



RESEARCH ARTICLE

STATE-LED COUNTERTERRORISM IN THE SAHEL: NIGERIA AND BURKINA FASO IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism has become one of the most pressing security challenges in the Sahel, undermining state authority and regional stability. Nigeria and Burkina Faso, two of the region's most affected states, have adopted predominantly state-led counterterrorism strategies, relying heavily on militarized responses. Yet, despite sustained efforts, insurgent groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, and al-Qaeda affiliates remain resilient. The central problem lies in the over-securitization of counterterrorism, which has often neglected governance reforms, human rights, and socio-economic development, thereby weakening state legitimacy. This paper employs a comparative qualitative methodology, drawing on secondary sources including policy documents, scholarly works, and reports, to examine the counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria and Burkina Faso. It adopts securitization theory and the human security framework to analyze the reliance on military force vis-à-vis the neglect of civilian-centered approaches. Findings reveal that while both states have achieved tactical gains, their strategies are undermined by human rights violations, weak institutional capacity, and inadequate community engagement. The study concludes that militarized responses alone are insufficient to address the complex and multidimensional roots of terrorism. In recommendation, lasting security in the Sahel requires integrating force with governance reforms, socioeconomic investment, reintegration programs, inclusive dialogue, and stronger regional cooperation.

Keyword: Counterterrorism, Sahel, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Human Security

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INTRODUCTION

The Sahel region is regarded as one of the most dangerous places in the world, with a complicated web of terrorism, armed uprisings, and weak government institutions (Richmond, 2021). The Sahel, which runs from Senegal to Sudan, has seen extremist violence spread quickly. Nigeria and Burkina Faso are two places where insecurity is always high. Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), have made Nigeria's Northeast less stable over the past ten years. Burkina Faso, on the other hand, has become the center of violent extremism in the central Sahel, with groups linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State attacking it all the time (Issaev, 2022). Even though both countries have tried different state-led ways to fight terrorism, they still have trouble keeping the peace, protecting weak groups, and restoring faith in the government.

The ongoing presence of terrorism in the Sahel highlights the pressing necessity to evaluate the efficacy of counterterrorism strategies employed by states. Nigeria and Burkina Faso have similar geography and face transnational extremist threats, but they respond in different ways because of their different political systems, levels of support from outside countries, and institutional capacities. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa and a regional power, has chosen a strong military response that includes both national and international efforts through the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) (Akindoyin, & Obafemi, 2024). O

n the other hand, Burkina Faso, which is a smaller and weaker state, has used both traditional military responses and auxiliary forces like the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP). It has also switched between working with Western allies like France and more recently working with Russian private security companies (International Crisis Group, 2021). Comparing these two states lets us look at how different state-led strategies affect not only the course of terrorism but also the legitimacy of government and human security in the Sahel.

The issue propelling this research is the evident discrepancy between the magnitude of state counterterrorism initiatives and the enduring, and in certain instances, escalating, nature of terrorist violence. Nigeria has put a lot of resources and time into its fight against terrorism, but Boko Haram and ISWAP are still strong groups that change their tactics and take advantage of the government. Burkina Faso has also seen a huge rise in violence since 2015, even though there have been military offensives and support from other countries. This paradox prompts critical inquiries regarding the sufficiency of state-led counterterrorism strategies, which frequently prioritise militarisation, in tackling the underlying causes of terrorism, including poverty, exclusion, fragile institutions, and disputed governance.

The study's objectives are threefold. Firstly, it aims to examine the historical and political contexts that facilitate terrorism in Nigeria and Burkina Faso. Secondly, it assesses the counterterrorism strategies implemented by both nations, focusing on military operations,



security sector reforms, community mobilisation, and dependence on external partners. Thirdly, it performs a comparative analysis to elucidate similarities, differences, and insights that can enhance counterterrorism strategies in the Sahel.

The study is guided by the following central question:

How effective are state-led counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria and Burkina Faso in mitigating terrorism and strengthening state authority?

Subsidiary questions include:

What contextual factors shape these strategies?

What challenges undermine their success?

What lessons can be drawn for future counterterrorism efforts in the Sahel?

This study is important for both academic and policy discussions. For academics, it enhances the literature on counterterrorism and African security by providing a comparative analysis of two states that exemplify varying levels of capacity and involvement in the counterterrorism effort. Similarly, the research provides policymakers with an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of existing strategies, offering suggestions on how Sahelian states can adjust their approaches to more effectively combat terrorism and its underlying causes. The study emphasises the necessity of transcending securitisation to adopt a comprehensive framework that encompasses human security, governance, and socio-economic development.

The structure of the paper is organized into six sections. Following this introduction and problem statement, the second section develops the conceptual and theoretical framework guiding the analysis. The third section provides the historical and political context of terrorism in Nigeria and Burkina Faso. The fourth section examines state-led counterterrorism strategies in both countries. The fifth section conducts a comparative analysis, discussing similarities, differences, and implications. The sixth and final section presents the conclusion and recommendations, summarising the findings and offering policy directions.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual Discourses

To comprehend state-led counterterrorism strategies in the Sahel, it is essential to rigorously examine the fundamental concepts and theoretical frameworks that underpin both policy implementation and scholarly discourse. This section elucidates fundamental concepts including terrorism, and counterterrorism, while contextualizing the study within two synergistic theoretical frameworks: securitization theory and the human security paradigm. These frameworks furnish analytical instruments for assessing the design, justification, and



implementation of counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria and Burkina Faso, along with the implications of these decisions for governance and societal stability.

Terrorism is still one of the most controversial ideas in security studies. In general, it denotes the device employed by non-state actors to threaten violence, scare people, reach political goals, and challenge the power of the state (Akindoyin, & Obafemi, 2025a). In the Sahel, terrorist groups like Boko Haram, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) have used religious, political, and economic problems to justify violent actions. These groups attack not only government buildings but also civilians, which makes the situation less safe and threatens both national sovereignty and regional stability.

Counterterrorism is the set of rules and actions that governments use to find, stop, and deal with terrorist threats (Akindoyin & Badru, 2024b). In the Sahel, counterterrorism has mostly been militarised state responses, but it can also include non-coercive methods like deradicalisation, political dialogue, and development programs. State-led counterterrorism strategies are actions that the central government starts and controls (Kamau, 2021). They often include sending in the military, intelligence agencies, and making changes to security. Scholars have argued that these kinds of strategies are needed to protect national sovereignty and restore territorial integrity. However, they can also make people feel less safe when they ignore the root causes of violence.

Theoretical Framework:

Securitization Theory

The Copenhagen School's securitisation theory is a strong way to look at how terrorism is made into an existential threat that needs extraordinary measures. This theory posits that threats are not objectively present but are constructed through "speech acts," in which political elites characterise issues like terrorism as pressing security threats (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 2009). When these issues are securitised, they make it okay to use extreme measures like suspending civil liberties, militarising, and getting involved from the outside. Nigeria and Burkina Faso have both made terrorism a threat to state survival in the Sahelian context.

Nigerian political elites often stress that Boko Haram and ISWAP are threats to the country's unity and independence. In the same way, the Burkinabè government has used the need to protect the state from collapse to justify large military operations and the use of civilian volunteers (Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland, VDP). Securitisation theory elucidates the predominance of militarised state responses, even when these strategies are inadequate or counterproductive. Securitisation frequently marginalises alternative strategies, including political dialogue, reconciliation, or socio-economic investment, by prioritising the survival of the state (Innes, 2024).



The Human Security Paradigm

In contrast to the state-centric focus of securitisation, the human security paradigm underscores the safeguarding of individuals against both violent threats and structural vulnerabilities. Human security broadens the concept of security to encompass economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political dimensions, extending beyond mere territorial defence (Khan, 2022). It shows that insecurity comes from more than just armed rebels. That is, it also comes from poverty, exclusion, bad government, and violations of human rights.

When used to fight terrorism in Nigeria and Burkina Faso, the human security approach shows how ineffective strategies that only use military force are. For example, Nigeria's heavy use of military offensives has often caused collateral damage and displacement, which has made it harder for local communities to work with the government to gather intelligence and stop radicalisation. In Burkina Faso, the use of volunteer militias has sometimes led to violence between communities, making people even more angry and breaking down social ties. From a human security standpoint, effective counterterrorism necessitates the incorporation of development, governance reforms, and civilian protection into state responses. This approach posits that the endurance of extremist factions in both nations is partially attributable to the disregard for human security issues.

Synthesizing the Frameworks

Securitisation and human security may seem different, but they work well together for this study. Securitisation theory elucidates the rationale behind the Sahelian governments' preference for military responses and the justification of extraordinary measures by political elites. On the other hand, human security gives us a set of rules for judging the effects of these choices and finding holes in current plans. These frameworks work together to give a fair look at the reasons for and limits of state-led counterterrorism. For Nigeria and Burkina Faso, this dual framework uncovers an enduring tension: the securitisation of terrorism as a threat to sovereignty fosters militarised strategies, while the disregard for human security sustains conditions conducive to extremism. The study utilises these theories to analyse state behaviour and assess the impact of counterterrorism strategies on long-term stability versus their potential to heighten insecurity.

METHODOLOGY

The paper employs a qualitative comparative case study methodology. Secondary data sources, such as academic literature, policy reports, and official government documents, are utilised to examine the progression of terrorism in both nations and to assess their counterterrorism strategies. A comparative perspective enables the paper to emphasize context-specific dynamics while extracting universally applicable insights for the Sahel region. The research is grounded in securitisation theory, which elucidates how states



characterise terrorism as an existential threat necessitating exceptional measures, and the human security paradigm, which redirects emphasis from state survival to individual protection. These frameworks are helpful for figuring out how well Nigeria and Burkina Faso's counterterrorism plans deal with both short-term security issues and the larger human aspects of security

DISCOURSES

Historical and Political Context of Terrorism in Nigeria and Burkina Faso

The rise of terrorism in the Sahel has its foundations in the political, historical, as well as socio-economic conditions that have made state-society relations weak. In Nigeria and Burkina Faso, insurgent violence has arisen not solely from extremist ideologies but also from structural deficiencies, governance inadequacies, and regional instability. It is very important to understand these paths in order to judge how well both countries' counterterrorism strategies are working.

The rise of Boko Haram in the early 2000s is the most well-known example of terrorism in Nigeria. Mohammed Yusuf led the group to start in the North-East of the country (Iornumbe, & Paul, 2025). At first, they spoke out against corruption, poverty, and what they saw as the imposition of Western values. After Yusuf was killed outside of court in 2009, Boko Haram became a violent insurgency that attacked government buildings, schools, churches, and civilians. In 2015, the group swore loyalty to the Islamic State, which led to the creation of the Islamic State West Africa Province. This group quickly became one of the deadliest extremist groups in Africa (Iornumbe, & Paul, 2025). Boko Haram and ISWAP are still around because they are flexible and Nigeria's North-East has historically been a region with the highest rate of poverty and unemployment, thereby making it easy for people to become radicalised. The insurgency continues to thrive by taking advantage of weak state authority, porous borders, and human rights abuses committed by security forces, even though there have been multiple military operations and regional cooperation through the Multinational Joint Task Force (Ya'u, 2021).

Burkina Faso, on the other hand, was mostly safe from terrorism until the middle of the 2010s. But when President Blaise Compaoré was forced out of office in 2014, it left a political vacuum and made state institutions weaker, which extremist groups quickly took advantage of. Armed groups connected to Al-Qaeda, especially Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), and groups connected to the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) started to spread from Mali and Niger into Burkina Faso (Zenn, 2022). They took advantage of the fact that the government was not very present in the outskirts of the country (Zenn, 2022). By 2015, violent attacks on state officials, security forces, and civilians had gotten a lot worse.



Extremists not only attacked the Burkinabè government, but they also set up their own systems of government in rural areas, where they provided their own justice and recruited heavily from marginalised groups. The political instability that followed two coups in 2022 and 2023 made the state's ability to fight terrorism even weaker, making many parts of the country easy targets for insurgents (McLarson-Griffith, 2023).

The terrorism problem is made worse in both Nigeria and Burkina Faso by regional dynamics. The Sahel's porous borders make it easy for fighters, weapons, and illegal goods to move freely, which lets insurgent groups work in more than one state with relative ease. Boko Haram and ISWAP can avoid national military offensives in Nigeria because the northeast is close to Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. In Burkina Faso, jihadist groups take advantage of the instability in Mali and Niger to set up networks that cross borders (Kazeem, 2024). Additionally, socio-economic marginalization persists as a prevalent characteristic in both states. Long-standing grievances in Nigeria's northeast have led to anger against the federal government. In Burkina Faso, on the other hand, Fulani communities have been targeted for recruitment because they have been left out of political and economic opportunities (Barlow, 2021).

These dynamics show that terrorism in Nigeria and Burkina Faso is not just caused by radical ideas;. That is, it is also caused by complicated historical and structural factors. In Nigeria, Boko Haram and ISWAP were able to grow because of years of neglect and lack of development in the North-East, as well as corruption and repression (Akindoyin, & Obafemi, 2024). After Compaoré left, the political order in Burkina Faso fell apart quickly, and the state was too weak to stop Sahelian jihadists from spreading. Both instances highlight the extent to which terrorism is intertwined with overarching governance crises, wherein the absence or illegitimacy of the state has facilitated the advancement of extremist groups. Understanding this context is essential for assessing state-led counterterrorism strategies, as it underscores that sustainable solutions cannot be attained solely through militarization but must also confront the underlying historical and political causes of insecurity.

State-Led Counterterrorism Strategies in Nigeria and Burkina Faso

State-led counterterrorism strategies in the Sahel demonstrate the pivotal role of national governments in safeguarding sovereignty, re-establishing territorial control, and mitigating the influence of extremist groups. In Nigeria and Burkina Faso, the way they deal with terrorism has been affected by politics, lack of resources, and the pressure of regional and international events. The two countries rely on militarized responses, which show both the strengths and weaknesses of state-centered strategies. However, their approaches are different in size and execution.

Nigeria has long used a heavily militarized approach to fighting terrorism, especially against Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State West Africa Province (Madubuegwu, 2021).



Since the insurgency got worse in 2009, different governments have sent joint military task forces to take back land that insurgents had taken. The most famous of these were Operation Lafiya Dole and later Operation Hadin Kai (Madubuegwu, 2021). The Nigerian military has also spent money on airpower, special operations, and intelligence-driven campaigns to weaken the insurgents. Nigeria has also worked with other countries in the area through the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which includes troops from Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Akindoyin, & Obafemi, 2024). This has made cooperation in the area stronger against extremist groups that cross borders. Corruption, poor coordination between security agencies, and ongoing claims of human rights violations, such as extrajudicial killings and the arbitrary detention of civilians accused of supporting insurgents, have often hurt Nigeria's counterterrorism efforts (John, 2022). These problems have made it harder for the state to trust local communities, which makes it harder to gather intelligence and makes long-term stabilization harder.

In addition to military responses, Nigeria has tried to include non-kinetic measures in its fight against terrorism. The government set up the Operation Safe Corridor program to help former Boko Haram fighters get back into society and stop being radicalized (Ugwueze, 2022). The program includes vocational training, psychological counselling, and community reintegration. This program recognizes the limits of militarization, but it has been criticized for its limited capacity, lack of community support, and the idea that it rewards insurgents while ignoring victims of violence. Nigeria has also passed laws to fight terrorism and tried to make intelligence and border security stronger. Nonetheless, the predominance of military solutions signifies the securitizations of terrorism as an existential threat to the Nigerian state, frequently eclipsing comprehensive governance reforms and developmental initiatives that could tackle the fundamental causes of extremism.

Burkina Faso's counterterrorism strategies have developed amid diminished state capacity and increased political instability (Zherlitsina, 2023). After the first major jihadist attack in the country in 2015, each new government took a military-focused approach to fighting insurgents in the North and Eastern part of the country. The Burkinabè armed forces, on the other hand, are not very big, have bad equipment, and are stretched too thin, which makes it hard for them to keep control of disputed areas (Ofongo, 2024). The government created the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP) in 2020 to help with these problems. This program got people in the area involved in the fight against insurgents by giving them information, protecting villages, and helping with military operations (Ofongo, 2024). The VDP is a practical way to make up for the weak state capacity, but it has caused a lot of controversy. In some cases, volunteer militias have been linked to human rights violations and violence between communities, especially against Fulani people who are thought to be working with jihadists. These changes could make the problems that extremist groups use to recruit people even worse.



Burkina Faso has also relied a lot on partnerships with other countries to help fight terrorism. The French-led Operation Barkhane and the G5 Sahel Joint Force gave important military help, training, and logistical support until 2022 (Agoni, 2025). However, as anti-French sentiment grew and the political situation became less stable, with two military coups in 2022 and 2023, the country's alliances changed to other partners. The transitional government worked more closely with Russia and, according to reports, welcomed private military contractors like the Wagner Group to help fight jihadists (Kimpel, 2025). This change is based on both strategic pragmatism and the desire to keep the regime in power, but it raises worries about long-term sovereignty, accountability, and the possibility of violence getting worse.

There are some important similarities and differences between Nigeria and Burkina Faso. Both states have made military solutions the main part of their plans to fight terrorism. This shows that they see terrorism as a threat to national survival. However, both methods have had problems with not enough resources, human rights abuses, and not enough focus on the real causes of extremism. The main difference is that Nigeria can use its size, resources, and leadership role in the region to carry out more coordinated operations, such as joining multinational coalitions. Burkina Faso, on the other hand, has had to rely on irregular militias and changing alliances with outside actors to keep its campaigns going because its institutions are weaker. These differences show how the ability of a state to act and its political stability affect the planning and results of counterterrorism strategies.

Hence, both countries' reliance on militarization highlights a fundamental problem. Military force is frequently essential to dismantle insurgent networks and regain territory; however, its efficacy is constrained without concurrent investments in governance, development, and reconciliation. In Nigeria, an overreliance on the military has pushed people away and failed to get rid of the things that cause extremism. In Burkina Faso, the mobilization of civilian militias threatens to exacerbate inter-communal divisions and compromise state legitimacy. These instances illustrate that counterterrorism strategies based solely on coercion are improbable to yield enduring security, particularly in contexts characterized by state fragility.

Comparative Analysis and Discussion

The counterterrorism strategies of Nigeria and Burkina Faso exemplify the similarities and differences that define state-led responses to terrorism in the Sahel. Looking at their strategies side by side shows that both countries see militarization as the most important part of their counterterrorism efforts. However, the exact ways they do things and the results they get are different because of things like state capacity, political stability, and regional positioning. Nigeria and Burkina Faso both depend heavily on military force as the best way to fight insurgencies. Operation Hadin Kai and other large-scale military operations in Nigeria are part of an effort to weaken Boko Haram and ISWAP through coordinated attacks, airstrikes, and intelligence-driven campaigns. Burkina Faso has also started long-term military



operations in the North and East, where jihadist activity is strongest. This convergence illustrates the securitisation of terrorism, as governments in both nations characterise insurgency as an existential threat to state survival, thereby legitimising extraordinary measures (Buzan, & Waever, 2009). However, in both situations, the militarised approach has had a hard time getting clear results. Insurgent groups have shown resilience by changing their strategies, taking advantage of gaps in government, and using the anger of people who are already on the outside.

The similarities also extend to the adverse consequences that accompany the militarisation of a state. In Nigeria, ongoing claims of human rights violations by security forces such as arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, and the detention of minors suspected of links to insurgents, have eroded public confidence (Mirzoev, & Ezenwa, 2024). The deployment of Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP) in Burkina Faso has led to extensive allegations of ethnic profiling, especially targeting Fulani communities, thereby perpetuating cycles of violence that jihadist groups leverage for recruitment (Demuynck, 2021). These similarities show that state responses can sometimes make insecurity worse by pushing civilians away, instead of stopping extremism. The disregard for human security issues in both scenarios has consequently undermined the legitimacy of counterterrorism initiatives. Even though these two countries have a lot in common, their strategies are very different.

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa and a regional power, has used its size and power to form coalitions both in Africa and around the world. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which includes troops from Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, shows that Nigeria can work with other countries to fight Boko Haram and ISWAP (Akindoyin, & Obafemi, 2024). Burkina Faso, on the other hand, has not had the institutional capacity or geopolitical weight to lead responses in the region. Instead, it has gone back and forth between relying on international partners like France and, more recently, forming strategic partnerships with Russia and the Wagner Group after relations with Western actors got worse. This difference is due to differences in political stability. Nigeria has had the same political leaders for a long time, but Burkina Faso has had two coups in two years, which has made its security strategy even less effective.

Another important difference is how civilian actors are included in counterterrorism plans. Nigeria's strategy has included programs like Operation Safe Corridor, which helps insurgents who want to change their ways and rejoin society, but these programs have not worked very well because they were not well implemented and the community didn't accept them (Ogunnubi, 2024). Burkina Faso, on the other hand, has used the VDP program to directly militarise civilians by putting them in active combat roles. While this has helped the government stay in remote areas for a little longer, it has also made it harder to tell the difference between soldiers and civilians, which could lead to more violence and make it harder to bring people together.



The comparative analysis highlights the influence of structural conditions on counterterrorism outcomes. In Nigeria, decades of political neglect and underdevelopment in the North-East have led to long-lasting problems that Boko Haram and ISWAP are still using. The swift rise of terrorism in Burkina Faso after the fall of Blaise Compaoré shows how weak state institutions are and how previous governments have failed to handle political changes or deliver services in remote areas (Eizenga, 2023). These disparities indicate that although military strategies prevail in both scenarios, their efficacy is limited by profound historical and governance obstacles specific to each state.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

From these findings, the study here makes the following recommendations

1. For Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and other Sahelian countries that are facing the same kinds of threats, military operations is still be needed, however they should be balanced with changes to the way the government works that deal with structural problems. To restore the legitimacy of the state, it is important to strengthen institutions, make sure that the security sector is held accountable, and deal with corruption.
2. Secondly, both countries need to put human rights and protecting civilians first when they fight terrorism. It is very important to hold security forces and community militias responsible for their wrongdoings in order to rebuild trust with marginalised groups and weaken extremist stories.
3. Programs for deradicalisation, reintegration, and socio-economic development that are not military-based need to be expanded and given the right resources. Despite its problems, Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor is a good example that can be used and improved in Burkina Faso and other places.
4. Counterterrorism plans should include community-based methods. Traditional leaders, civil society, and women's groups are very important for building resilience against extremist recruitment. They should be included as partners in security plans.
5. Lastly, regional cooperation is still very important. Nigeria's experience with the Multinational Joint Task Force shows how important collective security is, while Burkina Faso's growing isolation under military rule shows how dangerous it is to rely too much on outside private actors. To fight a threat that crosses national borders, it is important to work together more through regional and continental groups like ECOWAS and the African Union. This will help in pooling resources, intelligence, and political support.



Conclusion

The comparative analysis of state-led counterterrorism strategies in Nigeria and Burkina Faso underscores the intricacies of combating violent extremism in the Sahel, where vulnerable states contend with enduring insecurity, feeble institutions, and entrenched socio-political grievances. Both countries demonstrate that militarized counterterrorism has become the standard approach in vulnerable African nations facing terrorism, highlighting the securitization of insurgency as a fundamental threat to state survival. However, although military force is essential in addressing heavily armed insurgents, evidence from Nigeria and Burkina Faso indicates that coercion alone is inadequate and, in certain instances, counterproductive.

The Nigerian government has spent a lot of money on big military operations, especially in the northeast, where Boko Haram and ISWAP are still a strong hold. Even though these operations have had tactical successes, like taking back areas that was once held by insurgents, the movement has shown that it is strong and can reorganise. Human rights violations, a lack of community involvement, and poor reintegration programs have made people less likely to trust the government's efforts. This has allowed extremist groups to stay popular in communities that are already on the fringes.

1. In Burkina Faso, the state's reach in remote areas has temporarily grown because it relies heavily on the military and controversially mobilises civilian militias through the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland. But these militias have also been linked to human rights abuses, targeting of ethnic groups, and cycles of revenge attacks, which make things even less stable instead of fixing them.
2. The comparison between the two countries shows that militarisation is a quick way to deal with insurgent violence, but it doesn't really deal with the root causes of terrorism, which are problems with how the government works, people being left out of the economy, and the loss of state legitimacy. Nigeria's effort to combine military force with deradicalisation programs like Operation Safe Corridor shows that the country knows it needs more than just military action, but these programs have had trouble being put into action and have not been widely accepted by communities.

Burkina Faso, on the other hand, has not put much money into deradicalisation or reintegration programs. Instead, it has focused on military solutions while going through political instability marked by a series of coups. These different approaches show how important political stability and institutional capacity are in making counterterrorism policies work.

Theoretically, securitisation theory elucidates the rationale behind both states' elevation of terrorism to a survival imperative, thereby legitimising extraordinary



measures such as extensive troop deployments and emergency legislation. The human security framework, however, highlights the shortcomings of this approach, asserting that enduring peace relies not solely on the cessation of violence but also on the fulfilment of fundamental needs, the administration of justice, and the safeguarding of civilian rights. The lack of focus on human security in Nigeria and Burkina Faso has led to ongoing violence, a loss of faith in the government's ability to keep the peace, and a situation that has allowed insurgent groups to grow.

3. In conclusion, the situations in Nigeria and Burkina Faso demonstrate that terrorism in the Sahel is not solely a military issue but a challenge to governance and development. Militarised counterterrorism may yield transient benefits; however, enduring peace will materialise only when strategies are expanded to encompass human security, accountability, and inclusive governance. The future of counterterrorism in Nigeria and Burkina Faso relies on moving beyond coercion and fostering the social contract between the state and its citizens. If this does not happen, counterterrorism campaigns will stay stuck in cycles of violence, insurgents will keep changing, and the Sahel will never be stable.

Competing Interest

The authors have declared that no conflicting interest exist in this manuscript.

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