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Terrorism in Nigeria: Exploring the causes and the rise of Boko Haram

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Abstract

Terrorism remains a significant challenge in Nigeria, with Boko Haram emerging as one of the deadliest terrorist groups in the region. This article explores the concept of terrorism, its various types, and the unique factors that have contributed to the rise of Boko Haram. By analysing the economic, political, and social dynamics of Nigeria, the article examines the root causes of terrorism in the country. Factors such as religious and cultural diversity, economic stagnation, and deep-rooted political corruption are identified as key drivers that have fuelled Boko Haram's growth. The inability of Nigeria's security and justice systems to effectively manage these challenges further exacerbates the problem. Moreover, the article discusses the broader implications of these factors on national stability, social cohesion, and regional security. Boko Haram's rise is not an isolated event but rather a complex interplay of various socio-political and economic issues. Understanding these underlying causes is essential to addressing the terrorist threat in Nigeria. The article concludes by suggesting that a holistic approach, involving both domestic reforms and international cooperation, is necessary to combat terrorism effectively and bring peace to the region.

Keywords: Terrorism; Boko Haram; Political Corruption; Economic Stagnation; Religious Extremism

1. Introduction

1.1. Definition of Terrorism

Terrorism is a complex phenomenon that has evolved over time, marked by its use of violence or the threat of violence against civilians to achieve political or ideological goals. It can be traced back to various historical events and ideologies, but its modern manifestation is often associated with religious extremism and political grievances. According to Ahmed (1998), terrorism encompasses both the actions of groups labelled as terrorists and the state responses to such actions, emphasizing the subjective nature of the term. The rise of organizations like Boko Haram illustrates this evolution, as highlighted by Ali (2009), where extremist groups leverage violence to impose their ideological beliefs.

Aldis and Herd (2007) stress that the ideological underpinnings of terrorism have transformed, with contemporary terrorism being more decentralized and adaptive. This shift has been observed globally, particularly in regions like Nigeria, where local grievances intersect with broader geopolitical dynamics (Hoffman, 2006). The 9/11 attacks exemplify this evolution, showcasing a shift in terrorist tactics and motivations, leading to significant international counterterrorism efforts (The 9/11 Commission Report, 2004). As scholars continue to study the root causes of terrorism, understanding its multifaceted nature remains crucial in formulating effective responses to this enduring global challenge.

1.2. Relevance of the Study

Understanding terrorism in Nigeria is crucial due to the multifaceted impact it has on the nation's security, economy, and social fabric. The rise of extremist groups, particularly Boko Haram, has led to significant loss of life and

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displacement of communities, destabilizing the northern regions and creating a humanitarian crisis. Analysing the root causes of terrorism—such as poverty, political corruption, and social injustice—can inform effective counter-terrorism strategies and policies. Furthermore, Nigeria's position as a key player in West Africa means that the consequences of its internal strife can have regional implications, affecting trade, migration, and international relations. By studying terrorism in Nigeria, policymakers, scholars, and practitioners can better understand the dynamics of violence and develop comprehensive solutions to promote peace and stability, ultimately contributing to the broader fight against extremism globally.

Objectives and Scope

The primary objective of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of terrorism in Nigeria, with a focus on the emergence and impact of groups like Boko Haram. The article aims to:

- **Examine the Historical Context:** Explore the historical and socio-political factors that have contributed to the rise of terrorism in Nigeria, including religious extremism and economic disenfranchisement.
- **Identify Root Causes:** Analyse the underlying issues that fuel terrorism, such as poverty, governance failures, and social inequality.
- **Evaluate Counter-Terrorism Efforts:** Assess the effectiveness of current counter-terrorism measures implemented by the Nigerian government and international stakeholders.
- **Propose Recommendations:** Offer actionable recommendations for policymakers to enhance security and foster community resilience against extremist ideologies.

The scope of this study encompasses the regional and national implications of terrorism in Nigeria, emphasizing its significance in the broader context of global security challenges.

1.3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to Analyse terrorism in Nigeria, utilizing a multi-faceted approach. Data collection includes a thorough review of existing literature, including academic articles, government reports, and credible news sources, to gather insights into the historical, political, and social dimensions of terrorism. Additionally, case studies of specific incidents involving Boko Haram and other extremist groups provide a deeper understanding of their operational strategies and impact on local communities. Interviews with experts and stakeholders in counter-terrorism and security further enrich the analysis, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the complexities surrounding terrorism in Nigeria.

2. Overview of terrorism

2.1. What is Terrorism?

Terrorism is a multifaceted phenomenon characterized by the use of violence, intimidation, or threats to achieve political, ideological, or social objectives. The term itself derives from the Latin word "terrere," meaning to frighten or terrify (Hoffman, 2006). Historically, terrorism can be traced back to ancient times, but it gained prominence in the 19th century with the rise of anarchist movements in Europe, where groups like the Narodnaya Volya in Russia employed assassination and violence to challenge authority (Laqueur, 2001).

The 20th century witnessed significant evolution in the nature of terrorism, particularly during and after the two World Wars. Nationalist movements often resorted to terrorism as a means of fighting colonial rule or oppressive regimes (Harrison, 2006). The latter part of the century saw the emergence of ideologically motivated terrorism, with groups like the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Irish Republican Army engaging in violent acts to further their political causes (Hoffman, 2006).

In recent decades, terrorism has increasingly been linked to religious extremism, with groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS perpetrating high-profile attacks that have global repercussions. These groups often justify their violence through distorted interpretations of religious texts, framing their actions as a holy war against perceived enemies (Bloom, 2012). The rise of digital technology and social media has further transformed terrorism, enabling groups to recruit, radicalize, and coordinate attacks across borders (Silke, 2011).

While definitions of terrorism can vary, key elements often include the intention to instil fear, target civilians or non-combatants, and achieve broader political or ideological goals (Hoffman, 2006). Understanding terrorism requires

Analysing its historical context, ideological motivations, and the socio-political landscapes that facilitate its emergence and persistence. Addressing the root causes of terrorism, including poverty, social injustice, and political disenfranchisement, is essential for developing effective counter-terrorism strategies (Bjorgo, 2005).

2.2. Types of Terrorism

Terrorism manifests in various forms, each distinguished by its underlying motives, objectives, and methods. Understanding these types is crucial for developing effective counter-terrorism strategies.

- **Political Terrorism** seeks to influence political processes or systems through violence. Groups may target government officials or institutions to disrupt normal governance or to bring about political change. For instance, the Weather Underground in the United States employed bombings to protest against the Vietnam War and promote their radical agenda (Martin, 2010).
- **Religious Terrorism** is driven by extreme ideological beliefs often rooted in religious doctrines. Groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS operate under the premise that they are engaged in a holy war against perceived infidels, justifying violent acts as divine mandates (Hoffman, 2006). Their actions are often intended to spread their interpretation of faith and establish religious governance.
- **State-Sponsored Terrorism** involves governments supporting terrorist groups to further their geopolitical goals. This may include funding, training, or providing safe havens for terrorist organizations that align with a state's interests. Historical examples include Iran's support for Hezbollah and various militant groups in the Middle East (Ali, 2009).
- **Cyberterrorism** is an emerging form of terrorism that utilizes technology to disrupt, destroy, or manipulate critical infrastructure and information systems. Cyberterrorists exploit vulnerabilities in digital networks to instil fear, damage economies, or undermine national security. High-profile cyber-attacks, such as those targeting government databases and critical infrastructure, exemplify this modern threat (Lutz & Lutz, 2008).
- **Environmental Terrorism** involves acts that aim to harm the environment or oppose ecological policies. Groups may resort to sabotage against corporations or government entities that they perceive as harmful to the environment, as seen in various eco-terrorist actions throughout the world (Martin, 2010).

Recognizing the diverse types of terrorism helps in crafting targeted policies that address the specific motivations and methodologies of various terrorist groups, enhancing the effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts.

2.3. Global Perspective of Terrorism

Terrorism is a global phenomenon that transcends national borders and impacts societies worldwide. Over the past decades, terrorism has evolved, with its methods, motivations, and consequences significantly reshaping global security strategies and international relations.

One of the most visible impacts of terrorism is the widespread fear and insecurity it generates. Acts of terrorism, such as the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, not only caused immense physical destruction but also had profound psychological effects globally, leading to heightened fears of terrorism across nations (The 9/11 Commission Report, 2004). Governments responded by tightening security measures and increasing surveillance, with long-term impacts on personal freedoms and civil liberties.

Economic repercussions are another global impact of terrorism. Terrorist attacks often target critical infrastructure, tourism, and businesses, resulting in significant financial losses. The 2004 Madrid train bombings, for example, caused an estimated \$200 million in damages and a sharp decline in tourism in Spain (Bjorgo, 2005). In addition to immediate financial losses, terrorism can deter foreign investment and trade, leading to long-term economic downturns in affected regions.

Political consequences have also been significant. Terrorism has often been used as a tool to challenge governments, with groups aiming to destabilize political systems. For instance, terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram in Nigeria have sought to undermine state authority, contributing to prolonged instability in the region (Ali, 2009). Internationally, terrorism has reshaped alliances, with countries joining forces to fight extremist groups through coalitions such as NATO's involvement in Afghanistan post-9/11.

Trends in terrorism have evolved with the rise of lone-wolf attacks and cyberterrorism, which represent emerging threats in the global security landscape. As technology advances, terrorist groups are becoming more sophisticated, using the internet for recruitment, propaganda, and coordination of attacks (Hoffman, 2006). In response, counter-

terrorism strategies are increasingly focused on cybersecurity and the prevention of radicalization through online platforms.

3. Understanding terrorism in Nigeria

3.1. Historical Context of Terrorism in Nigeria

Terrorism in Nigeria has deep historical roots, evolving from complex socio-political and religious dynamics that have influenced the country for decades. The country's history of violence and extremism can be traced to colonial and post-colonial periods, where various groups have used violence to achieve political, religious, or ethnic goals.

One of the earliest examples of violent extremism in Nigeria is the Maitatsine uprising in the 1980s. Led by Mohammed Marwa, who claimed to be a prophet, the Maitatsine movement rejected Westernization and modernity, promoting a radical form of Islam. The group's violent clashes with Nigerian authorities, particularly in Kano and other northern states, resulted in thousands of deaths and marked the beginning of large-scale religious extremism in Nigeria (Danjibo, 2009). This insurgency set a precedent for future religiously motivated violence, illustrating the deep-seated tension between Islamic fundamentalists and the secular Nigerian state.

The Niger Delta militancy, which emerged in the 1990s, was another significant phase in Nigeria's violent history. Militant groups, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), used terrorism and guerrilla warfare to demand a greater share of the region's oil wealth. These militants targeted oil pipelines, kidnapped foreign workers, and clashed with government forces, leading to widespread economic disruption (Ishaku, 2009). Though primarily driven by economic and environmental grievances, the movement had ethnic and political dimensions, further complicating the nature of extremism in the region.

In the early 2000s, a new wave of terrorism emerged with the rise of Boko Haram, an Islamist militant group founded by Mohammed Yusuf in northeastern Nigeria. Boko Haram's ideology is based on the rejection of Western education and values, which the group sees as corrupt and un-Islamic (Addeh, 2012). Initially, Boko Haram's activities were limited to peaceful preaching and advocacy, but after a government crackdown in 2009, the group turned to violent extremism. Under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram escalated its attacks, targeting government institutions, security forces, churches, and schools.

Boko Haram's most infamous act was the Chibok schoolgirls' abduction in 2014, which drew international condemnation and highlighted the group's brutal tactics. Boko Haram's violence has caused significant humanitarian crises in Nigeria, including the displacement of millions and the deaths of over 30,000 people (Amnesty International, 2011). The group's insurgency has spread to neighbouring countries, prompting regional and international military responses, such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), comprising troops from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger (Adepegba & Baiyewu, 2012).

In addition to Boko Haram, other extremist groups, like the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), have emerged, further complicating Nigeria's security landscape. The country's history of terrorism is thus characterized by a complex interplay of religious, political, ethnic, and economic factors that continue to fuel violence and instability.

3.2. Religious and Cultural Diversity in Nigeria

Nigeria is one of the most culturally and religiously diverse nations in the world, with over 250 ethnic groups and a near-equal population split between Christians and Muslims. This diversity has shaped Nigeria's social, political, and economic landscape, but it has also contributed to tensions that fuel terrorism and extremism. The country's religious and ethnic divisions are central to understanding the dynamics of terrorism in Nigeria, as these differences are often exploited by extremist groups to justify violence and create divisions.

The north-south religious divide in Nigeria is one of the most significant factors in the country's terrorism landscape. The northern region is predominantly Muslim, while the southern region is mainly Christian. This religious split often overlaps with ethnic and political differences, exacerbating tensions. For example, northern Nigeria is home to the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group, who are predominantly Muslim, while the southern region consists of various ethnic groups such as the Yoruba and Igbo, who are primarily Christian. This division has historically contributed to political rivalry, economic inequality, and religious animosity (Paden, 2008). Extremist groups, particularly in the north, have exploited these divisions to gain followers and justify their acts of terrorism.

Groups like Boko Haram have capitalized on this divide, portraying their violent campaign as a religious struggle against perceived "Western" and "Christian" influences. Boko Haram, whose name means "Western education is forbidden," rejects secularism and Westernization, and seeks to establish an Islamic state governed by Sharia law in Nigeria (Adesoji, 2010). The group's violent attacks, which have targeted Christian churches, schools, and government institutions, have deepened the mistrust between Christians and Muslims in the country. Boko Haram's actions have led to widespread displacement, fear, and polarization along religious lines.

In addition to religious differences, Nigeria's ethnic diversity also plays a role in the country's terrorism problem. Ethnic tensions have often been linked to resource control, land ownership, and political power. For instance, in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, ethnic militias such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) emerged to challenge the federal government and multinational oil companies. While these groups were primarily focused on economic grievances, their actions were often framed in ethnic terms, with some militants calling for greater autonomy for their ethnic groups (Ojo, 2012). This ethnic dimension adds another layer of complexity to Nigeria's terrorism landscape.

Furthermore, the Fulani-herder conflict is another example of how ethnic and religious differences can lead to violence and terrorism. The conflict, which pits predominantly Muslim Fulani herders against predominantly Christian farming communities in the Middle Belt region, has led to thousands of deaths and widespread displacement. Extremist groups, such as Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), have reportedly exploited this conflict to recruit fighters and fuel further violence (Fiki & Lee, 2004).

Cultural diversity in Nigeria also includes traditional belief systems and practices that, in some cases, have clashed with modern religious and political ideologies. In regions where traditional religion is still practiced, conflicts can arise when extremist groups seek to impose a singular religious ideology. This further complicates the country's ability to address terrorism comprehensively, as solutions must take into account the vast array of religious, cultural, and ethnic differences.

In conclusion, Nigeria's cultural and religious diversity is both a strength and a challenge. While it enriches the country's heritage, it has also been manipulated by extremist groups to incite violence and terrorism. The exploitation of religious and ethnic differences continues to fuel conflict, and understanding these dynamics is crucial to formulating effective counter-terrorism strategies.

3.3. Geopolitical Factors in Nigeria

Nigeria's political landscape is shaped by its federal structure, its ethnic diversity, and its history of military rule. These factors have created a complex environment where geopolitical dynamics significantly influence the rise and persistence of extremism and terrorism. The political structure, particularly the distribution of power and resources, has been a key factor in fuelling tensions that extremist groups have exploited.

Nigeria's federal system divides the country into 36 states, each with a high degree of autonomy. However, this decentralization has not resolved long-standing issues of ethnic and regional inequality. The federal structure, designed to balance the interests of Nigeria's diverse population, often creates a power struggle between regions. The competition for political and economic dominance has, in some cases, exacerbated extremism as groups feel marginalized by the central government. For instance, political elites in the north often claim that the central government, dominated by southern interests, neglects their region. This sentiment has been exploited by groups such as Boko Haram, which draws support from disenfranchised northern populations, framing their struggle as a reaction to systemic political and economic exclusion (Agbiboa, 2013).

The oil-rich Niger Delta region is another example of how Nigeria's political structure influences extremism. The region has been a centre of economic activity, providing the bulk of the nation's revenue through oil production. However, the benefits of this wealth have not been equitably distributed, leading to resentment among local communities. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other militant groups have emerged from this discontent, engaging in acts of terrorism, including kidnapping foreign oil workers and sabotaging oil infrastructure. These groups argue that the central government and multinational oil companies exploit the region's resources while neglecting the development needs of its people (Watts, 2007). The conflict in the Niger Delta highlights how resource control and political marginalization can drive extremism.

Ethnic and regional divisions also play a significant role in Nigeria's political instability. The country's three largest ethnic groups—the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Igbo in the southeast—have

historically vied for political power. This competition often leads to regional imbalances in government appointments, resource allocation, and development projects. Extremist groups, particularly in the north, capitalize on these imbalances by promoting narratives that frame the government as biased in favor of certain regions or ethnic groups. Boko Haram, for example, emerged partly from the perception that the northern region, which has a predominantly Muslim population, is politically marginalized compared to the more prosperous south (Forest, 2012).

The politics of religion further complicates Nigeria's geopolitical landscape. The country's north-south religious divide mirrors its ethnic divisions, with the north being predominantly Muslim and the south mostly Christian. This religious dichotomy has fuelled political rivalry, as both regions seek to assert their influence over the central government. Extremist groups have taken advantage of this religious-political divide to foster an "us versus them" mentality, deepening the polarization between the two regions. For example, Boko Haram's violent campaign is often framed as a struggle against the secular government and its Christian-dominated south, aiming to establish an Islamic state in the north.

Corruption within Nigeria's political system also contributes to the rise of extremism. The country has long struggled with high levels of corruption, which undermines trust in the government and hampers efforts to address terrorism effectively. Corruption erodes state institutions, allowing extremist groups to thrive in regions where government presence is weak. For instance, in some northern areas, Boko Haram has been able to gain control because of the government's inability or unwillingness to provide basic services, security, or economic opportunities. Corruption within the military and police forces also weakens the state's ability to combat terrorism, as funds meant for counterterrorism efforts are often misappropriated (Ibrahim, 2014).

In conclusion, Nigeria's geopolitical factors—its federal structure, ethnic and regional divisions, competition for resources, and corruption—play a critical role in influencing extremism and terrorism. Extremist groups have skilfully exploited these dynamics to advance their agendas, making it challenging for the government to develop a unified and effective response. Addressing the root causes of political marginalization and ensuring equitable distribution of resources is key to curbing the rise of extremism in the country.

4. Causes of terrorism in Nigeria

4.1. Political Corruption and Governance Failures

Political corruption and governance failures play a pivotal role in fuelling terrorism in Nigeria. Corruption, defined as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, undermines public trust in government institutions and weakens the state's capacity to provide security and economic opportunities. In Nigeria, political corruption has contributed to a cycle of poverty, inequality, and disenfranchisement, all of which create a fertile ground for terrorism and extremism to thrive.

Corruption in Nigeria's political system is deeply entrenched, affecting all levels of government. Politicians and public officials often siphon off public funds meant for development projects, security, and infrastructure. This misappropriation of resources leaves essential services underfunded, exacerbating the socio-economic conditions that contribute to the rise of terrorism. For instance, funds allocated to counterterrorism efforts are frequently diverted, leaving security forces ill-equipped to deal with the threat of insurgent groups like Boko Haram. In 2014, it was reported that billions of dollars intended for purchasing military equipment were embezzled by senior military officials, leaving soldiers underfunded and ill-prepared to combat terrorism in the north (Reno, 2018). This kind of corruption not only weakens the state's ability to respond effectively to terrorism but also emboldens terrorist groups, who view the government as corrupt and incapable of protecting its citizens.

Governance failures, particularly in addressing the needs of marginalized communities, further exacerbate the problem. In regions like the northeastern part of Nigeria, where Boko Haram operates, the government's failure to provide basic services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure has created widespread disillusionment. This disenchantment is often exploited by extremist groups, who step in to fill the governance void by providing these services, thereby gaining support and legitimacy among local populations. For instance, Boko Haram has provided protection and financial incentives to some communities in exchange for loyalty, framing itself as a more reliable alternative to the corrupt and ineffective government (Hansen, 2017). The failure of the government to address grievances, particularly those related to poverty and unemployment, makes it easier for extremist groups to recruit young men who see terrorism as a way to improve their economic prospects or as a form of resistance against the state.

Electoral corruption also plays a significant role in fuelling terrorism. Nigeria's electoral process has long been plagued by vote rigging, political violence, and the manipulation of election results. This undermines democracy and fosters a sense of disenfranchisement among the electorate. When citizens feel that their votes do not matter and that the political process is skewed in favour of a corrupt elite, they are more likely to turn to violence or join extremist movements as a form of protest. In the north, for example, allegations of electoral fraud in favour of southern politicians have been used by groups like Boko Haram to justify their violent campaigns against the Nigerian state (Pham, 2012). This perception of political injustice fuels the narrative that the government is not representative of the people, further alienating marginalized groups and driving them toward extremism.

Corruption within the military and law enforcement agencies compounds the problem. Security forces are often accused of human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and arbitrary arrests, particularly in regions affected by terrorism. These abuses are frequently linked to corrupt practices, such as bribery and extortion, which erode public trust in law enforcement. In some cases, corrupt officials have even been accused of colluding with terrorist groups, either by turning a blind eye to their activities in exchange for bribes or by selling arms and intelligence to them (Amnesty International, 2015). This further weakens the state's capacity to combat terrorism and emboldens extremist groups, who capitalize on the population's distrust of the government and its security apparatus.

Moreover, corruption undermines economic development, which is crucial in addressing the root causes of terrorism. Nigeria's wealth, primarily derived from its vast oil reserves, has not been evenly distributed, leading to significant economic disparities between regions. The Niger Delta, in particular, has been a hotbed of militancy due to the perception that the region's oil wealth is being siphoned off by corrupt elites while local communities remain impoverished (Ukiwo, 2007). Militant groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) have used this narrative to justify attacks on oil installations and kidnappings of foreign workers, framing their actions as a fight against corruption and economic exploitation.

In conclusion, political corruption and governance failures are key drivers of terrorism in Nigeria. Corruption undermines the state's ability to provide security, basic services, and economic opportunities, creating a vacuum that extremist groups are all too willing to fill. Addressing the root causes of terrorism in Nigeria requires not only a military solution but also a comprehensive strategy that tackles corruption, improves governance, and restores public trust in the government.

4.2. Economic Stagnation and Inequality

Economic stagnation and inequality are key drivers of terrorism in Nigeria, as poverty, unemployment, and income disparity create an environment conducive to radicalization and violence. In a country where the wealth gap is immense and many struggle with inadequate access to basic necessities, terrorism thrives on the discontent of marginalized populations.

Poverty and unemployment are among the leading socio-economic factors that contribute to terrorism in Nigeria. The northern region, where Boko Haram operates, is one of the most impoverished areas of the country. According to the World Bank, approximately 40% of Nigeria's population lives below the poverty line, with the majority residing in the northern states (World Bank, 2020). In these regions, unemployment rates are high, especially among the youth, who make up a significant proportion of the population. With limited access to education, job opportunities, and social mobility, young people in northern Nigeria are more vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist organizations like Boko Haram, which exploits their grievances and promises them a sense of purpose, financial incentives, and power.

Economic stagnation and lack of development further compound the problem. Despite Nigeria being Africa's largest economy, the benefits of economic growth have not trickled down to the vast majority of the population, particularly in rural areas. The country remains heavily reliant on oil exports, which contribute little to job creation. In regions where poverty is widespread, basic infrastructure like roads, electricity, and clean water is lacking, which exacerbates frustration with the state. As economic opportunities remain scarce, many disenfranchised individuals turn to terrorism as a means of survival or expression of dissatisfaction with the government.

Income inequality also plays a significant role in driving terrorism. Nigeria ranks among the most unequal countries in the world, with a Gini coefficient of 35.1 as of 2019, indicating significant income disparity (World Bank, 2020). This inequality is particularly stark between the northern and southern regions of the country. While the southern states, particularly Lagos and the Niger Delta region, benefit from oil wealth and investment, the northern states have seen little to no economic growth. This regional imbalance fosters resentment and creates fertile ground for extremist

ideologies. Boko Haram and other terrorist groups often frame their violent campaigns as a fight against an unjust system that benefits the wealthy elite while ignoring the plight of the poor.

Educational disparities exacerbate the issue of inequality and economic stagnation. In northern Nigeria, education levels are significantly lower than in the south, with higher dropout rates and lower enrolment in primary and secondary schools. According to UNESCO, over 10.5 million children in Nigeria are out of school, the highest in the world, and the majority are in the northern region (UNESCO, 2021). Boko Haram has capitalized on this educational vacuum by framing itself as an alternative to the corrupt state and attacking Western-style education as a tool of oppression. The group's very name, "Boko Haram," translates to "Western education is forbidden," reflecting its ideological opposition to the educational system that it claims perpetuates inequality.

Moreover, environmental degradation and competition for resources further deepen economic disparities and fuel terrorism. The Lake Chad Basin, which spans parts of Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, has experienced significant shrinkage due to climate change, leading to loss of livelihoods for millions of people who rely on the lake for fishing and agriculture. The reduced availability of water and arable land has led to conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups, as well as between farmers and herders, over access to dwindling resources. Boko Haram has exploited these tensions, positioning itself as a defender of disenfranchised communities affected by environmental changes and the state's inability to address the crisis (Onuoha, 2017). In this context, terrorism becomes a way for marginalized groups to resist what they see as systemic neglect and economic exploitation.

Finally, the oil economy itself plays a contradictory role in Nigeria's economic inequality. While the oil industry has generated immense wealth for the country, it has also fuelled corruption and exacerbated regional disparities. In the Niger Delta, where most of Nigeria's oil is extracted, local communities suffer from environmental degradation caused by oil spills and gas flaring, which have destroyed traditional means of livelihood, such as fishing and farming. In response, militant groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) have engaged in acts of sabotage, kidnapping, and terrorism to demand a fairer distribution of oil revenues and compensation for the environmental damage inflicted by multinational oil companies (Courson, 2011). The wealth generated by oil exports has primarily benefited a small political and economic elite, leaving much of the population in poverty, particularly in regions that do not directly benefit from oil production.

In conclusion, economic stagnation and inequality are key factors driving terrorism in Nigeria. The lack of economic opportunities, widespread poverty, and income disparity fuel discontent among marginalized populations, who are more susceptible to recruitment by terrorist organizations. Addressing these root causes through equitable development, job creation, and education is essential in the fight against terrorism.

4.3. Social Grievances and Marginalization

Social grievances and marginalization are significant factors that contribute to the rise of terrorism in Nigeria, as these conditions foster alienation, resentment, and a sense of injustice. Marginalized communities, particularly in the northern region, have been historically excluded from socio-economic development, which feeds into the narratives of extremist groups that exploit these grievances to recruit new members.

Ethnic and religious marginalization is one of the most prominent social factors contributing to terrorism. Nigeria is an ethnically and religiously diverse country, with over 250 ethnic groups and a population almost evenly split between Muslims (predominantly in the north) and Christians (largely in the south). This diversity has often led to tensions, especially in northern Nigeria, where Muslims feel politically and economically marginalized compared to their southern Christian counterparts. These feelings of alienation are exacerbated by the centralization of power and wealth in the southern part of the country. Boko Haram has leveraged this sense of Muslim disenfranchisement to build its base of support, portraying itself as a defender of northern Muslims against the southern-dominated government. The group's violent campaigns are framed as a religious duty to overthrow what they perceive as a corrupt, secular, and Western-influenced government (Onuoha, 2012).

Inter-ethnic tensions also play a crucial role in driving terrorism. Nigeria's colonial history created artificial borders that forced different ethnic groups into a single political entity. Post-independence, competition for resources, political power, and land has led to frequent violent conflicts between ethnic groups, particularly in areas where Muslims and Christians live in close proximity, such as in the Middle Belt region. Extremist groups capitalize on these conflicts by offering protection, resources, or revenge, framing their violence as part of a broader ethnic struggle (Alao, 2013).

Youth alienation and lack of opportunity further fuel the grievances that lead to extremist recruitment. Nigeria has one of the largest youth populations in the world, with more than 60% of its population under the age of 25 (World Bank, 2020). However, many young Nigerians, especially in the north, face limited access to education, employment, and social services. As a result, a significant portion of the youth feels neglected by the state and disillusioned with the prospects of a better future. Extremist groups like Boko Haram exploit this disillusionment by providing not only financial incentives but also a sense of purpose and belonging to disenfranchised youth. For individuals who have grown up in poverty and exclusion, joining an extremist group can seem like an attractive alternative to a life of unemployment and marginalization (Botha & Abdile, 2014).

Gender marginalization is another overlooked but crucial social factor contributing to terrorism. In many parts of Nigeria, particularly in the north, gender inequality is deeply entrenched, with women and girls facing significant barriers to education, employment, and social participation. Boko Haram has specifically targeted women and girls, not only through violence, such as kidnapping and forced marriages, but also by recruiting them into its ranks. The group has used women as suicide bombers, exploiting their social invisibility to carry out attacks with greater ease. Women who are already marginalized in society are often more vulnerable to recruitment, as they are promised protection, financial support, or even empowerment within the terrorist group (Pearson, 2019).

Lastly, state repression and human rights abuses by security forces contribute to social grievances and drive individuals toward extremist ideologies. In the fight against terrorism, Nigerian security forces have been accused of committing widespread human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and unlawful detentions. These abuses often target entire communities suspected of harbouring terrorists, further alienating the population and pushing them toward radicalization. When the government is seen as oppressive and unjust, extremist groups can present themselves as the legitimate alternative, offering justice, protection, and retribution against state violence (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

In summary, social grievances and marginalization are central to understanding the root causes of terrorism in Nigeria. Ethnic and religious tensions, youth disenfranchisement, gender inequality, and state repression create a fertile ground for extremist recruitment. Addressing these social issues through inclusive policies and equitable development is critical in curbing the appeal of terrorist organizations.

4.4. Failures in Nigeria's Security and Justice Systems

The inadequacies in Nigeria's security and justice systems have played a significant role in exacerbating the terrorism crisis in the country. One of the primary issues is the weak law enforcement capacity. The Nigerian police force is underfunded, poorly trained, and inadequately equipped to tackle terrorism and organized crime effectively. This has led to a situation where terrorists, such as Boko Haram and ISWAP (Islamic State's West Africa Province), operate with impunity in certain regions, particularly in the northern and northeastern parts of the country (Zenn, 2020). The inability of the police to protect communities or respond swiftly to terrorist threats has left a vacuum that extremist groups exploit.

Additionally, the military response to terrorism has been largely reactive rather than preventive. Nigeria's military has been criticized for its heavy-handed tactics, which often result in significant civilian casualties and destruction of property. These actions have further alienated local populations, making it easier for terrorist groups to recruit disillusioned individuals. Moreover, issues of corruption and poor coordination within the military and security agencies have impeded effective counterterrorism operations. There have been instances where funds meant for security operations were misappropriated, and military personnel were not properly equipped for missions (Akinola, 2015).

The justice system's failure to prosecute terrorists effectively also undermines efforts to combat extremism. Many suspected terrorists are held for years without trial, and there is a lack of transparency and due process in handling terrorism cases. This failure to uphold justice fuels grievances and mistrust in the system, allowing terrorist narratives to flourish (Amnesty International, 2017).

5. Boko haram: a case study

5.1. Emergence of Boko Haram

Boko Haram, officially known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), originated in 2002 in northeastern Nigeria. The group was founded by Mohammed Yusuf, a charismatic and radical Islamic cleric who preached against Western education, governance, and influence, which he viewed as corrupt and contrary to Islamic values. Boko Haram literally means "Western education is forbidden" in the Hausa language, reflecting its initial focus on rejecting Westernized lifestyles and modern education systems that they deemed un-Islamic (Sergie & Johnson, 2014).

Yusuf's teachings resonated with many disillusioned young men in Nigeria, particularly in Borno State, an economically disadvantaged region plagued by poverty, unemployment, and lack of infrastructure. He gained a following by advocating for a pure form of Islam based on Sharia law and denouncing the Nigerian government as corrupt and ineffective. Yusuf also provided basic services, such as food and housing, to his followers, which endeared him to many who were otherwise neglected by the state (Thurston, 2016).

Boko Haram's activities were initially non-violent, focusing on proselytization and setting up a religious community. However, tensions between the group and local authorities escalated as Yusuf's rhetoric became more extreme. The tipping point occurred in 2009 when the Nigerian government launched a crackdown on Boko Haram, arresting several members and killing hundreds in clashes. Mohammed Yusuf was captured by the military and extrajudicially executed while in police custody, sparking outrage among his followers (Walker, 2012).

Following Yusuf's death, Boko Haram underwent a dramatic shift under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, Yusuf's deputy. Shekau transformed the group into a violent insurgency, targeting not only government officials and security forces but also civilians, schools, churches, and mosques that did not align with their ideology. Boko Haram's violent campaigns escalated in 2010, including bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings, the most infamous being the 2014 abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok. The group later aligned itself with **ISIS** in 2015, further intensifying its international profile (Onuoha, 2014).

5.2. Ideological Foundations of Boko Haram

Boko Haram's ideological foundation is rooted in religious extremism, particularly a radical interpretation of Salafi Islam. The group's belief system emphasizes the establishment of an Islamic state governed strictly by Sharia law and the rejection of any form of governance that incorporates Western influences. According to Boko Haram, Nigeria's secular government, its constitution, and Western-style education are corrupt, sinful, and an affront to Islam. This stance has led the group to reject modern educational institutions, as reflected in their name, which translates to "Western education is forbidden" in the Hausa language (Loimeier, 2012).

The group's founding leader, Mohammed Yusuf, argued that Western education instils non-Islamic values and corrupts Muslim society. His sermons emphasized the need to return to the early practices of Islam, strictly following the Qur'an and Hadith, and rejecting secular ideologies. Yusuf particularly criticized the Nigerian government for its failure to uplift the socioeconomic conditions of Muslims in northern Nigeria, claiming that this failure was due to the government's alignment with Western values and systems (Cook, 2011).

After Yusuf's death in 2009, Abubakar Shekau assumed leadership and took Boko Haram's ideological extremism to greater heights. Shekau adopted a more violent and rigid interpretation of Salafi-jihadism, which emphasized the necessity of violent jihad against both the Nigerian state and individuals who did not adhere to their radical version of Islam. Shekau's Boko Haram viewed not only government officials but also moderate Muslims, Christian civilians, and secular schools as legitimate targets for violence, declaring them enemies of true Islam. Shekau famously declared, "This war is against democracy, constitution, and Western education" (Zenn, 2014).

Boko Haram's ideology was further radicalized when the group pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2015. This move solidified its alignment with global jihadist movements, reinforcing its goal to establish a caliphate in Nigeria and the broader region. Boko Haram's ideological framework promotes the idea that non-Islamic governments and institutions must be overthrown and replaced by an Islamic state, viewing violence as a legitimate means to achieve this goal (Mahmood & Ani, 2018).

Their rigid worldview draws from Takfiri ideology, which allows the group to declare fellow Muslims who do not subscribe to their extremist views as apostates. This form of religious exclusivity justifies the group's attacks on moderate Muslim leaders, Islamic institutions that do not support their cause, and civilians who reject their radical ideology.

5.3. Boko Haram's Operations and Tactics

Boko Haram's operational strategies have evolved significantly since its inception, characterized by a combination of guerrilla warfare, conventional military tactics, and acts of terrorism. The group initially engaged in localized attacks and protests, but after the death of its founder, Mohammed Yusuf, in 2009, it transformed into a more violent and organized militant group under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau.

Boko Haram employs a range of tactics, including suicide bombings, ambushes, kidnappings, and attacks on military and civilian targets. The group has become infamous for its mass abductions, most notably the 2014 kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok, which garnered international attention and outrage (Sahara Reporters, 2014). These tactics are designed not only to inflict damage but also to instil fear and terror within communities and to gain global media coverage.

Geographically, Boko Haram primarily operates in northern Nigeria, particularly in the Northeast region encompassing states like Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. However, the group's influence has spread across the borders into Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, where it conducts cross-border raids and collaborates with local insurgent groups, creating a regional security crisis.

Boko Haram has also adapted its strategies to target military forces, resulting in numerous attacks on Nigerian security forces, military bases, and convoys. The group often uses hit-and-run tactics, enabling them to evade capture while sustaining a continuous campaign of violence. The operational capabilities of Boko Haram are supported by a network of logistics, which includes funding through extortion, looting, and, in some cases, foreign support.

Overall, Boko Haram's operations and tactics have demonstrated a significant capacity for violence and adaptation, posing a substantial challenge to Nigerian security forces and destabilizing the region.

5.4. Recruitment and Radicalization Strategies

Boko Haram employs a range of recruitment and radicalization strategies to attract new members and spread its extremist ideology. One primary method is through religious indoctrination, where potential recruits are exposed to a distorted interpretation of Islamic teachings that promotes violence against perceived enemies of Islam. This indoctrination often occurs in informal settings, such as mosques or community gatherings, where charismatic leaders articulate a vision of a puritanical Islamic state.

Additionally, Boko Haram exploits social grievances and economic despair, particularly in impoverished communities where opportunities are scarce. Young men and women facing unemployment and marginalization are particularly vulnerable to the group's appeals, which promise purpose, belonging, and financial incentives.

Peer influence also plays a crucial role in recruitment. Once individuals join Boko Haram, they often recruit friends and family members, creating a cycle of radicalization within communities. Furthermore, the group utilizes social media and online platforms to disseminate propaganda, glorifying acts of violence and framing them as part of a noble struggle. This blend of ideological, social, and economic factors contributes to the ongoing cycle of recruitment and radicalization, sustaining Boko Haram's operations.

5.5. Impact of Boko Haram on Nigerian Society

The impact of Boko Haram on Nigerian society has been devastating, resulting in significant humanitarian, economic, and social costs. Humanitarian impacts include the loss of thousands of lives, displacement of over two million people, and widespread trauma among affected communities. The conflict has disrupted access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and food security, leaving many in dire conditions.

Economically, Boko Haram has severely affected local and national economies. The group's attacks have led to the destruction of infrastructure, businesses, and agricultural land, crippling livelihoods in the northeastern region. This economic instability is further compounded by the costs of military operations and humanitarian aid, which strain government resources and contribute to national debt.

Socially, the group's activities have fuelled divisions within communities, exacerbating existing ethnic and religious tensions. Trust in government institutions has eroded, leading to a cycle of instability and insecurity. The pervasive fear of violence has altered daily life, resulting in social dislocation and a breakdown of communal ties. The overall impact of Boko Haram on Nigerian society underscores the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address the multifaceted crises it has engendered.

6. Counterterrorism efforts in Nigeria

6.1. Nigeria's Military Response

Nigeria's military response to the Boko Haram insurgency has involved a series of operations aimed at dismantling the group's infrastructure and restoring security to affected regions. Initially, the Nigerian government underestimated the threat posed by Boko Haram, which allowed the group to gain ground in 2009. However, by 2011, as attacks escalated, the military began to mobilize more significantly, launching Operation Restore Order, which aimed to reclaim territory in the northeast and protect civilians.

Subsequent military actions included a state of emergency declared in three northeastern states—Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa—in May 2013. This led to the deployment of more troops and increased resources. Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of Nigeria's military response has been mixed. Initial operations faced logistical challenges, inadequate training, and poor coordination among military units. Reports of human rights abuses by Nigerian forces further complicated public perception and undermined trust in the military.

In 2015, the Nigerian government restructured its military command and sought assistance from regional partners, leading to the formation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). This collaboration with neighbouring countries—Chad, Cameroon, and Niger—helped to strengthen military efforts against Boko Haram, resulting in significant territorial losses for the group. By 2016, the Nigerian military reported that it had degraded Boko Haram's capabilities substantially, capturing key leaders and reclaiming towns previously held by the insurgents.

However, despite these military successes, Boko Haram has adapted its tactics, shifting towards asymmetric warfare and guerilla strategies. This adaptability has prolonged the conflict and complicated military operations. Additionally, the group's fragmentation has led to the emergence of splinter factions, such as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which continue to pose significant threats.

Overall, while Nigeria's military response has seen some success in reclaiming territory and weakening Boko Haram's structure, the persistence of violence highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach that includes socio-economic development, community engagement, and effective governance. Addressing the underlying grievances that fuel insurgency is essential for sustainable peace in Nigeria's northeast.

6.2. Regional and International Cooperation

The fight against Boko Haram has necessitated extensive regional and international cooperation, as the group's activities transcend national borders. The Nigerian government has engaged with neighbouring countries, particularly Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, to form a unified front against the insurgency. This collaboration culminated in the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2015, which aims to coordinate military efforts and share intelligence among member nations. The MNJTF has enabled joint operations that have resulted in significant territorial recoveries from Boko Haram and the disruption of its supply chains.

Internationally, Nigeria has sought support from global bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU). These organizations have facilitated dialogues and provided logistical support, including training for Nigerian troops. The AU, through its Peace and Security Council, has emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates military action with socio-economic development, counter-radicalization initiatives, and humanitarian assistance.

Additionally, international partners, including the United States and the United Kingdom, have provided financial aid, military training, and intelligence support to bolster Nigeria's security forces. Programs aimed at enhancing community resilience against radicalization have also been initiated, emphasizing the importance of grassroots involvement in counter-terrorism efforts.

Despite these collaborations, challenges persist, including varying levels of commitment among regional partners and issues related to human rights abuses in military operations. Effective regional and international cooperation remains crucial for addressing the multifaceted nature of the Boko Haram insurgency, as shared intelligence, resources, and strategies can enhance the effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures and foster stability in the region.

6.3. The Role of the United States and the West

The United States and Western nations have played a significant role in Nigeria's counterterrorism efforts, particularly in combating Boko Haram. This involvement began in earnest after Boko Haram's activities escalated in the early 2010s, drawing international attention to the humanitarian and security crises in the region. The U.S. government has provided extensive support through military training, funding, and intelligence sharing. For instance, the U.S. has trained Nigerian military forces under the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program, focusing on improving operational capabilities and human rights compliance in counterinsurgency operations.

In addition to direct military assistance, Western nations have offered humanitarian aid to address the immediate needs of those affected by the conflict. Programs aimed at providing food, shelter, and medical care for internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been essential in mitigating the humanitarian fallout from the insurgency. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has implemented initiatives aimed at stabilizing communities and preventing radicalization, emphasizing education and economic development as long-term solutions to the underlying issues driving extremism.

Moreover, the West has actively participated in diplomatic efforts to facilitate cooperation among regional actors. Through initiatives like the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, which also addresses the threat posed by Boko Haram, the U.S. has underscored the need for a coordinated international response to terrorism.

However, the effectiveness of Western involvement has faced criticism. Concerns regarding human rights abuses by Nigerian security forces, coupled with perceived inconsistencies in commitment, have led to scepticism about the sustainability of these partnerships. Therefore, while Western support remains crucial, a holistic approach that incorporates local perspectives and governance reforms is essential for lasting solutions.

6.4. Civil Society and Local Initiatives

Civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community leaders play a crucial role in combating terrorism in Nigeria, particularly in the context of Boko Haram's insurgency. These entities often serve as the first line of defense against radicalization, focusing on community resilience, education, and conflict resolution. For instance, organizations like the *Borno Youth Coalition* and *Search for Common Ground* engage in grassroots initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue among diverse religious and ethnic groups, thereby reducing tensions that can lead to extremism.

Local leaders are pivotal in mobilizing communities against the influence of extremist groups. They facilitate programs that address youth unemployment and offer educational opportunities, which are essential in countering the narratives propagated by Boko Haram. Additionally, these initiatives often include psychological support for victims of violence, aiding in healing and reintegration.

Moreover, civil society organizations advocate for policy changes and greater accountability from the government, highlighting issues like political corruption and social injustices that fuel grievances. Their grassroots efforts complement military and international initiatives, providing a holistic approach to countering terrorism. Ultimately, empowering local communities and harnessing their insights is vital for creating sustainable solutions to the challenges posed by terrorism in Nigeria.

7. The path forward: solutions and recommendations

7.1. Addressing Political and Economic Root Causes

Addressing the political and economic root causes of terrorism in Nigeria requires comprehensive governance reforms and targeted economic development strategies. Corruption remains a significant barrier to effective governance, undermining public trust and inhibiting the delivery of essential services. To combat this, Nigeria must implement transparent and accountable governance practices that include the establishment of independent anti-corruption bodies and rigorous enforcement of existing laws. This can help restore faith in political institutions and reduce the sense of disenfranchisement that often drives individuals toward extremist ideologies.

Economic development is equally critical. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality have created fertile ground for extremist recruitment. The Nigerian government should prioritize job creation, particularly for youth, by investing in sectors like agriculture, technology, and renewable energy. Public-private partnerships can be instrumental in providing vocational training and skills development, empowering young people to seek legitimate livelihoods rather than turning to violence.

Furthermore, targeted social welfare programs can address the immediate needs of marginalized communities. By improving access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure, the government can help alleviate social grievances that fuel discontent.

Incorporating local communities in decision-making processes ensures that policies are context-specific and effectively address the needs of those affected by terrorism. Engaging civil society organizations in these efforts can also enhance accountability and foster a sense of ownership among citizens, thereby contributing to long-term stability. Ultimately, a holistic approach that combines political reform with economic empowerment is essential to mitigate the factors that contribute to terrorism in Nigeria.

7.2. Strengthening Security and Justice Systems

To effectively combat terrorism in Nigeria, it is imperative to strengthen security and justice systems through comprehensive reforms in operational practices and legal frameworks. The Nigerian military and law enforcement agencies have faced criticism for their inadequate response to security threats, often characterized by human rights abuses and lack of coordination. Therefore, a critical reform agenda should focus on enhancing training programs for security personnel, emphasizing community engagement, human rights, and intelligence-led operations. This approach can improve operational effectiveness while fostering trust between security agencies and local communities.

Moreover, establishing clear lines of accountability and oversight for security forces is essential to prevent abuses of power and ensure compliance with the law. Creating independent oversight bodies can help monitor operations and investigate complaints, thereby enhancing public confidence in security institutions.

In addition to operational reforms, revisiting and strengthening legal frameworks is crucial. Current laws must be evaluated to ensure they effectively address the complexities of modern terrorism while upholding fundamental rights. Legislative measures that promote swift prosecution of terror-related offenses, without compromising judicial standards, can deter potential recruits and disrupt extremist networks. Collaborating with international legal bodies can provide insights into best practices and enhance Nigeria's capacity to prosecute terrorism effectively.

Furthermore, enhancing inter-agency collaboration is vital for a unified response to terrorism. This can be achieved through the establishment of joint task forces that combine the capabilities of military, police, and intelligence services, ensuring a holistic approach to counter-terrorism operations.

Overall, strengthening security and justice systems through training, accountability, legal reform, and inter-agency cooperation is essential for creating a resilient and effective framework to combat terrorism in Nigeria.

7.3. Promoting Social Cohesion and Religious Tolerance

Promoting social cohesion and religious tolerance is essential for combating extremism and fostering a peaceful society in Nigeria. Efforts must begin with community engagement initiatives that bring together diverse religious and ethnic groups to foster understanding and dialogue. Interfaith dialogues and community workshops can serve as platforms for addressing misconceptions and promoting shared values, helping to break down barriers that fuel division.

Educational programs that emphasize the importance of tolerance and respect for diversity can also play a significant role. Schools should incorporate curricula that promote cultural awareness, empathy, and critical thinking, equipping young people with the tools to challenge extremist narratives. Involving community leaders, educators, and local NGOs in these efforts can enhance their effectiveness and reach.

Additionally, supporting grassroots movements and local peacebuilding initiatives can help address underlying grievances and promote inclusivity. By empowering communities to take ownership of their social dynamics, Nigeria can build resilience against extremist ideologies. Collaborative efforts that highlight the benefits of social harmony can contribute to a more cohesive society, ultimately reducing the appeal of extremist groups and fostering a climate of peace and mutual respect.

7.4. Enhancing International Collaboration

Enhancing international collaboration is crucial for effectively addressing terrorism in Nigeria. Global actors, including governments, international organizations, and NGOs, can contribute significantly by providing technical assistance, funding, and sharing intelligence. Establishing partnerships with Nigerian authorities can facilitate the transfer of best practices in counterterrorism strategies and community resilience programs.

International organizations like the United Nations and the African Union can play a pivotal role in coordinating efforts and ensuring a unified approach to combatting terrorism. This includes supporting regional initiatives that address cross-border threats, particularly from groups like Boko Haram. Additionally, international actors can help enhance Nigeria's capacity for effective law enforcement and military operations through training programs and resource provision.

Moreover, global actors should prioritize funding for socio-economic development initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of extremism, such as poverty and unemployment. Investing in education and job creation can reduce vulnerabilities that extremist groups exploit. By fostering a collaborative environment where knowledge and resources are shared, the international community can help Nigeria develop sustainable strategies to combat terrorism and promote lasting peace.

8. Conclusion

8.1. Summary of Findings

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the terrorism landscape in Nigeria, focusing on the emergence of Boko Haram and its profound impacts on society. It highlights how historical context, religious and cultural diversity, and geopolitical factors contribute to the prevalence of extremism. Political corruption, economic stagnation, and social grievances further exacerbate the situation, leading to widespread vulnerability among the population. The findings emphasize the importance of understanding the ideological foundations of Boko Haram and its recruitment strategies, as well as the challenges faced by Nigeria's military and justice systems. Additionally, the role of international cooperation and local initiatives is underscored as essential to combating terrorism effectively. The study concludes that addressing root causes and enhancing collaboration between global actors and local stakeholders is crucial for building a resilient society in Nigeria.

8.2. Final Thoughts on Moving Forward

Moving forward, Nigeria must adopt a multifaceted approach to combat terrorism effectively. This involves not only military and law enforcement measures but also socio-economic reforms aimed at addressing the underlying issues that fuel extremism. Strengthening governance, promoting economic development, and fostering social cohesion are critical steps toward building a more stable and secure environment. Moreover, enhancing regional and international collaboration will provide the necessary resources and expertise to tackle the complex challenges posed by terrorism. By prioritizing education, community engagement, and the promotion of religious tolerance, Nigeria can work towards dismantling the ideologies that underpin extremist groups. Ultimately, a holistic strategy that combines security with sustainable development and community empowerment is essential for paving the way toward lasting peace and stability in Nigeria.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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