



Ending Terrorism in Nigeria

Not by Military Might
Reform the Security Sector
Monitor the Porous Borders
Govern the Ungoverned Spaces
Collaborate to Disarm and Demobilise

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Overview

The Nigerian Army is locked in a twelve-year war with jihadist terrorists. While deaths from terrorism have declined globally in the last five years²¹, terrorist groups and criminal organisations are expanding their operations in the country. The protracted crisis in Nigeria’s North-East region has birthed one of the most severe humanitarian crises globally. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), people in need of urgent assistance in the North-East region increased from 7.9 million to 10.6 million in 2020. This crisis worsened because of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are about 1.9 million internally displaced persons, of which 60 percent are children. In addition, about 3.4 million people face acute hunger, and 300,000 children are at imminent risk of death due to acute malnutrition.

Data from Nextier SPD Violent Conflict Database²² shows that in the twelve months to September 2021, Nigeria recorded 46 terrorist attacks resulting in 435 deaths, 21 injured persons, and 17 kidnapped persons. 75.9 percent of the fatalities were civilians, while the balance of 24.1 percent were security agents.

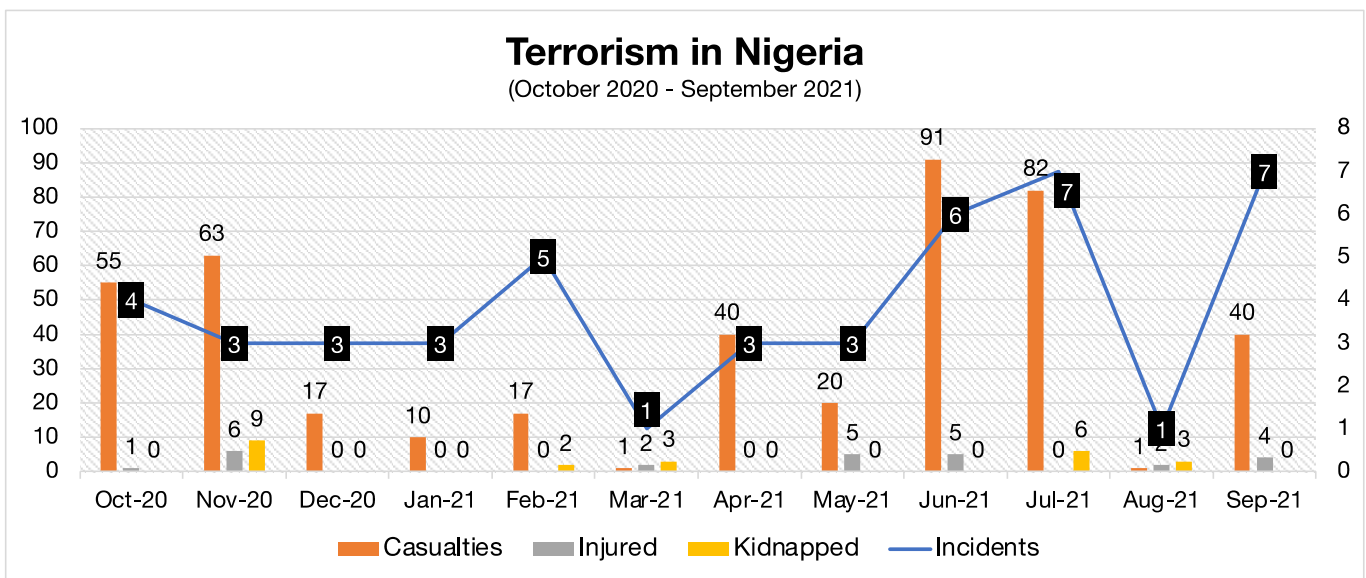


Figure 3: Terrorism in Nigeria from October 2020 to September 2021 (Source: Nextier SPD Violent Conflicts Database)

²¹ Institute for Economics & Peace. (2020). *Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*. Institute for Economics & Peace, Sydney. Available at: <http://visionofhumanity.org/reports>.

²² Fatality figures were culled from the Nextier SPD Violent Conflict Database which sources its data from media reported violent conflicts. The database categorizes the conflicts into banditry, terrorism, farmers-herder crisis, extra-judicial killings, cultism, armed robbery, domestic violence, civil unrest, piracy, communal clashes.

Despite government claims of successful campaigns, terrorism remains a major security challenge in the country. The growing insecurity leads to significant losses, both in direct and indirect costs of the conflict and in the price of building peace. While it is hard to derive the exact economic cost of an ongoing violent conflict (Mueller, 2013),²³ data from the 2021 Global Peace Index²⁴ shows that the economic impact of violence in Nigeria has almost doubled since 2007. The figure increased from \$69.39 billion in 2007 to \$132.60 billion in 2019. In the last 12 years (2007-2019), the estimated multiplier effect of direct and indirect violence was \$1.35 trillion, meaning that the ongoing conflict costs about 30 percent of Nigeria's GDP. This cost is a significant drain on Nigeria, with the highest number of out-of-school children globally (13.2 million in 2015). The number would have been reduced to 1.8 million by 2020 if not for conflict. According to UNDP (2021),²⁵ as the hostilities continue, children feel the burden increasingly.

Drivers of Terrorism

Insurgency in Nigeria Northeast is driven by many social, economic, political, and environmental factors. A Nextier SPD publication, 'Breaking the Stalemate,' outlines the issues to include poverty, unemployment, ungoverned spaces, inadequate and burnt-out security personnel, war business, climate change, etc.

Prior Intervention Efforts

The government has implemented several combative and non-combative counterterrorism programmes in Nigeria. These interventions include a range of military, developmental and social programmes. While military operations have liberated captured communities, most advances are short-lived. The effectiveness of these initiatives is hampered by confusion over priorities, inadequate personnel to control reclaimed areas, and unintended non-salutary. In 2013, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) was organised to support the government troops in the fight against the Jihadist insurgents. However, the group is accused of human rights abuses and challenges by poor training and an unclear operational framework. Furthermore, there is no clarity on the disarmament and demobilisation of the group. Failure to properly handle these fighters could lead to unintended consequences.

²³ Mueller, H. (2013). The Economic Cost of Conflict (IGC Report). Available at <https://www.theigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Mueller-2013-Working-Paper2.pdf>

²⁴ Institute for Economics & Peace. (2021). *Economic Value of Peace 2021: Measuring the global economic impact of violence and conflict*, Sydney, January 2021. Available from: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources>

²⁵ Hanna, T., Bohl, D., Rafa, M., & Moyer, J. (2021). *Assessing the Impact of Conflict on Development in North-East Nigeria*. United Nations Development Programme.

The government has established the North-East Development Commission to manage the resettlement, rehabilitation, integration, and reconstruction of infrastructure in the region. However, with a structure resembling the ineffectual Niger Delta Development Commission, fears abound that the Commission would be similarly unsuccessful.

The Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the National Social Investments Programmes (NSIP) to address poverty and increase economic development in the country. However, since the programmes' launch in 2016, it has spent over [N300 billion](#) without significantly improving Nigeria's poverty status.

Recommendations

Not by Military Might

Military force alone is hardly adequate to end insurgency in Nigeria. First, the government must fix the root causes of the struggle and address the political and socio-economic factors that birthed extremism amongst the once peace-loving people of Nigeria. Second, the government must drastically reduce poverty, especially for the marginalised, so they do not turn to violent and criminal means to agitate for inclusion. Third, the country's political elite must rise to the governance challenges, including the arduous efforts required to deliver developmental projects, social actions, and people-oriented programmes to win the [hearts and minds](#) of the people. Fourth, there is a need for a more responsive and inclusive system of government anchored on strong democratic institutions. Finally, the North-East Development Commission should [strengthen policies](#) and drive [socio-economic reforms](#) to sustain peacebuilding efforts in the region.

Reform the Security Sector

The inability of the government security agencies to rise to the threat from non-state violent actors is a manifestation of the State's weakness. Nigeria requires [security sector reforms](#) to build the capacity of the relevant actors to be effective and efficient. There is also the need to [increase the number of security personnel](#), train, equip, and adequately motivate them to achieve and maintain stability in the Northeast. In addition, as the military are liberating communities, the police and other paramilitary personnel should be deployed to [maintain law and order](#). The state government needs to carry out a [biometric capture](#) of all Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) members. This information is critical to prevent any excesses by the CJTF.

Monitor the Porous Borders

Security operatives at national and regional levels should work together to deploy surveillance over the borders. Furthermore, the government should provide similar surveillance to monitor the migration routes to prevent human, drug, and arms trafficking. This process will require the provision of state-of-the-art [operational logistics](#) and upscale the security operatives' capacity for monitoring and surveillance. In addition, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Free Movement Protocol should be [amended](#) to align with current inter-state and intra-regional security threats.

Govern the Ungoverned Spaces

The North-East region has many [ungoverned spaces](#), or places with minimal government presence. Terrorists and other miscreants use these spaces as safe-havens. Their control of these spaces lulls their recruits into believing that they can, someday, achieve their goal of being a government unto themselves. Therefore, the government at all levels should target all such areas for [development projects](#). In addition, the government should strengthen and elevate the role of traditional institutions to ensure that organised governance is felt at the community level. Traditional institutions can more properly deliver the will of the people.

Collaborate to Disarm and Demobilise

The government needs the support of the local communities for effective disarmament, demobilisation, and rehabilitation programme for repentant terrorists. The programme can't succeed if shrouded in secrecy, as is the case with many military engagements. For instance, the current programme, "Operation Safe Corridor," is run like a military operation, in secrecy with little input from the community. As such, it does not have the confidence or the support of the public, who perceive it with many suspicions. The government needs to [sensitise](#) the community and secure their support.