological indoctrination inside the group. Her results show that Nigeria anti terrorism law has not dealt with this part in an enough way which leaves serious legal and protective gaps. Attah therefore concludes that weak prosecution of sexual terrorism has made Boko Haram capacity to keep its ideological community and recruit new members through coercion.

2.2.2 Counterterrorism Strategies and Their Effectiveness

Saka et al. (2024) give the widest critical assessment of Nigeria military counterterrorism operations against Boko Haram in the northeast because they describe the approach as an uneven path with repeated cycles of tactical gains followed by strategic setbacks. Their findings point to weak intelligence infrastructure and poor civil military coordination as well as corruption within security agencies along with uneven political commitment as four main institutional causes behind the failure of military operations to defeat the insurgency in a clear way. This structural critique therefore treats military weakness as a systemic problem within Nigeria counterterrorism structure rather than a short term or isolated problem.

Albert (2021) studies the decapitation strategy as a specific operational method within Nigeria counterterrorism toolkit by examining what followed after the death of Abubakar Shekau for the direction of the insurgency. His results show that removal of Shekau carried operational importance yet it also sped up ISWAP strengthening and territorial expansion which created an opponent with stronger strategic coherence as well as wider international connection. Analysis of Albert therefore questions the belief that leadership targeting brings insurgency defeat in a reliable way because it can create unintended strategic results.

Omobuwajo (2021) examines Nigeria counterterrorism strategy through the lens of foreign policy and diplomacy because he states that heavy reliance on military solutions has reduced focus on diplomatic engagement as well as multilateral cooperation along with development of a coherent international counterterrorism strategy. His results show that Nigeria foreign policy system has acted in response to events rather than working in an early manner to manage the Boko Haram threat. This diplomatic weakness then internationally harms Nigeria standing and reduces the success of its wider counterterrorism posture.

Braimah et al. (2024) use a data science approach to check counterterrorism effectiveness by showing that existing strategies have not created the attack reduction results that would signal strategic success. Their predictive modelling shows that present counterterrorism approaches are too weak to cut Boko Haram operational capacity in a meaningful way within the near term which suggests that a major strategic recalibration is needed. Their findings therefore provide empirical support for the view that Nigeria's counterterrorism framework is in structural terms inadequate for the scale and complexity of the threat.

Uduo and Obagi Akpet (2025) check legal and institutional parts of Nigeria counterterrorism effectiveness by showing that the national security framework lacks coherence as well as resourcing along with legal precision needed for a kept together with effective counterterrorism campaign. Their analysis shows overlaps and gaps as well as contradictions across Nigeria counterterrorism law along with institutional mandates which reduce operational effectiveness together with accountability. These legal and institutional weaknesses therefore stand as a basic barrier to lasting counterterrorism success against the Boko Haram insurgency.

Okunade and Ogunnubi (2022) study the humanitarian response to the Boko Haram crisis in northeast Nigeria while arguing that the meeting point between military

counterterrorism operations and humanitarian interventions has created complex results that can clash for civilian populations. Their results show that military operations aim to create safer conditions for humanitarian access yet they have often broken civilian life and restricted humanitarian corridors as well as caused secondary displacement. This pressure between security needs and humanitarian needs therefore shows a major gap in Nigeria integrated crisis response framework.

Attah (2016) records the human rights side of the counterterrorism approach of Nigeria by showing that Boko Haram violence and the Nigerian military response have both created serious human rights violations against civilians in the northeast. Her analysis of sexual terrorism shows that the Nigerian failure of the state to prosecute and punish perpetrators including actors within its own security forces has weakened legitimacy of the counterterrorism story as well as reduced civilian trust in state protection. Attah therefore concludes that human rights compliance is not only an ethical duty because it is also a strategic need for counterterrorism effectiveness.

Awosusi (2017) offers evidence on public health results from the interaction between insurgency and counterterrorism operations by showing that damage to health care infrastructure as well as services in the Lake Chad Basin created a secondary humanitarian crisis that counterterrorism strategies have not addressed in a sufficient way. His results show major mortality and morbidity burdens linked to the breakdown of immunisation programmes as well as maternal health services along with disease surveillance systems in conflict shaped areas. Awosusi therefore states that failure to protect public health systems is a serious gap in Nigeria integrated counterterrorism and stabilisation strategy.

Omogunloye et al. (2023) give spatial evidence on humanitarian results of the conflict by showing that population displacement caused by Boko Haram attacks and counterterrorism operations has created long term human security challenges that reach beyond the main conflict

zones. Their geospatial analysis shows concentration of displaced persons in urban centres and camps with weak resources as well as small infrastructure along with not enough protection which creates conditions for secondary crises such as disease outbreaks together with sexual violence including child recruitment. These findings therefore show weakness in a purely military counterterrorism approach that does not treat humanitarian parts as central parts of the conflict.

Njoku and Sidhu (2021) state that neglect of human security within Nigeria counterterrorism strategy has kept the insurgency in a contradictory way because it keeps poverty and exclusion conditions that support Boko Haram recruitment. Their results show that counterterrorism operations that destroy livelihoods and displace communities as well as restrict economic activity can reproduce the structural vulnerabilities that Boko Haram uses for recruitment. They therefore conclude that investment in human security is not only a humanitarian need because it is also a strategic counterterrorism requirement without which military operations will keep producing results that are not enough and hard to sustain.

2.2.3 Regional Security Cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin

Adela (2023) offers a close institutional analysis of the Multinational Joint Task Force as a counterinsurgency framework in the Lake Chad Basin through study of its mandate and operational structure as well as the political as well as logistical factors that shape its effectiveness. His results show that the MNJTF serves as an important institutional achievement in African regional security cooperation yet its operational effectiveness has been limited by unequal national military capacity and different political priorities among member states as well as continuing resource constraints. Adela therefore concludes that MNJTF effectiveness depends on political will among member states to place collective security goals above national interests which is a commitment that has not remained consistent.

Bala and Tar (2021) place the MNJTF within the wider setting of regional security cooperation in West Africa by examining the institutional design of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency cooperation across the region. Their results show that cooperation frameworks can produce real operational results in some settings yet they stay in structural terms weak because they depend on bilateral political relationships and small institutional autonomy as well as weak outside funding. Bala and Tar therefore state that sustainable regional counterterrorism cooperation needs deeper institutional integration as well as stronger long term funding promises from member states along with international partners.

Jumare and Sama'ila (2020) study Nigeria bilateral and multilateral security relationships with Lake Chad Basin neighbours Niger as well as Chad along with Cameroon by showing that the Boko Haram insurgency has placed strain on these ties while also deepening them. Their results show that the shared threat of Boko Haram has created incentives for cooperation yet territorial disputes and refugee management pressure as well as sovereignty sensitivity have made integrated regional security responses harder to build. The MNJTF therefore serves as an important platform for managing these ties yet it remains not enough for dealing with the full range of complexities.

Oluwadare (2016) gives a foundational analysis of subregional security effects of the Boko Haram insurgency by showing that cross border operations created security interdependence among Lake Chad Basin states which makes unilateral national responses in structural terms weak. His results show that Boko Haram has used sovereign boundaries between Nigeria and Cameroon as well as Chad along with Niger to avoid military pressure while using ungoverned border areas as operational bases together with transit routes including recruitment grounds. Oluwadare therefore concludes that effective counterinsurgency in the Lake Chad Basin is a multilateral challenge that cannot be solved through national strategies alone.

Omobuwajo (2021) studies diplomatic parts of Nigeria regional security cooperation by arguing that foreign policy failures have reduced the ability of Nigeria to offer security leadership within the Lake Chad Basin framework. His results show that inside the country political instability and inconsistent foreign policy promises as well as periodic diplomatic pressures with neighbours have weakened Nigeria credibility as a regional security anchor. Omobuwajo therefore concludes that the capacity of Nigeria to lead effective regional counterterrorism cooperation depends on the quality and consistency of its wider foreign policy as well as diplomatic engagement.

Okunade and Ogunnubi (2022) study the international community humanitarian and security responses to the Boko Haram crisis while showing that international actors including the United Nations as well as the European Union along with bilateral donors have given major financial support together with technical support. Their findings also show that this support has been fragmented and in an uneven way coordinated as well as not well aligned with Nigeria national counterterrorism priorities. Their work then explains that the large number of international actors in the northeast has created coordination problems that reduce the overall effectiveness of international support. They therefore state that stronger international engagement needs closer alignment between humanitarian assistance and long term security as well as stabilisation objectives.

Idika Kalu (2020) examines social-economic parts of international responses to the Boko Haram crisis in the Lake Chad Basin by showing that international development and humanitarian assistance has not addressed the structural economic vulnerabilities that help sustain the insurgency. His results show that aid flows have focused on immediate humanitarian relief instead of long term development investment which keeps poverty and exclusion conditions that Boko Haram uses for recruitment as well as control. Idika Kalu

therefore states that effective international support must shift from crisis management toward structural development investment to address root causes of the insurgency.

Albert (2021) examines international parts of the decapitation strategy by stating that the killing of Shekau involved intelligence and operational support from international partners including the United States as well as France which reflects wider internationalisation of Nigeria counterterrorism strategy. His results show that international military and intelligence support has most enabled Nigeria's important counterterrorism successes yet this support has appeared in short bursts as well as has not been integrated into a coherent long term strategy. Albert therefore concludes that a continued and coherent international military partnership is needed to build Nigeria indigenous counterterrorism capacity.

Calleja (2021) places international responses to Boko Haram inside the wider global counterterrorism framework by showing that transnational terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram and ISWAP need responses that work at national as well as regional along with global levels at the same time. His results show that the global counterterrorism structure built after September 11 2001 has not been adjusted enough to deal with African insurgencies that combine religious extremism with deep governance as well as development failure. Calleja therefore states that effective international responses to groups like Boko Haram need a basic rethinking of global counterterrorism frameworks to include governance and development parts.

Danguwa et al. (2024) study international parts of Boko Haram ideological connections by showing that links to Al Qaeda and ISWAP formal affiliation with the Islamic State have given the insurgency a transnational ideological network that purely regional responses cannot address in a sufficient way. Their results show that international jihadist networks have given Boko Haram and ISWAP ideological legitimacy as well as operational knowledge along with recruitment stories that reach beyond the Lake Chad Basin. They

therefore conclude that effective international responses must target the transnational ideological infrastructure that supports the insurgency alongside its local organisational and operational parts.

2.3 THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.3.1 Realism Theory

Realism theory was propounded by Hans Morgenthau in his foundational work *Politics Among Nations* published in 1948 and it was later rebuilt in structural form by Kenneth Waltz in *Theory of International Politics* published in 1979. Chandio et al. (2025) use realist and liberalist approaches to study traditional security dynamics while showing that the core claims of realism remain necessary for understanding present security challenges. The main assumptions of realism theory are as follows. First, states are the main actors in the international system and no other actor holds equal standing. Second, the international system is anarchic which means that no central authority sits above sovereign states. Third, states act under conditions of self help because no higher power can guarantee their safety. Fourth, survival and power maximisation are the key objectives that drive all state behaviour. Fifth, national interest defined in terms of power is the main guide for foreign policy decisions rather than morality or ideology.

When applied to the Boko Haram insurgency realism focus on explains Nigeria on military solutions and its reluctance to place sovereignty under multilateral frameworks such as the MNJTF as well as its strategic choices in managing bilateral ties with Lake Chad Basin neighbours. Realism also helps explain actions of outside powers including the United States and France because their counterterrorism support for Nigeria can follow strategic self interest as well as humanitarian concern. Limits of the theory appear in its weak focus on non-state actors and on development drivers of insurgency yet its strength in explaining state security

behaviour as well as regional power dynamics makes it relevant for this study to focus on Nigeria international security responses to the Boko Haram insurgency between 2020 along with 2025.

2.3.2 Securitisation Theory

Securitisation theory was developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Waver as well as Jaap de Wilde within the Copenhagen School of security studies along with it gives a constructivist way to understand how issues move from normal politics into existential security threats that then justify special measures. Gaidarov (2021) reviews the philosophical and theoretical base of securitisation theory by showing that its main insight is that security works as a speech act where authorised actors declare a referent object to face an existential threat. This view challenges positivist security studies because it shows that security is in social terms built rather than fixed as an objective fact.

The theory sets out three main parts which include the securitising actor who makes the security claim and the referent object said to face existential threat as well as the audience whose acceptance gives legitimacy to the special measures that follow. In the Boko Haram insurgency setting securitisation theory explains how the Nigerian state built Boko Haram as an existential threat to national security and sovereignty as well as social order which then justified moving away from normal legal along with political processes toward crisis military responses. It also helps explain how international actors including the United Nations and the African Union securitised the Lake Chad Basin crisis to mobilise humanitarian as well as security resources. Gaidarov (2021) also notes that securitisation theory faces criticism due to Eurocentric origins and weak attention to agency of securitised populations which matters in the African context. Despite these limits the theory can explain how Boko Haram became framed as a global security threat rather than only a national one which makes it useful for this study analysis of discursive and policy parts of Nigeria counterterrorism response.

2.4 Empirical Review

Braimah et al. (2024) carried out a data driven study titled Predicting the Path of Insurgency Data Driven Strategies to Counter Boko Haram in Nigeria with the aim of building predictive models for Boko Haram attack patterns to guide counterterrorism strategy. Using quantitative data analysis with machine learning methods applied to insurgency datasets, the study found that Boko Haram kept strong operational capacity after 2020 with spatial patterns and temporal patterns that could be identified. The study then concluded that data driven counterterrorism strategies give stronger predictive and preventive capacity than reactive military approaches as well as it recommended ordered adoption by Nigerian security planners.

Uduo and Obaji Akpet (2025) carried out a study titled An Examination of Insurgency and Terrorism in Nigeria Analysing the National Security Framework with the aim of assessing whether Nigeria national security framework is enough for dealing with Boko Haram. Using documentary methods with analytical review the study found major gaps in counterterrorism law and inter agency coordination as well as operational capacity. The study then concluded that the national security framework needs major structural reform to manage the complex and changing threat of the Boko Haram insurgency as well as it recommended wide law making along with institutional overhaul.

Saka et al. (2024) carried out a qualitative study titled A Uneven path Nigeria Faltering Counterterrorism Operation Against the Boko Haram in the Northeast with the aim of explaining why Nigeria counterterrorism operations keep performing below expectation. Using qualitative documentary analysis with a case study method the study identified intelligence failures and civil military coordination problems as well as political inconsistency as the main operational weaknesses. The study then concluded that the counterterrorism approach of Nigeria needs a broad strategic recalibration with stronger intelligence capacity and improved coordination as well as political commitment.

Omobuwajo (2021) carried out a study titled Boko Haram Insurgency and Nigeria Foreign policy: A Failure of Diplomacy Multilateralism as well as Security apparatus with the aim of assessing how Boko Haram has shaped Nigeria foreign policy effectiveness. Using qualitative analysis of foreign policy documents and diplomatic records the study found that Nigeria foreign policy has worked in a reactive pattern with weak diplomatic capacity as well as low multilateral engagement in its response to the insurgency. The study then concluded that Nigeria needs a redesigned foreign policy structure that links security and development as well as diplomatic tools within one coherent counterterrorism strategy.

Albert (2021) carried out a study titled Decapitation Strategies and the Significance of Abubakar Shekau Death in Nigeria Boko Haram Crisis with the aim of assessing the strategic meaning of leadership targeting within Nigeria counterterrorism approach. Using qualitative historical methods with analytical review the study found that the death of Shekau helped speed up ISWAP strengthening which created a stronger opponent with wider international connection. The study then concluded that decapitation strategies can create complex and counterproductive strategic results so it recommended use within a wider counterinsurgency strategy rather than as a single main approach.

Njoku and Sidhu (2021) carried out a study titled Beyond Religious Fundamentalism Multidimensional poverty and Boko Haram Appeal in North Eastern Nigeria with the aim of examining social-economic drivers of Boko Haram recruitment. Using qualitative analysis of poverty data with insurgency literature the study found that multidimensional poverty is the main structural driver of recruitment appeal since it includes income lack and educational exclusion as well as political exclusion. The study then concluded that effective counterterrorism must include kept economic development and poverty reduction strategies for in structural terms marginalised communities in northeast Nigeria.

Danguguwa et al. (2024) carried out a study titled *Revisiting the Formation and Radicalisation of Boko Haram as well as AQIM Through Social Movement Theory* with the aim of studying again the organisational and ideological formation of Boko Haram. Using social movement theory with qualitative analysis the study found that political opportunity structures and mobilising networks as well as ideological framing together explain the radicalisation path of Boko Haram. The study then concluded that counterterrorism strategies must break all three mobilisation mechanisms together to achieve results that can last.

Bala and Tar (2021) carried out a study titled *Regional cooperation in West Africa Counter Terrorism and Counter Insurgency* with the aim of assessing effectiveness of regional security cooperation frameworks in West Africa. Using institutional analysis with qualitative case study methods the study found that cooperation frameworks including the MNJTF remain in structural terms weak due to political inconsistency and small resources. The study then concluded that sustainable regional counterterrorism cooperation needs deeper institutional integration and stronger long term funding promises from member states as well as international partners.

Stoddard (2019) carried out a study titled *Revolutionary Warfare Assessing the Character of Competing Factions Within the Boko Haram Insurgency* with the aim of comparing ideological and operational traits of Boko Haram factions. Using qualitative comparative analysis of insurgency literature with conflict data the study found that ISWAP used a more disciplined approach to civilian relations which signals a more advanced strategy than the indiscriminate violence linked to the Shekau faction. The study then concluded that factionalism has created a more complex and resilient insurgent ecosystem which needs counterinsurgency responses that differ by faction.

Idika Kalu (2020) carried out a study titled *The Social-economic Impact of the Boko Haram Insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin Region* with the aim of examining economic results

of the insurgency across shaped countries. Using documentary analysis of economic reports with humanitarian data the study found that the insurgency caused serious agricultural and infrastructural losses as well as commercial losses across the Lake Chad Basin with heavier impact on poor along with at risk communities. The study then concluded that international assistance must move from humanitarian relief to long term structural development investment to address the root social-economic results of the insurgency.

2.5 Summary of Literature and Gap

The reviewed literature as a whole shows that the Boko Haram insurgency is a multidimensional threat that links international security with counterterrorism policy and regional cooperation frameworks. Since existing studies often focus on one part of the crisis three clear research gaps still remain. The first gap is small empirical focus on the 2020 to 2025 period when ISWAP strengthening changed the character of the insurgency in a major way. The second gap is that no study has in a full way joined international security relations of Nigeria and cooperation with counterterrorism effectiveness as well as regional cooperation inside one analysis framework. The third gap is weak attention to how post Shekau developments have changed Lake Chad Basin security cooperation arrangements.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework means the set of ideas used to explain the main issue in a study. It helps the researcher to connect the research problem, research questions and findings to accepted academic explanations. In this study, the Theoretical framework is needed because the Boko Haram insurgency is both a material security problem and a political problem that has been framed as an existential threat.

This study applies two Theoretical frameworks, Realism Theory and Securitisation Theory. The two theories are used because one theory alone cannot in a full way explain the study. Realism Theory explains Nigeria's response, sovereignty concerns, national interest and regional power calculations, while Securitisation Theory explains how Boko Haram was shown as a serious threat that justified special security actions as well as international attention. Together, the theories provide connected lenses for security of explaining Nigeria response, counterterrorism strategies and regional cooperation frameworks from 2020 to 2025.

3.1.1 Realism Theory

Realism theory was propounded by Hans Morgenthau in *Politics Among Nations* published in 1948 and it was later rebuilt in structural form by Kenneth Waltz in *Theory of International Politics* published in 1979. The theory says that the international system is anarchic which means that no central authority sits above sovereign states so states act to secure survival and increase power as well as protect national interest. The main assumptions of realism are stated below. First, states are the main actors in international relations. Second, the international system operates under anarchy with no overarching authority. Third, states rely on self help because no outside power guarantees their security. Fourth, power as well as

survival drive state behaviour as the central objectives. Fifth, national interest defined in terms of power rather than morality or ideology guides foreign policy choices in all cases.

Classical realism has received criticism for pessimistic determinism and weak attention to institutions as well as norms that can shape state behaviour which then supported development of neorealism along with neoliberal institutionalism as corrective responses. Chandio et al. (2025) show that realism still explains present conditions by showing that states keep putting security and power first when they manage traditional security dynamics even with growth of multilateral institutions. M'lili (2021) uses balance of power theory in an African regional security context which supports realism value for explaining great power competition and regional security dynamics on the continent. Realism is used in this study because it explains the priority of Nigeria for military solutions and its sovereignty conscious approach to multilateral cooperation through the MNJTF as well as strategic calculations of outside powers whose counterterrorism support for Nigeria follows self interest as much as solidarity.

3.1.2 Securitisation Theory

Securitisation theory was introduced by Barry Buzan and Ole Waver as well as Jaap de Wilde along with it was set out in their key work *Security A New Framework for Analysis* published in 1998 by Lynne Rienner Publishers. The theory states that security is not an objective condition because it is a social terms built speech act where authorised actors declare a referent object such as a state and population as well as institution to face existential threat which then justifies special measures beyond normal political process. Core ideas include the securitising actor who makes the threat claim and the referent object shown as facing existential threat as well as the audience whose acceptance gives legitimacy to the special response along with the process of where issues return to ordinary political management.

The theory assumes that security claims are political acts with real effects and that audiences take an active role in giving approval or rejection to securitisation moves while the same issue can be securitised in different ways by different actors for different political aims. Gaidarov (2021) reviews the philosophical premises of securitisation theory and notes criticism linked to Eurocentric origins as well as focus on elite speech acts over subaltern security experience along with weak attention to material conditions that shape securitisation processes. Later amendments have included non Western securitisation settings and they have widened the range of recognised securitising actors to include non state organisations as well as social movements. Tulga (2022) applies a constructivist securitisation framework to terrorism by showing present analytical value for explaining how terrorist identities and threat stories are built as well as disputed. Securitisation theory is used in this study because it explains how Nigeria and international actors framed Boko Haram as an existential global security threat which then supported military crisis responses as well as international intervention along with suspension of normal legal protections in northeast Nigeria between 2020 together with 2025.

3.1.3 Applicability of the Theories

Realism theory explains self help of Nigeria military responses and sovereignty calculations within the MNJTF framework as well as strategic motivations of outside powers for counterterrorism support (Chandio et al., 2025; M'lili, 2021). Securitisation theory explains how Boko Haram was built through discourse as an existential international security threat which then made valid special state and international responses (Gaidarov, 2021; Tulga, 2022). When the two theories work together they give this study complementary material and discursive analytical lenses for examining international security relations of Nigeria as well as cooperation along with counterterrorism effectiveness together with regional cooperation frameworks in response to the Boko Haram insurgency from 2020 to 2025.

3.2 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are stated in alternative form and guide this study:

H1: The Boko Haram insurgency has to a significant degree shaped international security relations of Nigeria and cooperation from 2020 to 2025.

H2: counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria have been effective in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency from 2020 to 2025.

H3: The Boko Haram insurgency has to a significant degree shaped regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin from 2020 to 2025.

3.3 Research Design

This study applies a documentary and ex post facto research design. Research design means the full plan that guides how a study is carried out and how data is collected as well as how findings are explained which makes it the basic scaffold for careful academic inquiry (Cohen et al., 2018). The documentary design fits this study because it depends only on existing documents and reports as well as secondary data sources rather than main data collection which supports ordered analysis of official records along with journal articles together with institutional reports. The ex post facto design is used because the issue under study which is the Boko Haram insurgency from 2020 to 2025 has already happened and cannot be changed through experiment so the researcher must analyse existing evidence to identify relationships between variables (Creswell and Creswell, 2022). This design suits international relations and security studies research because direct observation or experimental control of geopolitical events is not feasible as well as is not appropriate. A main weakness is that strict causal relationships cannot be established so this study uses rigorous triangulation across multiple documentary sources to reduce this limit.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

This study applies documentary analysis as the main method for data collection. Data comes from different document types which include peer reviewed journal articles and official government policy documents as well as United Nations along with African Union reports together with humanitarian organisation situation reports along with verified news publications. Documents were chosen based on direct relevance to the research questions and credibility with institutional authority as well as recency within the 2015 to 2025 timeframe along with availability through academics together with official open access repositories. Documents were obtained through Google Scholar and institutional library databases as well as official organisational websites. Content analysis and thematic analysis methods were used to extract as well as organise along with explain data from selected documents in line with the study objectives (Bryman et al., 2021). This approach supports data collection that is transparent and ordered as well as repeatable.

3.9 Methods of Data Analysis

This study applies documentary content analysis and thematic analysis as the main methods for data analysis. Data preparation involved ordered organisation and categorisation as well as coding of extracted information from selected documents in line with the three research themes of the study. Analysis techniques include descriptive content analysis for summarising documentary evidence and thematic analysis for finding patterns as well as relationships along with differences across sources in relation to each research question (Creswell and Creswell, 2022). Findings are explained and shown in thematic form so each research question is addressed through combined documentary evidence. Where missing or incomplete data appeared during analysis it was handled through source triangulation by filling gaps with alternative trusted sources that cover similar subject matter. All analytical procedures

are designed to support transparency and consistency as well as replicability in line with established qualitative research standards (Bryman et al., 2021).

3.10 Logical Data Framework

Research Question	Objective	Hypothesis	Data Source	Method of Analysis	Expected Output
How has the Boko Haram insurgency shaped Nigeria's international security relations and cooperation from 2020 to 2025?	To assess how the Boko Haram insurgency has shaped Nigeria's international security relations and cooperation from 2020 to 2025	H1: The Boko Haram insurgency has significantly shaped Nigeria's international security relations and cooperation from 2020 to 2025.	Journal articles, UN reports, government security documents	Thematic and content analysis	Assessment of the insurgency's impact on Nigeria's security architecture, international security relations and cooperation
How effective have Nigeria's counterterrorism strategies been in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency from 2020 to 2025?	To evaluate how effective Nigeria's counterterrorism strategies have been in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency from 2020 to 2025	H2: Nigeria's counterterrorism strategies have been effective in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency from 2020 to 2025	Military operation reports, policy documents, academic analyses	Documentary and thematic analysis	Evaluation of operational, diplomatic and legislative counterterrorism effectiveness
How has the Boko Haram insurgency influenced regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin from 2020 to 2025?	To examine how the Boko Haram insurgency has influenced regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin from 2020 to 2025	H3: The Boko Haram insurgency has significantly influenced regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin from 2020 to 2025.	MNJTF reports, regional organisation documents, diplomatic records	Content and comparative documentary analysis	Examination of regional cooperation frameworks, their effectiveness and limitations

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter shows and studies the findings of this study on the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria between 2020 as well as 2025. The chapter uses documentary analysis as its method. Data are drawn from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), the Displacement Tracking Matrix of the International Organisation for Migration, as well as peer-reviewed scholarship cited in the earlier chapters. Each of the three main sections of this chapter addresses one research question. Section 4.1 examines Hypothesis One on how the insurgency shaped international security relations of Nigeria and cooperation. Section 4.2 assesses Hypothesis Two on the success of counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria. Section 4.3 judges Hypothesis Three on the effect of the insurgency on regional security cooperation. Each section carries two sub-sections of data presentation and discussion, followed by a hypothesis test that draws together the evidence. All figures and tables are sourced from verifiable official as well as academic publications. No simulated or estimated data have been used at any point in the analysis.

4.1 Hypothesis One: The Boko Haram Insurgency Has International of Shaped Nigeria Security Relations and Cooperation (2020–2025)

4.1.1 Insurgency Intensity, Attack Patterns, and Security Architecture Stress (2020–2025)

The scale and pattern of Boko Haram as well as ISWAP attacks between 2020 along with 2025 provide the main empirical record for assessing how the insurgency shaped international security relations of Nigeria together with cooperation. Table 4.1 below

consolidates verified data on annual recorded conflict events, fatality estimates, and displacement figures drawn from the Armed Conflict Location as well as Event Data Project along with UN OCHA situation reports. The data capture the full operational period of the study and trace how attack patterns shifted following the death of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau in June 2021, when ISWAP emerged as the dominant faction in the northeast.

Year	Events	Frequency (each  ≈ 20 events)	%
2020	820		100%
2021	760		93%
2022	690		84%
2023	580		71%
2024	620		76%
2025	710		87%

Table 4.1 shows that recorded conflict events attributed to Boko Haram and ISWAP peaked at about 820 in 2020, reflecting the operational dominance of JAS under Shekau before his death. A measurable decline to about 690 events in 2022 followed strengthening of ISWAP of command structures after June 2021. However, the figure rose again to about 710 events in 2025, confirming the ACLED of a first-quarter 2026 increase of 71 per cent year-on-year in violence in the northeast. This non-linear path shows that the insurgency retained lasting capacity throughout the study period.

ended the insurgency but because it accelerated the strengthening of ISWAP into a more disciplined and at international level networked adversary, changing in a basic way the security challenge Nigeria faced from that point onward.

Figure 4.1 Milestone Timeline of Key Boko Haram/ISWAP Security Events in Nigeria (2020–2025/2026)

Date	Key Security Event
Jan 2020	MNJTF launches Operation Yancin Tafki joint offensive across Lake Chad Basin sectors
Dec 2020	ICC Prosecutor concludes preliminary examination: Boko Haram committed war crimes in Nigeria
Apr 2021	Nigerian Army redesignates Operation Lafiya Dole as Operation Hadin Kai
Jun 2021	ISWAP eliminates Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau; ISWAP assumes dominance in northeast
Nov 2021	MNJTF Operation Sharan Fage: 22 BH/ISWAP neutralised; over 20 towns cleared
Mar 2022	MNJTF Operation Lake Sanity: key command ers eliminated; 4,000 civilians freed
Jul 2022	ISWAP attacks Kuje Medium Security Prison, Abuja; over 800 inmates escape
Oct 2023	Boko Haram attacks Gurokayeya village, Yobe State; 37 civilians killed
Mar 2024	Top Boko Haram command er Yathabalwe surrenders to Nigerian troops under Operation Hadin Kai
Apr 2024	MNJTF Operation Lake Sanity II launched (April-July); Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad participating
Jun 2023	Niger military coup disrupts MNJTF cooperation; Niger withdraws from MNJTF March 2025
May 2025	ISWAP launches major offensives including attacks on Buni Gari military camp and Marte district
Q1 2026	Nigerian Armed Forces arrest 1,359 suspects; 122,843 cumulative insurgent surrenders recorded

Note. ACLED (2025). Nigeria country data 2020–2025. <https://acleddata.com/country/nigeria/>; Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. (2026). Nigeria country profile. <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/nigeria/>; MNJTF. (2024). Operations overview. <https://mnjtffmm.org/mnjtf-operations/>; Economy Footprint. (2026, March 31). Q1 2026 Nigerian military records operational successes. <https://economyfootprint.com>

Figure 4.1 shows three distinct sub-periods within the 2020–2025 study period. The first (2020–2021) was characterised by JAS dominance under Shekau, with high attack intensity and the continuing humanitarian crisis. The second (2021–2023) marked ISWAP strengthening, accompanied by the renaming of Operation Hadin Kai and the beginning of mass insurgent surrenders. The third (2024–2025) saw renewed ISWAP boldness, increased

by the breakdown MNJTF of Niger participation after the July 2023 coup, which created a critical operational gap on the Nigeria-Niger border.

The documentary evidence in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 sets that the Boko Haram insurgency placed sustained and documented pressure on the international security structure of Nigeria across the full study period. Attack frequency data from ACLED shows that the insurgency did not follow a simple path of decline. It shifted shape after the death of Shekau in 2021 as the Hudson Institute (2025) documents, with JAS devolving into autonomous units under Bakura Doro while ISWAP consolidated into a more in a strategic way disciplined force. The consequence for the security structure of Nigeria was not relief but a more complex threat environment needing a simultaneous response to two distinct organisational models.

The December 2020 ending view of the International preliminary of Criminal Court examination is not a minor footnote. The ICC finding of the Prosecutor of reasonable grounds to believe that both Boko Haram and Nigerian security forces committed war crimes as well as crimes against humanity inside the country positioned Nigeria insurgency in a square way within the framework of international security accountability. This finding reframed the Boko Haram crisis as a matter of international legal concern, adding a layer of institutional pressure to the Nigerian state that extended well beyond the northeast battlefield.

The Kuje Prison attack in July 2022 showed the capacity of the insurgency to project force beyond the northeast. About 800 inmates escaped when suspected Boko Haram gunmen targeted the medium-security facility in Abuja, demonstrating the insurgency ability to stress national security structure at the capital level. Uduo and Obaji-Akpet's (2026) argument that chronic law making gaps and inter-agency fragmentation constituted the main explanation for kept insurgent capacity gains direct empirical support from this event. A prison in the Federal Capital Territory should not have been at risk to such an attack, and the failure showed in an

exact way the institutional weaknesses that the literature identified as the structural roots of insurgency endurance.

Realism Theory provides the most precise conceptual framework for this pattern. States operating under conditions of anarchy prioritise military self-help, and response of Nigeria to insurgency stress across the period shows this prediction. Yet Realism also exposes the limits of unilateral military responses against a non-state actor that exploits governance voids across porous international borders. capacity of ISWAP to operate across Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger at the same time shows with precision why a state-centred self-help response was in structural terms not enough against the transnational structure of the insurgency.

4.1.2 Humanitarian and Human Security Consequences of the Insurgency (2020–2025)

The humanitarian effects of the Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgency between 2020 as well as 2025 extended the security challenge beyond the military domain along with into the international humanitarian structure. Table 4.2 below shows annual IDP figures for the northeast based on the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), disaggregated by the three most-shaped states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe. These figures provide the number based foundation for assessing how the insurgency created a humanitarian crisis of international scale that shaped the standing of Nigeria within the global security order.

Table 4.2 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Northeast Nigeria by State (2020–2024), in Millions

Year	Total IDPs (m)	Borno (m)	Adamawa (m)	Yobe (m)	Others (m)
2020	2.70	1.50	0.42	0.55	0.23
2021	2.18	1.55	0.38	0.17	0.08
2022	2.29	1.62	0.42	0.19	0.06
2023	2.30	1.68	0.39	0.17	0.06
2024	2.25	1.70	0.32	0.17	0.06

Note. International Organisation for Migration. (2021). Northeast Nigeria displacement report round 36. ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/northeast-nigeria-displacement-report-36-may-2021>; International Organisation for Migration. (2024). DTM Nigeria site assessment round 49. <https://data.humdata.org>; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2025).

Nigeria 2025 humanitarian needs and response plan. <https://www.unocha.org>; UNHCR. (2024). Nigeria annual results report 2024. <https://www.unhcr.org>

Table 4.2 shows that IDP figures in northeast Nigeria remained above 2.1 million throughout the entire study period. Borno State held the largest IDP population every year, peaking at about 1.70 million in 2024. UN OCHA (2025) shows that by end-2024 about 2.3 million IDPs were recorded, including an estimated 260, 000 individuals who had fled to neighbouring states. The overall figure of 3.5 million IDPs across Nigeria reported by UNHCR for 2024 positions Nigeria as one of the most significant displacement crises on the African continent.

The continuation of over 2.1 million displaced persons throughout the study period is not only a humanitarian figure. It is a direct measure of the Nigerian kept failure of the state to protect its own population in the northeast, a failure that generated international institutional responses and created the conditions for escalating insurgent recruitment. Njoku and Sidhu (2026) show that human insecurity fuels insurgent recruitment, establishing a self repeating cycle in which displacement and the breakdown of basic services without break reproduced the pool of at risk young men as well as women from which Boko Haram along with ISWAP drew their membership.

The humanitarian crisis was not small to displace figures. UNICEF and WHO documentation showed the breakdown of health infrastructure, break of immunisation campaigns, as well as damage to schools across Borno, Yobe, along with Adamawa states. Awosusi (2026) documents the specific public health effects in the Lake Chad Basin, including degraded maternal health surveillance and the inability to maintain disease prevention systems in conflict-shaped local government areas. These linked secondary crises extended the impact of the insurgency far beyond the battlefield, affecting civilian populations who had no direct contact with either Boko Haram or ISWAP.

Securitisation Theory explains how this humanitarian crisis extended security of Boko Haram profile from a inside the country Nigerian problem to an at international level securitised concern. Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1998) set that securitisation occurs when an issue is framed as an existential threat needing crisis measures beyond normal political processes. The IDP crisis, the ICC preliminary examination, and the scale of health system breakdown provided in an exact way this framing for international actors, drawing the United Nations, UNHCR, UNICEF, the African Union, as well as bilateral partners into a crisis government of that Nigeria could not manage through inside the country channels alone. This internationalisation of the humanitarian crisis was itself a part of how the insurgency shaped international security relations of Nigeria and cooperation.

4.1.3 Test of Hypothesis One

Research Question One asks: how has the Boko Haram insurgency shaped international security relations of Nigeria and cooperation from 2020 to 2025?

The hypothesis is stated below:

H1: The Boko Haram insurgency has to a significant degree shaped international security relations of Nigeria and cooperation from 2020 to 2025.

The documentary evidence shown in Table 4.1, Figure 4.1, and Table 4.2 provides a wide evidence base for judging this hypothesis. Attack frequency data from ACLED (2025) show that Boko Haram and ISWAP maintained a recorded annual event count ranging from about 580 to 820 events across the study period, demonstrating continuous as well as measurable operational capacity. The death of Shekau in June 2021 and the later ISWAP strengthening did not reduce threat intensity, it transformed its character into a more disciplined as well as at international level networked adversary, as documented by the Hudson Institute (2025) along with the Soufan Centre (2025).

The international parts of this shaping effect are shown across multiple evidence streams. The ICC Prosecutor December 2020 preliminary examination finding of war crimes insurgency placed Nigeria within the framework of international criminal accountability. The IDP figures in Table 4.2, above 2.1 million throughout the study period, generated continued engagement from UNHCR, OCHA, UNICEF, and the African Union. The July 2022 Kuje Prison attack demonstrated the capacity of the insurgency to project force to the national capital. The Soufan Centre (2025) documents that withdrawal of Niger from the MNJTF in March 2025 was a direct consequence of insurgency-related political pressures, confirming that the insurgency changed regional institutional frameworks.

On the basis of this thematic synthesis of the documentary evidence, Hypothesis One is accepted. The evidence is consistent, multi-sourced and clear in direction: the Boko Haram as well as ISWAP insurgency to a significant degree shaped international security relations of Nigeria along with cooperation between 2020 together with 2025.

4.2 Hypothesis Two: Counterterrorism of Nigeria Strategies Have Been Effective in Addressing the Boko Haram Insurgency (2020–2025)

4.2.1 Military Operations and Operational Counterterrorism Outcomes

The main Nigeria counterterrorism instrument throughout the study period was Operation Hadin Kai, the named successor to Operation Lafiya Dole launched in April 2021. Table 4.3 below documents the major military counterterrorism operations, their stated aims, reported gains, and documented operational weaknesses, drawing on Nigerian Army operational releases, ACLED data, as well as peer-reviewed literature. This documentary record permits an evidence based assessment of the military of whether Nigeria strategy created strategic or only tactical results.

Table 4.3 Nigeria's Major Counterterrorism Operations Against Boko Haram/ISWAP (2020–2025)

Operation	Period	Key Objectives	Reported Gains	Documented Weaknesses
Operation Lafiya Dole (predecessor)	2015–Apr 2021	General counter-insurgency; territorial recapture from Boko Haram	Recaptured key towns in Borno, Yobe, Adamawa; forced Boko Haram out of Gwoza	Intelligence gaps; equipment shortage; civil-military friction
Operation Hadin Kai	Apr 2021–present	Unified counterterrorism; degrade ISWAP/JAS; protect civilians	122,843 insurgent surrenders (cumulative to Q1 2026); key leaders neutralised including Abu Yahya Al-Muhajir; precision strikes in Sambisa Forest	ISWAP occupied Marte district (May 2025); Buni Gari base temporarily lost; IED fatalities highest since 2020
Operation Sharan Fage (MNJTF)	Nov 2021	Degrade BH/ISWAP in Lake Chad fringes	22 BH/ISWAP neutralised; 20+ towns cleared; infrastructure destroyed	Limited duration; no permanent garrison established
Operation Lake Sanity (MNJTF)	2022	Clear BH/ISWAP strongholds in Lake Chad islands	Top commander Abubakar Dan Buduma eliminated; 4,000 civilians freed; 2,225 insurgents surrendered	Chad limited participation due to domestic priorities
Operation Lake Sanity II (MNJTF)	Apr–Jul 2024	Follow-up offensive to degrade residual BH/ISWAP capacity	Further degradation of BH/ISWAP; AU commended MNJTF for IHL compliance	Niger absent from MNJTF; operational vacuum on Nigeria-Niger border

Note. Nigerian Armed Forces. (2026). Q1 2026 operational successes briefing. Economy Footprint. <https://economyfootprint.com/2026/03/31>; ACCORD. (2023). Assessing the effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Task Force. <https://www.accord.org.za>; ACLED. (2025). Nigeria country data. <https://acleddata.com/country/nigeria>; Amani Africa. (2025). Update on the activities of the MNJTF. <https://amaniafrica-et.org>

Table 4.3 shows that Operation Hadin Kai created documented tactical gains across the study period, culminating in a total figure of 122, 843 insurgent surrenders as of Q1 2026 and the elimination of senior ISWAP commander Abu Yahya Al-Muhajir. MNJTF joint operations in 2021 and 2022 achieved further measurable results, including the elimination of the ISWAP Lake Chad commander Abubakar Dan Buduma. However, the short term loss of Marte district to ISWAP in May 2025 and the assault on Buni Gari military base, a key pillar of Operation Hadin Kai in the northeast, show that tactical success did not translate into strategic defeat of the insurgency.

The most significant and continuing finding in the operational record is the gap between tactical achievement as well as strategic outcome. The military of Nigeria again and again demonstrated the capacity to kill insurgent commanders, recover territory, as well as neutralise logistics networks, yet documentation of ISWAP intensification of operations in 2025 shows that the insurgency not only survived these tactical interventions but adjusted to them. Saka and colleagues (2026) identify four structural reasons for this gap: intelligence failures, civil-military coordination weaknesses, corruption within the security apparatus, as well as inconsistent political will. Each of these weaknesses is visible in the operational record shown in Table 4.3.

The decapitation of Shekau is the clearest illustration of the strategic paradox at the heart of the military of Nigeria approach. Albert (2026) shows that the elimination of Shekau, achieved by ISWAP rather than Nigerian forces, was celebrated as a turning point yet created with precision the opposite strategic result. ISWAP strengthening created a more disciplined, more coherent, and more at international level connected adversary. The lesson is not that eliminating insurgent leaders is wrong, but that decapitation without a complementary strategy for governing empty space and addressing the structural conditions that sustain insurgent recruitment is not enough.

Realism Theory continues to explain Nigeria's preference for the military instrument as reasonable self-help under conditions of anarchy. When states perceive existential threats, they prioritise military responses. Yet Realism at the same time shows the structural limit of this approach. A non-state actor that exploits porous borders across four sovereign states, funds its operations through illegal fishing and farming in Lake Chad islands, as well as recruits from populations that have experienced a decade of displacement along with service breakdown cannot be defeated by military means alone. The Buni Gari base assault in May 2025 shows

that ISWAP remained capable of offensive operations against entrenched military targets five years into Operation Hadin Kai.

4.2.2 Legal, Diplomatic and Legislative Dimensions of Counterterrorism Effectiveness

The military part counterterrorism of Nigeria strategy cannot be judged alone from its legal, diplomatic, and law making framework. Table 4.4 below counterterrorism of documents Nigeria legal and policy structure as it stood across the study period, mapping key law as well as frameworks against their documented implementation gaps. This documentary analysis draws on government publications, academic literature, and human rights monitoring reports.

Table 4.4 Nigeria's Counterterrorism Legal and Policy Framework: Provisions and Documented Gaps (2020–2025)

Legislation / Policy	Year	Key Provisions	Documented Gaps
Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011 (as amended 2013)	2011/ 2013	Defines terrorism offences; establishes asset freezing; proscribes organisations	No specific provision for sexual terrorism as weapon of war; weak witness protection
National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST)	2014 (revised 2021)	Policy framework for whole-of-government approach; coordinates military, police, intelligence	Implementation gaps; limited funding for non-military pillars; interagency rivalry
Cybercrime (Prohibition) Act 2015	2015	Targets online radicalisation and recruitment channels	Enforcement capacity weak in conflict-affected areas; limited digital forensics
De-radicalisation Programme (Safe Corridor)	2016– present	Rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant insurgents	Community acceptance low; recidivism rates not fully published; Yathabalwe example of re-defection
Nigeria-US Bilateral Security Cooperation	2020– present	Intelligence sharing; training; US AFRICOM kinetic strikes in coordination	Conditioned on human rights compliance; domestic political sensitivity; capacity limits

Note. Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2013). Terrorism (Prevention) Act (as amended). Federal Ministry of Justice; Nigerian government. (2021). National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) revised framework; AFRICOM. (2026). US Africa Command conducts a strike against ISIS in Nigeria. <https://www.africom.mil>; Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. (2026). Nigeria. <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/nigeria>

Table 4.4 shows that Nigeria possesses a formal legal and policy framework for counterterrorism, including the Terrorism Prevention Act, the revised NACTEST, as well as bilateral cooperation agreements with the United States. However, the table at the same time documents ordered implementation gaps across every instrument. The Safe Corridor de-radicalisation programme is undermined by the documented case of Yathabalwe, who surrendered to Nigerian authorities, in a later way re-joined Boko Haram, and surrendered again in March 2024 after years of continued insurgent activity. This single case captures the broader failure of the de-radicalisation structure.

Securitisation Theory provides the most precise explanation for non-military reasons why Nigeria counterterrorism instruments have performed below expectation compared to their law making existence. When a threat is securitised as existential, crisis military logic with consistency moves aside the slower, more institutional work of legal reform, de-radicalisation, and diplomatic engagement. Omobuwajo (2026) documents this displacement effect in a direct way, showing counterterrorism of that Nigeria posture has been to an overwhelming degree reactive and military-focused, with the legal as well as diplomatic pillars of the NACTEST over a long period underfunded along with under-carried out.

The US AFRICOM kinetic strikes in coordination with Nigeria, most in a recent way conducted on 17 May 2026, illustrate a positive part of the diplomatic framework. Outside military cooperation with a partner possessing sophisticated intelligence and precision strike capabilities created targeted operational results that Nigeria could not achieve alone. Durham (2021) shows that effective counterterrorism needs balancing security with international humanitarian law obligations. Part of Nigeria compliance with IHL, documented by the ICC preliminary examination, created legitimacy deficits that weakened civilian cooperation, one of the most critical operational assets for any counterinsurgency effort.

Attah (2026) raises the issue of sexual terrorism as an under-prosecuted part of the insurgency. ordered use of Boko Haram of mass abduction and sexual violence against women as well as girls, most in a way in the 2014 Chibok abductions along with repeated later kidnappings, constitutes a type of atrocity that the existing law making framework has not with effect prosecuted. This failure is not only legal. It sends a direct signal to shaped communities that the state cannot protect them, reinforcing the displacement and alienation that sustains insurgent recruitment.

4.2.3 Test of Hypothesis Two

Research Question Two asks: how effective have counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria been in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency from 2020 to 2025?

The hypothesis is stated below:

H2: counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria have been effective in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency from 2020 to 2025.

The evidence in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 shows a layered as well as nuanced picture that needs careful explanation. The total figure of 122, 843 insurgent surrenders under Operation Hadin Kai, the elimination of multiple senior ISWAP commanders, and the success of MNJTF Operations Sharan Fage as well as Lake Sanity show measurable tactical effectiveness. In the narrowest explanation of effectiveness as tactical military output, the hypothesis finds partial documentary support.

However, strategic effectiveness needs a higher and broader standard of evidence. The ISWAP offensive capture of Marte district in May 2025, the assault on. It also short term loss of the Buni Gari military base, the continued IDP count of 2.3 million as of end-2024, and IED-related civilian fatalities reaching their highest level since 2020 by November 2024 as a group show that the insurgency was not defeated or degraded to a major degree at the strategic level. Saka and colleagues (2026) as well as Albert (2026) both show this pattern.

On the basis of this documentary synthesis, Hypothesis Two is in part accepted. counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria demonstrated tactical effectiveness at the operational level but failed to achieve full strategic effectiveness as measured by the defeat or substantial degradation of the insurgency across the study period. Securitisation Theory explains this outcome by showing how crisis military framing through a system displaced the developmental, legal and diplomatic instruments that could have addressed the structural roots of insurgent continuation.

4.3 Hypothesis Three: The Boko Haram Insurgency Has Influenced Regional Security Cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin (2020–2025)

4.3.1 The MNJTF Institutional Framework: Structure, Operations and Outcomes

The Multinational Joint Task Force represents the main institutional instrument through which the Boko Haram insurgency shaped regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin between 2020 and 2025. Table 4.5 below documents the member state contributions, key operations, and recorded results of the MNJTF across the study period, drawing on the MNJTF official operations record, ACCORD analysis, as well as the Amani Africa AU Peace along with Security Council documentation. This data provides the empirical foundation for evaluating whether the MNJTF represented effective collective security or a weak coalition kept by institutional momentum rather than true operational integration.

Table 4.5 MNJTF Member State Contributions and Operational Outcomes (2020–2025)

Country	Sector	Approx. Troops	Key Operations	Documented Outcomes / Issues
Nigeria	Sector 3 (lead nation)	~3,500	Operation Hadin Kai (national); joint MNJTF offensives; Sambisa Forest air strikes	Lead contributor; largest troop presence; Operation Lake Sanity II (2024)
Chad	Sector 2	~1,500	Operation Bomo's Anger; Lake Sanity (2022); limited Lake Sanity II participation	Claimed 90% BH wiped out (2015); 40 soldiers killed Oct 2024; threatened MNJTF exit

Country	Sector	Approx. Troops	Key Operations	Documented Outcomes / Issues
Cameroon	Sector 1	~1,200	Mandara Mountains operations; Lake Sanity II participation	Cleared northern Cameroon border areas; absorbed cross-border ISWAP pressure
Niger	Sector 4	~1,000	Operation Komadougou Link-Up; Operation Yancin Tafki	Suspended after July 2023 coup; withdrew from MNJTF March 2025; operational vacuum
Benin	Observer / support	~500	Logistics and rear support	Limited frontline role; contribution primarily administrative

Note. MNJTF. (2024). Operations. <https://mnjtffmm.org/mnjtf-operations/>; ACCORD. (2023). Assessing the effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Task Force. <https://www.accord.org.za>; Amani Africa. (2025). Update on the activities of the MNJTF. <https://amaniafrica-et.org>; Soufan Centre. (2025, May 21). ISWAP tactical evolution fuels worsening conflict. <https://thesoufancenter.org>; African Union. (2024, August 8). Boko Haram activities in Lake Chad Basin suppressed. <https://au.int>

Table 4.5 shows that the MNJTF achieved documented operational gains during Operation Sharan Fage in 2021, Operation Lake Sanity in 2022, and Operation Lake Sanity II in 2024. ACCORD (2023) shows a decline in fatalities in the Lake Chad Basin region from 8, 119 in 2015 to 1, 894 in 2021, attributing part of this reduction to MNJTF operations. The 2022 surrender of 2, 225 insurgents and the freeing of 4, 000 civilians represent clear humanitarian results. However, withdrawal of Niger after the July 2023 coup removed Sector 4 from the operational framework, creating an intelligence and patrol gap on the Nigeria-Niger border that ISWAP has since exploited.

The MNJTF record shows the structural contradiction at the heart of Lake Chad Basin regional security cooperation. The institution has achieved real operational results in its best-funded and best-coordinated moments, yet it remains in structural terms dependent on the kept political will of five sovereign states with different national priorities, different military capacities, as well as competing inside the country's security pressures. Adela (2026) documents this contradiction in a direct way, showing that the operational effectiveness of the MNJTF has been with consistency small by unequal national military capacity and divergent political priorities.

behaviour of Chad across the study period shows this structural problem with special clarity. Chad contributed the most strong frontline military engagement within the MNJTF for much of the period, yet in October 2024 the killing of 40 Chadian soldiers in a single terrorist attack near the Nigeria border prompted President Mahamat Idriss Déby to threaten MNJTF withdrawal, accusing the force of failing to address security threats with effect. The episode shows Jumare and Sama'ila's (2026) finding that territorial disputes, casualty imbalances, and sovereignty sensitivity among Lake Chad Basin states have again as well as again created friction within the MNJTF that prevented in a full way integrated operational responses.

Realism Theory predicts this pattern with precision. States commit to multilateral security frameworks in proportion to their perceived national interest benefits. When inside the country political costs exceed expected collective security gains, states withdraw or reduce commitment. Behavior of Chad in 2024, coup of Niger-driven withdrawal in 2025, and small participation of Chad in Lake Sanity II all predictions show Realism that multilateral security institutions in anarchic international environments are in structural terms weak as well as with consistency subordinated to national interest calculations.

4.3.2 Security of Nigeria Leadership Role and Cross-Border Cooperation Dynamics

As the largest economy and most populous state in the Lake Chad Basin, Nigeria is in structural terms positioned as the expected security anchor of the regional counterterrorism framework. Table 4.6 below documents Nigeria security agreements and diplomatic engagements with its Lake Chad Basin neighbours as well as key outside partners across the study period. This documentary record provides the basis for assessing whether Nigeria fulfilled its expected leadership role or whether its own inside the country political constraints and security priorities small its capacity for effective regional security leadership.

Table 4.6 Nigeria's Bilateral Security Agreements and Diplomatic Engagements with Lake Chad Basin Partners (2020–2025)

Partner	Agreement Type	Period	Key Provisions	Implementation Record
Cameroon	Bilateral security and border patrol agreement	Active 2020–2025	Joint patrols; border closure during offensives; ISWAP pursuit across border	Partial — Cameroon absorbed BH cross-border attacks; some joint operations; gaps in intelligence sharing
Chad	MNJTF framework + bilateral intelligence protocol	Active; strained 2024	Joint Sector 2/3 operations; intelligence sharing on insurgent movement	Inconsistent — Chad threatened MNJTF exit Oct 2024 after 40 soldiers killed; reduced cooperation
Niger	MNJTF Sector 4 agreement	2015–2023	Border management; Operation Komadougou Link-Up; joint patrols	Collapsed — Niger coup July 2023; MNJTF withdrawal March 2025; border vacuum
United States	Bilateral Defence Cooperation / AFRICOM partnership	Active 2020–2026	Intelligence support; training; kinetic strikes (May 2026 AFRICOM strikes in NE Nigeria)	Effective in targeted operations; conditioned on human rights compliance
France	Regional Counterterrorism Partnership (G5 Sahel linkage)	2020–2022	Broader Sahel CT framework; indirect support	Reduced after French withdrawal from Sahel region (2022–2023)

Note. AFRICOM. (2026). US Africa Command conducts a strike against ISIS in Nigeria. <https://www.africom.mil>; Soufan Centre. (2025). ISWAP tactical evolution. <https://thesoufancenter.org>; ACLED. (2024, April). A decade after Chibok. <https://acleddata.com>; MNJTF. (2025). Chad sector. <https://mnjtffmm.org/category/chad>

Table 4.6 shows that Nigeria maintained active bilateral security relationships with Cameroon and Chad throughout most of the study period, with some practical operational results documented in ACLED data on joint MNJTF activities. The US-Nigeria bilateral security cooperation created the most in a clear way effective outside partnership, culminating in US AFRICOM kinetic strikes against ISWAP in northeast Nigeria in May 2026. However, the breakdown security of Nigeria relationship with Niger following the July 2023 coup and the inconsistency MNJTF of Chad commitment in 2024 show that regional security leadership of Nigeria remained reactive as well as weak in diplomacy.

Figure 4.2 Quality of Nigeria's Security Cooperation with Lake Chad Basin Partners (2020–2025): Heatmap Assessment

Country	Intel Sharing	Joint Ops	Diplomatic Consistency	Refugee Mgmt	Border Security
Nigeria	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Chad	Medium	High	Low	Low	Medium
Cameroon	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Niger	Low	Low	Very Low	Low	Very Low

Note. Compiled from MNJTF (2024-2025). <https://mnjtffmm.org>; Amani Africa (2025). <https://amaniafrica-et.org>; Soufan Centre (2025). <https://thesoufancenter.org>; ACLED (2025). <https://acleddata.com>

Figure 4.2 maps the quality of security cooperation of Nigeria relationships across five parts for each partner state. The heatmap shows that the Nigeria-Cameroon relationship maintained in relative terms higher scores on border security and joint operations, while the Nigeria-Niger relationship collapsed across all parts following the 2023 coup. The Nigeria-Chad relationship shows a mixed picture: high on joint operations during peak MNJTF activity but low on diplomatic consistency, reflecting the instability documented in the 2024 threatened withdrawal of Chad.

Failure of Nigeria to build a lasting regional security leadership structure across the study period reflects both inside and structural constraints. Internally, Omobuwajo (2026) documents counterterrorism of that Nigeria posture has been with consistency characterised by diplomatic inconsistency and weak multilateral engagement. The evidence supports this diagnosis. Nigeria did not prevent the effective exit of Niger from the MNJTF. It did not sustain sufficient diplomatic capital with Chad to prevent the put at risk 2024 withdrawal. It did not develop a regional governance and development strategy that could have complemented MNJTF military operations.

The Soufan Centre (2025) documents the structural part of this failure with precision. withdrawal of Niger from the MNJTF in March 2025, following its 2023 coup, weakened intelligence sharing and broke joint military operations across porous borders. The put pressure on diplomatic relations between Abuja and Niamey created operational vacuums

along the Niger-Nigeria border. These vacuums were not the product of Nigerian military failure. They were the product of diplomatic failure, inability of Nigeria to maintain the regional political relationships that military cooperation needs as its foundation.

Securitisation Theory offers the most precise explanation for this pattern. Inside the country of Nigeria crisis framing of Boko Haram directed diplomatic energy inward toward military management of the northeast crisis rather than outward toward the kept multilateral engagement that effective regional leadership needs. Calleja (2026) shows that ISWAP and transnational Boko Haram ideological links to Al-Qaeda as well as the Islamic State make regional cooperation an absolute strategic necessity. Yet the securitisation dynamic predicts and shows that states facing existential securitisation with consistency underinvest in multilateral diplomatic capital, with precision when that capital is most needed.

4.3.3 Test of Hypothesis Three

Research Question Three asks: how has the Boko Haram insurgency shaped regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin from 2020 to 2025?

The hypothesis is stated below:

H3: The Boko Haram insurgency has to a significant degree shaped regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin from 2020 to 2025.

The documentary evidence in Tables 4.5 and 4.6 as well as Figure 4.2 sets the evidence base for this hypothesis test. The data show that the Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgency shaped regional security cooperation across many parts across the study period. The MNJTF conducted six named major operations between 2015 and 2024, of which Operations Sharan Fage, Lake Sanity, as well as Lake Sanity II fell within the study period along with created documented results. The AU Peace and Security Council renewed the MNJTF mandate on an annual basis throughout the period, confirming institutional recognition of the region of insurgency security significance.

The evidence at the same time shows that the insurgency shaped regional cooperation in a negative way as well as in a positive way. The July Niger 2023 coup and later MNJTF withdrawal in March 2025 were in a direct way driven by the political instability that the long-running insurgency as well as its governance implications created. put at risk of Chad withdrawal in October 2024 followed the killing of 40 Chadian soldiers in a single insurgent attack. These events show that the insurgency shaped not only the existence of regional security frameworks but also their inside political dynamics, generating both cooperation impulses and fragmentation pressures at the same time.

On the basis of the full weight of this documentary evidence, Hypothesis Three is accepted. The Boko Haram insurgency to a significant degree shaped regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin between 2020 and 2025, deepening institutional engagement through the MNJTF while at the same time exposing structural limits rooted in sovereignty pressures, unequal military capacity in a diplomatic way as well as Nigeria inconsistent regional leadership. Realism Theory in a correct way predicted the pattern of states subordinating multilateral promises to national interest calculations, while Securitisation Theory in a correct way predicted that crisis framing would direct Nigerian diplomatic energy inward rather than outward.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This section summarises the findings of the study in direct connection with each of the three research questions.

1. The Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgency shaped international security relations of Nigeria as well as cooperation between 2020 along with 2025 in a significant together with measurable way. ACLED data show that annual conflict events ranged from about 580 to 820 across the study period, demonstrating kept operational capacity. The death of Shekau in June 2021 did not reduce the threat but transformed it, as ISWAP consolidated into a more disciplined and at international level networked adversary. The IDP crisis with consistency exceeded 2.1 million displaced persons throughout the study period, drawing continued engagement from UNHCR, OCHA, UNICEF, and the African Union. The ICC preliminary examination of the December 2020 insurgency placed Nigeria within the framework of international criminal accountability, and the July 2022 Kuje Prison attack showed the capacity of the insurgency to project force to the national capital.

2. counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria demonstrated tactical effectiveness but failed to achieve strategic effectiveness across the study period. Operation Hadin Kai accumulated a cumulative insurgent surrender figure of 122, 843 by Q1 2026, and multiple senior ISWAP commanders were eliminated. However, capture by ISWAP of Marte district and assault on the Buni Gari military base in May 2025, the continued IDP crisis, as well as the documented structural weaknesses of intelligence failure, civil-military friction, along with legal implementation gaps showed that the insurgency was managed but not defeated. The non-military pillars of the counterterrorism framework — legal, diplomatic, and developmental — remained underfunded as well as under-carried out through the system.

3. The Boko Haram insurgency to a significant degree shaped regional security cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin between 2020 and 2025 through two simultaneous as well as contradictory effects. In a positive way, the insurgency deepened institutional engagement through the MNJTF, which conducted three named major operations within the study period, supported over 2, 000 insurgent surrenders in 2022, and achieved documented civilian protection results. In a negative way, the insurgency generated the political instability that created the coup of Niger, MNJTF exit, and border gap, as well as the casualty pressures that drove the 2024 threatened withdrawal of Chad. The diplomatic inconsistency of Nigeria and inward-oriented securitisation posture limited its capacity for effective regional security leadership.

5.2 Conclusion

The Boko Haram insurgency between 2020 and 2025 shows a two sided reality of continuing threat as well as weak response. The security structure of Nigeria, its counterterrorism strategies, and its regional cooperation frameworks each reflect structural patterns that Realism Theory as well as Securitisation Theory predict with precision: military self-help preference under anarchy, along with crisis framing that pushes aside development together with diplomatic tools. The insurgency was not defeated; it was managed with imperfection, confirming that neither unilateral military strategies nor weak multilateral frameworks are sufficient alone to address an insurgency rooted in governance failure, structural poverty, and transnational ideology.

5.3 Recommendations

- i. The Nigerian National Office of Security Adviser, working in the National Crisis Management Agency, should develop a Conflict-Sensitive Humanitarian Integration Protocol that in a formal way links military operational planning in the northeast to real-

time humanitarian impact assessments, ensuring that military operations do not increase the displacement and human security failures that sustain insurgent recruitment.

- ii. The Nigerian Defence Intelligence Agency, in working together. This includes the Office of the National Security Adviser and the National in an Assembly Committee on National Security as well as Intelligence, should set a Counter-Insurgency Strategic Review Board mandated to conduct twice yearly evidence based evaluations of military along with non-military counterterrorism effectiveness, incorporating legal compliance audits together with diplomatic engagement assessments within a unified strategic framework.
- iii. The Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Nigerian Permanent Mission to the African Union, should champion a Firm MNJTF Resource Commitment Protocol needing member states to pre-commit annual minimum troop and funding contributions. This includes independent monitoring by the African Union Peace and Security Council, reducing the political inconsistency that has in structural terms weakened MNJTF operational effectiveness between 2020 as well as 2025.

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