

STRENGTHENING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE GATHERING IN COMBATING TERRORISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Terrorism has remained a significant challenge in Nigeria, particularly since 2015, despite various counterterrorism efforts by successive governments. While military strategies have been prioritized, this study focuses on the potential of human intelligence gathering (HUMINT) as a more effective counterterrorism approach. HUMINT involves collecting information through human sources, including interviews, surveillance, social media monitoring, and observations. The study highlights the reluctance of citizens to provide intelligence due to concerns such as fear of retaliation, loss of anonymity, and potential financial implications. The theoretical framework used is Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that individuals weigh the costs and benefits before sharing information. If the perceived risks outweigh the benefits, people may hesitate to engage in intelligence sharing. The study concludes that HUMINT could be highly effective if citizens are motivated through assurances of safety, confidentiality, anonymity, and tangible government action. By fostering an environment where people feel secure, the strategy of "If you see it, say it" could significantly enhance Nigeria's counterterrorism efforts.

Keywords: Terrorism, Insurgency, Kidnapping, Abduction, Banditry and Human Intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is presently bedeviled with a very serious security challenge of monumental proportion according to President Muhammadu Buhari, The Punch, 2021, May 24, UN report by Vanguard, 2020, July, U.S Government, This Day, 2023, April 14. "Nigeria faces unprecedented security challenges according to the ECOWAS", The Guardian, 2020, September, 23. What started like a religious problem during the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan in year 2015 has snowballed into a very serious and alarming security challenges of an enormous dimension. This little fire referred to then as 'it will soon pass away' when the Chibok girls were kidnapped in Maiduguri, Borno state on 14th April, 2014 has developed a hydra head and spread into every part of the country and neighboring countries with huge negative consequences manifesting in various forms such as insurgency, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, abduction and all forms of criminal activities. The peculiarity of the Nigerian security experience is that it is more of an 'internal' than an 'external' issue. These challenges are perpetuated by mostly people among us.

Efforts on the part of government led by the military in coordination with other security agencies do not appear to yield the desired results yet probably due to the unreadiness of the country for this new phase of security challenge. The insecurity in Nigeria is no longer viewed as a religious issue because it has transcended it. The terrorists attack all religious centres whether churches or mosques, Christians or Muslims, there is no divide as it was when it initially started. The attacks are not only limited to worship centres but also to schools, markets, parks and all social gatherings such as marriages, birthdays, funerals. Travels are now difficult to make because of the fear of terrorists.

Terrorism has become a persistent threat not only in Nigeria but a global threat. Therefore, countries all over the world are not only developing and partnering but are constantly reviewing counter terrorism strategies to deal with the peculiarity of their experiences. The problem of insecurity and crime control in Nigeria have become a complex situation as most attacks take security personnel and affected communities' hands down.

Ahmadu and Haruna (2014) with the titled "The United Nations and The Challenge of Global Peace, Security and Development" stated that according to the United Nations University Institute for Sustainability and Peace, there is today increasing threats to global peace and security such as violent conflicts, human rights abuses, spread of diseases, increasing poverty and deprivation in a grossly unequal but well-informed world which has watered the seeds of terrorism. According to the report of the

Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) 2019 'The Evolution of Terrorism in Africa' by Dr. John Campbell, a former U.S Ambassador to Nigeria, the issue of terrorism has grown beyond its immediate environment to the 'enemy' western nations because of its opposition to western practices and democratic principles to the once quiet and peaceful African continent. The report provides an in-dept analysis of the spread of terrorism in Africa highlighting factors such as political instability, economic inequality and foreign influence. In sub- regional West Africa e.g. Nigeria, with some neighboring countries like Niger republic, Mali and Chad etc., we have Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram.

Statement of the Problem

Kinetic efforts have been on-going to tackle the menace of terrorism in Nigeria. However, it appears the more they are neutralized, the number increases like a hydra. The most challenging aspect is the inability of security agencies to gather enough intelligence to nip their attacks in the bud before taken place. Cases of kidnapping, abduction, banditry and insurgency has become part of our daily experience, even when people are kidnapped for a long period of time, there is no intelligence as to where they are. Yet this people live among us and collect ransom from the families of their victims. As we speak today, a good number of the Chibok girls who were kidnapped from their school in 2014 are yet to be found or released to their parents, Leah Sharibu, one of the 110 female students of Government Girl's and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State, who were abducted on 19th February, 2018 by Boko Haram terrorists is yet to be found and no one knows her fate to date despite assurances from the government, BBC news (2020), Al Jazeera (2018), The Guardian (2014), Premium Times (2019), and new cases happen regularly.

The families of victims prefer to negotiate and pay ransom instead of reporting to the security agencies out of various reasons that will be highlighted and discussed in this study. This study is therefore interested in how human intelligence gathering can be made more effective as a counter terrorism strategy to discover and prevent terrorism attacks before they are carried out. It is concerned with how people must be made to realize that sharing information with security agencies should be treated as a civic responsibility as it will do all of us good and help in the prevention of some of terrorist attacks. The fight against terrorism cannot be left in the hands of the security agencies alone, it requires collective action and the part of the citizens is to provide timely and useful information that will lead to the tracking and neutralization of these undesirable elements among us. In addition, the paper aims to see how citizens can be motivated to 'see something, say something' instead of been docile with information that can be useful and helpful in preventing terrorist attacks. The objective of this study is to examine how Human Intelligence (HUMINT) gathering strategy can be used in combating terrorism operations in Nigeria.

Statement of Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between human intelligence strategy and combating terrorism in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Terrorism has no all-inclusive definition; most definitions are tied to the researchers needs and purposes. However, there is a consensus on what constitutes terrorism. The Terrorism Prevention Act, 2011, TPA (As Amended) Federal Republic of Nigeria defines it as act which is deliberately done with malice, aforethought and which may seriously harm or damage a country or international organization. It includes compelling a government against its will either by intimidation or coercion, intimidate a population, destabilizing the fundamental political, constitutional or social life or structure of a country or international organization. Terrorism manifestation includes kidnapping, abduction, banditry, insurgency and destruction of government or public property among others. This definition aligns with the positions of The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the African Union (AU) article 1 and 3 which states that 'any act which a violation of the criminal laws of a State Party is and which may endanger the life, physical integrity of freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any number or groups of persons or causes damage to public or private property, natural

resources, environmental or cultural heritage (OAU, 1999:207). The offshoots of terrorism in Nigeria include: insurgency, abduction, kidnapping, and banditry.

Insurgency

Insurgency is an organized, protracted and violent rebellion against a government authority, often with the aim of overthrowing or destabilizing the government. There are different types of insurgencies but the one common to the Nigerian experience is the Islamist insurgency whereby Boko Haram with support from ISWAP is engaged in the use of violence and intimidation, organized rebellion, arms and ammunition and political or religion motivation to want to overthrow or destabilize a duly elected government, 'BBC News: Insurgency', 'Journal of Insurgency and Counter Insurgency', 'Insurgency and Terrorism' (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

Abduction

It is the of taking someone away forcefully or by coercion often for the reason of requesting for ransom, exploitation, or other malicious purposes, "Abduction" (Merriam -Webster Dictionary). This can be perpetuated by individuals or groups for various reasons ranging from kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking, child abduction, political and terrorists' abduction, "Abduction and Kidnapping" (International Committee of the Red Cross). Nigeria has not been spared as abduction has taken a new meaning and trend. It has become almost a daily occurrence across the country. Boko Haram terrorist endanger human lives by attacking travelers and estates and demanding ransom in huge amounts running into millions depending on the status of the victims or number of abductees. According to a security expert, Dennis Amachree (2023) a former Deputy Director of Department of State Security (DSS), cases of abduction has continued to increase because of the hap-hazard approach of the authorities in dealing with the issue.

Kidnapping

the unlawful seizure, transportation and detention of a person against their will, often for ransom, extortion or other malicious purposes. Kidnapping involves ransom kidnapping, express kidnapping often short term or immediate demand, tiger kidnapping where victim's family or associates are forced to commit a crime, virtual kidnapping using on-line extortion and child kidnapping, 'Global Kidnapping Review' (Control Risks, 2022), 'The Dynamics of Kidnapping' (Journal of Crime and Justice, 2020). The increase in the cases of kidnapping across the States including Abuja led to the establishment and launch of the Special Intervention Squad by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) of Nigeria on 17th January, 2024 to combat kidnapping and heinous crime.

Banditry

Banditry involves organized crime of robbery, extortion and violence especially by the terrorists in the Northern east rural areas or frontier, 'Banditry' (Oxford English Dictionary) The motivation is purely financial as a result of hunger, use of drugs, and alcohol among others, it can also involve kidnapping and ransom demand. Their modes of operation include rural banditry e.g. cattle rustling, highway robbery, urban banditry e.g. armed robbery and extortion, maritime banditry e.g. piracy and cyber banditry e.g. on-line extortion and ransomware, Primitive Rebels by Eric Hobsbawm (1959), 'Bandits by Richard W. Slatta (1997), 'Banditry and Insurgency', Paul B. Rich (2012).

Kidnapping and abduction are often financially motivated, while Insurgency is driven by political or ideological goals. Banditry is primarily financially motivated. Furthermore, insurgency involves a broader scope of activities, including guerrilla warfare and terrorism, however, abduction and kidnapping are specific acts. While insurgency typically involves a high level of planning and organization by groups, kidnapping and abduction can be done by individuals or small groups, banditry involves organized crime networks, 'Abduction' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary), (Oxford English Dictionary), 'Terrorism, Insurgency and Banditry' (International Institute for Strategic Studies).

The Imperative of Human Intelligence Gathering (HUMINT)

The collection of information through human sources involving interviews, interrogations, surveillance, social media monitoring and observations. It is a crucial component of intelligence gathering as it provides context, nuance and insight into human motivations and intentions. The CIA's Directorate of Operations (CIA, 2020) emphasizes HUMINT as a critical component of intelligence gathering. The National Intelligence Strategy (2019) defines HUMINT as "the collection of information from human sources" and The FBI's Human Intelligence Collection (FBI, 2020) states the importance of HUMINT in supporting law enforcement and national security investigations. To be effective, HUMINT gathering depends on interpersonal skills, cultural sensitivity and the ability to build trust with sources. It provides valuable insights into human behaviour, intentions and activities, supporting informed decision making in various fields, including national security, law enforcement and business, American Public University System (2020). Human Intelligence: A Guide.

The benefits of this method of intelligence gathering includes providing rich contextual information, intuition and insight into motivations, building relationships and trust and adapting to changing situations. However, this method of intelligence gathering must also be handled with caution to ensure the credibility and accuracy before application. There is also need to protect sources and methods from being compromised and dealing with the challenges of cultural and language barriers to effective communication and accessing the required information according to: The National Intelligence Strategy (2019). Therefore, overcoming the challenges posed by HUMINT gathering in line with best practices will require that the persons involved will be trained to acquire some level of expertise, given clear objectives on clear collection requirements, verification of the source of validation and thoroughly documenting and reporting collected information, John Brennan (2019), James Clapper (2018), (CIA, 2018), The International Association for Counter terrorism and Security Professionals (IACSP, 2020). In UK's, a total of over 100 potential terrorists' attacks were detected and prevented in 2017 by human intelligence gathering strategy by its border force thereby reducing international terrorist threats.

Empirical Studies

Ogunyemi (2019), examined the role of human intelligence in counter terrorism operations in Nigeria. He employed a qualitative research design, conducting in-dept interviews with security personnel, policy makers and experts. The study showed that Human Intelligence (HUMINT) is imperative in gathering intelligence in identifying terrorist networks in order to disrupt their operations. Oyinlola (2020), University of Ibadan assessed the effectiveness of intelligence gathering strategies in combating terrorism in Nigeria. The study reveals that human intelligence (HUMINT), signal intelligence (SIGINT) and open source (OSINT) are the most utilized strategies. He stated that human intelligence is the most effective strategy in combating terrorism. However, the challenge is the reluctance by individuals as a result of fear of reprisal attack, loss of confidentiality, distrust between with authorities, cultural and social norms and financial and time constraints.

However, challenges such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure and limited technological capacity hinder effective intelligence gathering. It was also discovered in the study that there is a lack of coordination among inter -security agencies which hinders intelligence sharing. Abdullahi (2022) Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria examined intelligence gathering and counter terrorism in Nigeria: an exploratory study of the role of human intelligence in combating Boko Haram. Intelligence gathering plays a crucial role in combating terrorism. According to Abubakar (2020) intelligence gathering involves the collection analysis and dissemination of information to support decision making and action. In the context of counter terrorism, intelligence gathering is used to identify and disrupt terrorist networks, anticipate and prevent terrorist attacks and apprehend and prosecute terrorists.

Abdullahi (2020) conducted empirical study on assessment of human intelligence gathering in combating terrorism in Nigeria: a study of Kaduna State and Aliyu (2020) work in Sokoto State found that individuals in Kaduna and Sokoto were not willing to provide intelligence to security agencies despite the on-going serious security challenges in the states because of fear of reprisal action by the terrorists

as well as lack of trust in the ability of government to protect them. Suleiman (2019) of the University of Maiduguri in his study carried out in Borno State reveals that people were reluctant to provide intelligence to the government as a result of lack of confidence in the counter terrorism measures of security agencies and community engagement despite the fact that Borno I the epicenter of terrorism in Nigeria. In the same vein, Danjuma (2018) of the University of Jos study found that the concerns of individuals in the state is the fear of stigmatization of been named informants leading to bean also banished from the community

Theoretical Framework

The theory underpins this study is the social exchange theory attributed to George Homans (1958). The theory posits that individuals first count the costs and benefits that will accrue to them before sharing information. It states further that when the perceived costs e.g. fear of retaliation, loss of anonymity, loss of confidentiality, financial implication outweighs the benefits like contributing to national security, citizens may be reluctant to share information.

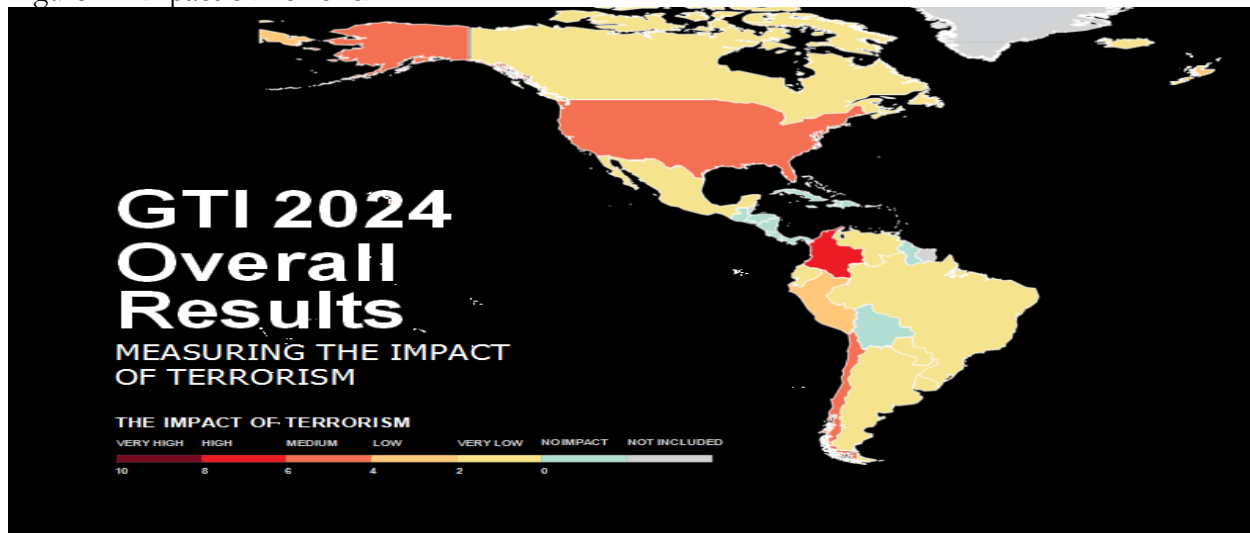
METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed for this study is exploratory design using qualitative approach. Data was collected by secondary method from published materials and literature from Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2023 and 2024.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study adopted descriptive analysis by examining the impact of terrorism in Nigeria. The data is shown in the various figures below:

Figure: 1: Impact of Terrorism



RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK CHANGE	RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK CHANGE	RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK CHANGE
1	Burkina Faso	8.571	↑ 1	28	Thailand	4.219	↓ 5	55	Spain	1.669	↑ 5
2	Israel	8.143	↑ 24	29	Türkiye	4.168	↓ 8	56	Lebanon	1.562	↓ 5
3	Mali	7.998	↑ 1	30	United States of America	4.141	↓ 1	57	Australia	1.475	↓ 2
4	Pakistan	7.916	↑ 3	31	Indonesia	3.993	↓ 7	58	Italy	1.447	↓ 4
5	Syria	7.890	↔	32	Banqladesh	3.317	↑ 14	59	Central African Republic	1.445	↓ 2
6	Afghanistan	7.825	↓ 5	33	Sri Lanka	3.072	↓ 2	60	Saudi Arabia	1.366	↑ 5
7	Somalia	7.814	↓ 4	34	Greece	3.028	↓ 1	61	Argentina	1.274	↓ 3
8	Nigeria	7.575	↔	35	Russia	3.016	↑ 8	62	Ethiopia	1.272	↓ 3
9	Myanmar	7.536	↔	36	Tunisia	2.914	↑ 4	63	Kosovo	1.218	↑ 28
10	Niger	7.274	↔	37	Germany	2.782	↓ 2	64	Japan	1.189	↔
11	Iraq	7.078	↓ 5	38	France	2.647	↓ 4	65	Venezuela	1.174	↓ 13
12	Cameroon	6.98	↓ 1	39	Libya	2.469	↓ 7	66	Slovakia	1.092	↓ 5
13	Democratic Republic of the Congo	6.514	↑ 1	40	Burundi	2.434	↓ 4	67	Mexico	1.04	↑ 1
14	India	6.324	↓ 1	41	United Kingdom	2.373	↑ 3	68	Austria	0.953	↓ 5
15	Mozambique	6.267	↓ 3	42	Tanzania	2.267	↓ 3	69	Tajikistan	0.871	↓ 16
16	Colombia	6.188	↓ 1	43	Angola	2.254	↑ 48	70	Sweden	0.735	↓ 4
17	Chile	5.679	↓ 1	44	Algeria	2.197	↓ 6	71	Switzerland	0.627	↓ 4
18	Kenya	5.616	↑ 1	45	Nepal	2.163	↓ 8	72	Cyprus	0.616	↑ 3
19	Philippines	5.383	↓ 1	46	Côte d'Ivoire	2.06	↓ 5	73	China	0.582	↑ 21
20	Egypt	5.221	↓ 3	47	Peru	2.045	↓ 6	74	Netherlands	0.577	↓ 4
21	Chad	4.987	↓ 1	48	Djibouti	2.035	↓ 3	75	Jordan	0.455	↓ 4
22	Palestine	4.966	↑ 6	49	Brazil	1.988	↓ 2	76	Armenia	0.423	↑ 18
23	Yemen	4.951	↓ 1	50	New Zealand	1.947	↓ 2	77	Uzbekistan	0.423	↓ 4
24	Benin	4.898	↑ 3	51	Belgium	1.904	↑ 11	78	Paraguay	0.241	↓ 5
25	Togo	4.67	↑ 5	52	Canada	1.753	↑ 4	79	United Arab Emirates	0.233	↓ 2
26	Iran	4.464	↓ 1	53	Norway	1.747	↓ 3	80	Iceland	0.233	↓ 2
27	Uganda	4.377	↑ 22	54	Ukraine	1.686	↑ 20	81	Malaysia	0.192	↓ 5

Figure 2: Most Important Problems | Nigeria | 2022

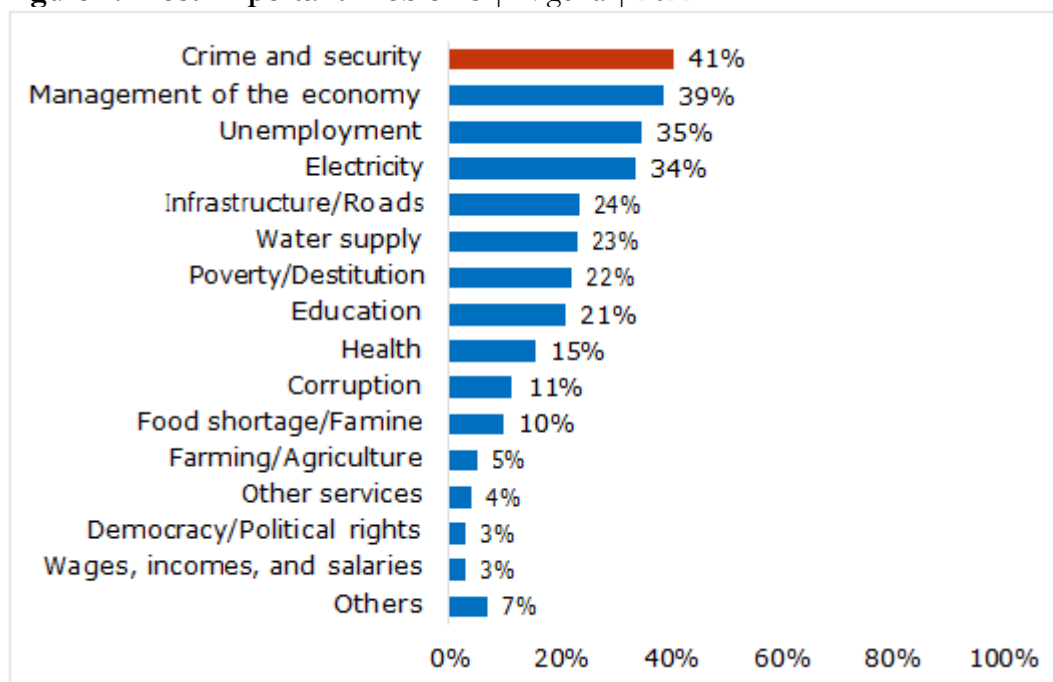


Figure 3: Crime and Security as most Important Problem | Nigeria | 2007-2022

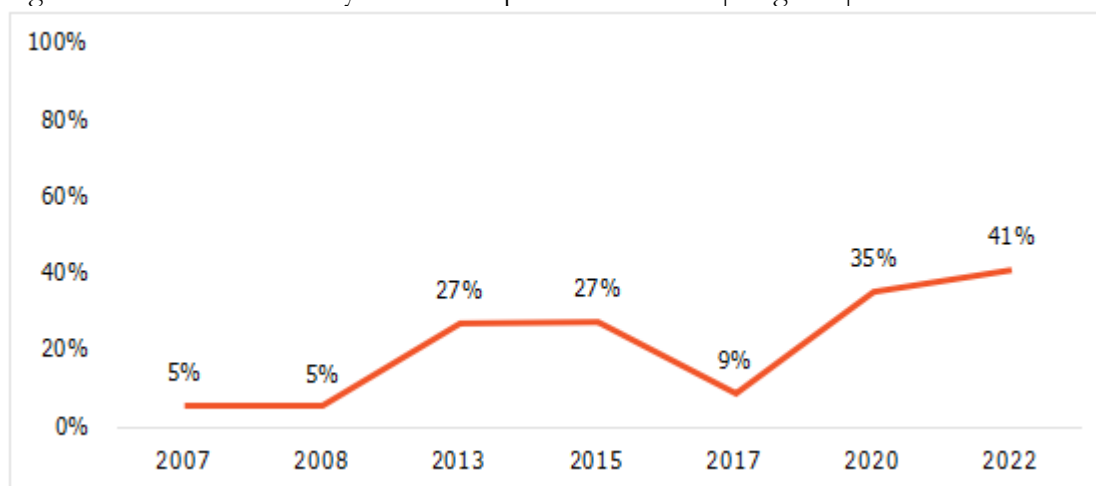


Figure 4: Ten Countries most Impacted by Terrorism, GTI ranks 2011- 2023.

Ten countries most impacted by terrorism, GTI ranks 2011–2023
Burkina Faso recorded the highest impact of terrorism for the first year.

Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Burkina Faso	114	113	111	110	52	30	21	15	7	6	4	2	1
Israel	22	18	22	23	29	31	33	31	34	34	35	26	2
Mali	40	22	19	21	16	13	10	9	8	7	7	4	3
Pakistan	2	2	2	2	4	4	5	5	5	8	9	7	4
Syria	19	4	4	5	6	7	7	8	6	5	6	5	5
Afghanistan	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	6
Somalia	5	7	7	7	8	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	7
Nigeria	8	5	5	3	2	2	4	4	4	4	5	8	8
Myanmar	17	20	23	29	41	43	40	42	23	24	10	9	9
Niger	50	60	45	34	19	19	18	19	14	12	8	10	10

Source: IEP

10 COUNTRIES MOST IMPACTED BY TERRORISM			
Nigeria	GTI RANK 8	GTI SCORE 7.575	524  DEAD 89  INJURED 145 INCIDENTS
<p>Nigeria recorded its first increase in terrorism in three years in 2023, with total deaths rising by 34 per cent to 524. This year marks Nigeria's highest death toll since 2020, driven by a surge in conflict between ISWA and Boko Haram. If the conflict between these two groups was excluded, terrorism deaths would have declined by 18 per cent.</p>		<p>11,299 deaths from terrorism since 2007</p>	
<p>Civilians were the most targeted group for the second consecutive year in 2023, followed by military personnel. Civilians were targeted in over a quarter of all attacks, followed by military personnel at 21 per cent and law enforcement also at 21 per cent.</p>		<p>2,000 1,500 1,000 500</p>	
		2007	2023
<p>ISWA has been Nigeria's deadliest terrorist group for each of the past four years. It accounted for 53 per cent of the nation's terrorism-related fatalities and 37 per cent of terrorist incidents in 2023. Even though the number of ISWA terrorist attacks decreased slightly in the past year, the death toll rose by 27 per cent to 276 deaths, the highest amount in the past three years. On average, ISWA attacks became deadlier in 2023, causing 5.2 fatalities per attack, an increase from 3.6 in 2022. The conflict</p>		<p>Attack Targets in 2023</p>	
		<p>Civilians Military Police Other</p>	

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal the significant impact of terrorism on Nigeria, with a high ranking in global terrorism indices. Figure 1 shows that the impact of terrorism in the country remains severe, despite military efforts, with Nigeria ranking 8th in the world in terms of terrorism impact between 2011 and 2023 (GTI, 2024). The security situation in Nigeria has worsened over the years, as demonstrated in Figures 2 and 3, with concerns about crime and security escalating from just 5% in 2007 to 41% in 2022, although there was a temporary decline between 2015 and 2017. From 2007 to 2023, terrorist attacks by groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP have led to over 11,299 deaths, with civilians suffering the highest casualties, followed by military personnel and other targets (Figure 4, GTI, 2024).

The study also highlights the effectiveness of human intelligence (HUMINT) as a strategy for counterterrorism. For example, in the UK, over 100 potential terrorist attacks were detected and prevented in 2017 through HUMINT by its border force, reducing international terrorist threats. Similarly, intelligence-led operations in Nigeria, according to a study by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), resulted in a 70% reduction in terrorist attacks between 2015 and 2017. Despite the clear potential of HUMINT, several challenges hinder its successful implementation in Nigeria. One key issue is the reluctance of individuals to provide intelligence due to fears of reprisal attacks, loss of confidentiality, and distrust of authorities. Cultural and social norms also play a role in limiting the willingness of citizens to engage with security forces. Additionally, financial and time constraints, the perceived unseriousness of some security personnel, and social stigmatization further discourage citizens from sharing critical information. Language and cultural barriers further impede effective communication between security officers and communities, making it difficult for intelligence to flow efficiently.

Another major challenge identified is the general public's perception of security matters. Many Nigerians view security issues as the sole responsibility of the government, and there is a tendency to rely on prayer rather than active involvement in reporting suspicious activities. Economic hardship also plays a role, with many people prioritizing daily survival over participating in intelligence gathering, as they perceive it to be a waste of time. This reluctance underscores the need for government action to motivate and assure citizens of the safety and confidentiality of their involvement in counterterrorism efforts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study highlighted the importance of human intelligence gathering in combating terrorism in Nigeria as well as the challenges it is confronted with. Human intelligence strategy is believed to be one of the most effective intelligences gathering methods and if the government can motivate individuals with information to make them available to security agencies, it will go a long way in eliminating or reducing terrorism in the country.

Arising from the above, the following recommendations become imperative for an effective human intelligence gathering in combating terrorism in Nigeria:

- i. the government should consider it as a matter of urgency to create regular awareness through all forms of social media that security is the responsibility of all and not only the duty of the security agencies. It is our civic duty to see something and say something.
- ii. Government must ensure the security and confidentiality of informants not only by words but to provide security cover for them and their family against reprisal actions. This will boost their confidence in providing intelligence information. Toll free lines and on-line communication will improve intelligence gathering when it does attract cost to the informants.
- iii. The issue of language and cultural barrier which do hinder communication can be resolve by the government implementing the National Language Policy of Nigeria. Security agencies should be made to learn two or three of Nigeria's major languages, so that in whatever community they find themselves, they can communicate effectively with the people.
- iv. Individuals can be motivated to step forward with intelligence by providing a reward system which includes protection, monetary, employment, promotion etc. This is very important because the terrorist groups pay for information and it is given to the highest bidder.

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