

**TERRORISM AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF
RESOURCE CONTROL IN NORTHERN AND MIDDLE BELT
NIGERIA**

Temple C. Nwambuko^{1*}, Chukwunenye C. Njoku² & Ernest Ositadimma Ugwu³

¹Department of Public Administration, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State

²Department of International Relations, Gregory University, Uturu, Abia State

³Department of Political Science, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State

*nwambukotc@fuotuoche.edu.ng

ABSTRACT: This study examines terrorism and the political economy of resource control in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria, focusing on its underlying economic, political, and security dimensions. This study advances debates on terrorism in Nigeria by demonstrating how violent groups in the Northern and Middle Belt deliberately exploit resource control dynamics—linking land, extractive resources, and governance failures—to sustain conflict, thereby integrating political economy perspectives with security analysis in a context-specific framework. Anchored on the Resource Curse Theory, the research adopts a qualitative research design, drawing evidence from scholarly literature, security reports, and field-based empirical studies. The findings reveal that terrorism in these regions has evolved from ideologically driven violence into a strategic mechanism for the economic capture of natural and land-based resources, including gold deposits, farmlands, and grazing corridors. Weak governance structures, corruption, unemployment, and socio-political exclusion have fostered conditions where non-state armed groups exploit natural resources to finance insurgency and sustain territorial control. The study further establishes that existing state and regional counter-terrorism frameworks, notably military operations and cross-border security collaborations, have achieved only limited success because they neglect the economic and governance roots of terrorism. The research concludes that Nigeria's resource-endowed regions illustrate the dynamics of the resource curse, where resource wealth, mismanagement, and institutional weakness intersect to produce cycles of violent conflict. It recommends a paradigm shift from militarized counter-terrorism to integrated governance and development approaches, emphasizing transparency in resource management, community participation, and inclusive peace building as pathways to sustainable security and stability.

Keywords: Terrorism, Resource Control, Resource Curse Theory, Governance, Security Governance

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism in Nigeria has evolved from isolated acts of violence into a sustained and strategic instrument for advancing political, economic, and resource-based agendas. In recent years, the Northern and Middle Belt regions have become the epicentres of violent conflicts driven not only

by ideological motives but also by the struggle for control over land, minerals, and other valuable resources. The deliberate use of terrorism as a strategy for resource control underscores a growing nexus between insecurity and competition over natural wealth, reflecting broader patterns of violent resource politics in fragile states (Ikelegbe, 2013; Uche & Iwuoha, 2020).

The Northern region, rich in solid minerals and agricultural land, and the Middle Belt, known for its fertile environment and multi-ethnic composition, have witnessed persistent violent attacks involving extremist groups, militia formations, and armed herders (Akinyetun, 2022). These acts often aim at displacing local populations, securing territorial dominance, and asserting control over resource-rich areas. This pattern aligns with the “resource curse” hypothesis, which suggests that competition over valuable resources can undermine governance, exacerbate inequalities, and fuel violent conflicts (Ross, 2015; Basedau & Lay, 2009).

The Nigerian state’s counter-terrorism response, while significant, has largely focused on military containment, often neglecting the deeper socio-economic and environmental dimensions of the crisis (Onuoha, 2014). Policy frameworks such as the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) and regional collaborations under ECOWAS have sought to curb terrorist activities, yet challenges persist due to bad political leadership, weak governance structures, corruption, and limited local participation in resource management (Agbiboa, 2015; Ezeani, 2021; Nwambuko, 2021). Consequently, the failure to integrate resource control dynamics into security policy has limited the effectiveness of existing measures.

This study, therefore, examines terrorism and the political economy of resource control in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria. It seeks to understand how resource-based grievances, political manipulation, and governance failures intersect to perpetuate terrorism, and how policy interventions can be reframed to address the underlying economic motivations of violent actors. By situating terrorism within the broader context of resource competition and security governance, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on sustainable peace building and inclusive policy design in Nigeria’s conflict-affected regions.

This study argues that terrorism in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria is deeply embedded in the political economy of resource control, where competition over land, extractive resources, and state rents - shaped by governance failures, elite interests, and structural inequalities -interacts with extremist violence, banditry, and communal conflict to produce persistent insecurity and underdevelopment.

Problem Statement

Nigeria’s persistent struggle with terrorism has become increasingly complex as violent groups adopt strategic, resource-oriented motives that go beyond ideological extremism. In the Northern and Middle Belt regions, terrorism has transformed into a deliberate mechanism for asserting control over natural resources (land, minerals, and water) thereby redefining the security landscape and exacerbating communal conflicts (Uche & Iwuoha, 2020). This transformation reflects a deep-rooted structural problem where resource competition intersects with bad political leadership, weak

governance, ethnic tensions, and uneven development, resulting in a cycle of violence and displacement (Akinyetun, 2022; Ikelegbe, 2013; Nwambuko, 2021).

Despite successive counter-terrorism initiatives, including the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) and regional collaborations through ECOWAS and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), the Nigerian state continues to face challenges in addressing the resource-control dimension of terrorism (Ezeani, 2021; Agbibo, 2015). These strategies remain largely reactive and militarized, focusing on suppressing insurgents rather than addressing the socio-economic and environmental contexts that sustain them. Consequently, terrorism persists as a means for violent actors to dominate resource-endowed territories, control local economies, and negotiate political relevance (Basedau & Lay, 2009).

The inability of policy frameworks to incorporate the resource governance dimension into national security planning has contributed to the escalation of violent resource conflicts in the Northern and Middle Belt regions. The continued attacks on agrarian and mining communities have disrupted livelihoods, deepened poverty, and undermined local governance structures (Onuoha, 2014; Ross, 2015; Nwambuko et al, 2025). This gap reflects a broader policy failure to understand terrorism not only as a security issue but also as a contestation over resource ownership and distribution.

Therefore, the central problem this study addresses is the inadequacy of existing counter-terrorism and policy interventions to effectively respond to the resource-control dynamics driving terrorism in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria. Unless this nexus between resource competition, terrorism, and governance failure is empirically analyzed and policy solutions restructured, Nigeria's security architecture will remain fragile, and sustainable peace in the affected regions will continue to be elusive.

Thus, the main objective of this study is to examine terrorism and the political economy of resource control in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria. The specific objectives are to - assess how terrorism has been used as a deliberate mechanism for resource control in the Northern and Middle Belt regions of Nigeria; evaluate the effectiveness of existing state and regional counter-terrorism policies in addressing the resource-control dimensions of terrorism; and examine the implications of resource-driven terrorism for national security governance and sustainable peace in Nigeria. In line with the above objectives, this study will seek to answer the following research questions - In what ways has terrorism served as a deliberate strategy for resource control in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria? How effective are current national and regional counter-terrorism policies in addressing the resource-control dimensions of terrorism? And what are the policy and security governance implications of resource-driven terrorism for sustainable peace in Nigeria? Therefore, based on the stated objectives and questions, the following null hypotheses will guide the study - H_{01} : Terrorism is not deliberately used as a mechanism for resource control in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria; H_{02} : Existing counter-terrorism policies are effective in addressing the resource-control dimension of terrorism; and H_{03} : Resource-driven terrorism has no significant implication for national security governance and sustainable peace in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarifications

Terrorism: This is a multifaceted and contested concept that has evolved over time in response to political, ideological, and socio-economic contexts. Broadly, terrorism refers to the use or threat of violence by non-state actors to instil fear, coerce governments, or advance political, religious, or economic objectives (Schmid, 2011). It is characterized by deliberate attacks on civilian populations or symbolic targets designed to influence a wider audience beyond the immediate victims (Hoffman, 2006). From a political science perspective, terrorism functions as both a tactic and a strategy — a tactic of asymmetrical warfare used by weaker actors against more powerful states, and a strategy aimed at delegitimizing state authority or controlling valuable resources (Crenshaw, 2011).

In the Nigerian context, terrorism has manifested in groups such as Boko Haram and various bandit and militia networks that employ violence to dominate territory, exploit local resources, or challenge state control (Onuoha, 2014; Agbiboa, 2015). Thus, terrorism in Nigeria is not only ideologically driven but also economically motivated, often linked to resource capture, illegal mining, and the control of agricultural or grazing lands. Consequently, it can be understood as an organized and deliberate form of violent behavior intended to achieve both political influence and material gain.

Resource Control: Resource control refers to the ownership, management, and decision-making authority over the exploitation, allocation, and benefits of natural resources within a defined territorial space (Watts, 2008). It involves the ability of a state, community, or group to determine how resources such as oil, minerals, or land are extracted and distributed. In political economy discourse, resource control is often associated with struggles over power, equity, and access to wealth generated from natural endowments (Ikelegbe, 2013).

In Nigeria, resource control debates have deep historical roots, especially concerning oil in the Niger Delta and solid minerals and farmland in Northern and Middle Belt regions (Suberu, 2001). The inequitable distribution of resource benefits and environmental degradation has fueled grievances, leading to militant and terrorist uprisings. Resource control, therefore, extends beyond economic interest; it encompasses identity, self-determination, and justice, particularly where local communities perceive exclusion from national wealth. When viewed together, terrorism and resource control intersect where non-state actors use violence as a means of asserting de facto control over natural resources, thereby challenging state sovereignty and undermining national stability. This linkage underscores the emerging pattern of resource-driven terrorism, where resource competition becomes both a cause and a consequence of insecurity.

Assessing how terrorism has been used as a deliberate mechanism for resource control in the Northern and Middle Belt regions of Nigeria

A growing body of empirical research demonstrates that violent groups in Nigeria increasingly instrumentalise terror tactics to secure access to, and control over, natural resources, notably land,

pasture, and livestock, as well as pockets of mineral and agricultural value, rather than relying solely on ideological motives. Studies that analyse conflict-event data and household surveys show that disputes over land use and access to grazing and water resources are frequently reported as proximate causes of violent episodes in North-Central (Middle Belt) and adjoining northern zones, linking rural resource competition directly to episodes classified as “militant/terrorist” or “insurgency” activity (World Bank, 2018).

Empirical fieldwork and security analyses further trace the evolution of bandit and militant groups from opportunistic criminals into more organised actors that deploy terror (mass abductions, village raids, and deliberate farm destruction) to displace communities, impose unofficial “taxes” or tolls, and consolidate control over pastureland and trade routes. Detailed community-level studies and security reports document increased militarisation of these groups (use of AK-pattern rifles, motorbikes, controlled checkpoints) since the late 2000s, tactics that facilitate territorial domination and sustained extraction of resources through cattle rustling, forced labour, and kidnap-for-ransom economies (UNIDIR, 2024; Musa, 2025).

Boko Haram’s activities in north-eastern Nigeria provide a salient empirical case of how insurgent terrorism reshapes land use and agricultural production: satellite- and household-level analyses show declines in cultivated land, mass displacement of farming populations, and the deliberate targeting of farming infrastructure outcomes consistent with a strategy that seeks to control territory and deny livelihoods to opponents while extracting local rents or coercing compliance (Adelaja, 2019). These patterns indicate that terrorism’s impact on resource access is both strategic and measurable, evidenced by lost output, land abandonment, and altered settlement patterns.

Scholarly reviews and quantitative policy papers that examine farmer–herder violence in the Middle Belt explain how environmental change, population pressures, and weak resource governance create opportunities for violent actors to weaponise resource scarcity. World Bank and related policy-research work document reductions in agricultural labour and market participation in areas affected by herder-related violence, with consequent impacts on food security and local economies. These are empirical outcomes that both motivate and sustain cycles of violent resource control (World Bank PRWP; World Bank, 2023).

Taken together, the empirical literature converges on three interrelated findings: (1) resource competition is a recurrent proximate cause of violent events classified as terrorism or banditry in Nigeria’s northern and Middle Belt zones; (2) violent actors deliberately use terror tactics (raids, forced displacement, kidnappings) to appropriate resources and revenues; and (3) these dynamics are amplified by governance deficits (weak land tenure systems, limited state presence, and poor resource-management institutions) which transform local disputes into protracted, securitized conflicts (Ojakorotu et al., 2022; Basedau & Lay, 2009 as applied in Nigerian contexts). These empirical insights underscore the necessity of integrating resource-governance and local economic remedies into counter-terrorism and security policy if interventions are to address the root incentives for violence rather than only its symptoms.

The table below extracts authoritative reports from the UNIDIR, World Bank, and PRWP of the most relevant direct statistics and quantitative findings with figures and quantitative claims that are

explicitly given in each source or clearly summarised in authoritative reports (UNIDIR, World Bank, PRWP).

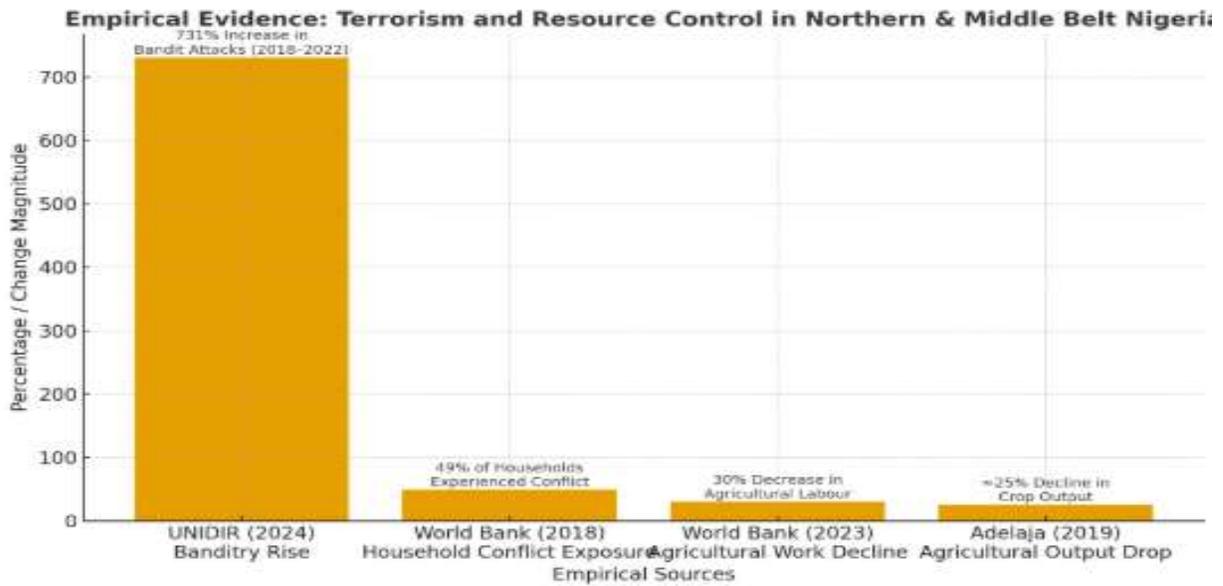
Table 1: Evidential Authoritative Reports (UNIDIR, World Bank, PRWP)

Source (Harvard)	Key statistic(s) / figure(s)	Context / short note (what it means for resource-control via terrorism)	Citation
UNIDIR, 2024. <i>Banditry Violence in Nigeria's North West: Insights from Affected Communities</i>	- Survey of 2,947 community members (Jan–Mar 2024).- ACLED: bandit attacks in North West rose 731% between 2018 and 2022.- Kidnappings in the North West were 169% more frequently reported (2019–2023) than in the North East->25,000 children orphaned in Zamfara; >200,000 internally displaced in the North West. - 70% of respondents cited “banditry” as a top community problem (Katsina ≈ 90%).	Large, recent community survey and incident-data synthesis showing (often labelled terrorism by government) and the direct social/economic effects (displacement, orphaning) consistent with groups using violence to control people, mobility and resources (cattle, access to land/routes).	
World Bank & NBS, 2018. <i>Conflict and Violence in Nigeria: Results from the North East, North Central, and South South</i>	- 49% of households in the North East experienced at least one conflict/violence event (2010–2017).- >2/3 of conflict events in the North East were attributed to Boko Haram- Only 8% of conflict-affected households reported receiving any assistance.	Representative phone survey showing high household exposure to violent events in the North East (Boko Haram dominant). The report also disaggregates causes and highlights that land/resource access (e.g., livestock grazing on farms, land disputes) is a notable cause in other zones (North Central), linking resource competition to violent events.	(World Bank)
World Bank (PRWP 10607), 2023. <i>Herder-Related Violence,</i>	- Exposure to herder-related violent events leads to >30 percentage point decrease in the probability that a man worked in on-farm	Panel analysis (2010–2019) showing that herder-related violence materially alters agricultural labour supply	(Enterprise Surveys)

<i>Agricultural Work, and the Informal Sector as a Safety Net</i>	agricultural work in the last week (relative to a sample mean of 0.28).- Documented seasonal "shadow of violence" effects (post-planting/post-harvest) and shifts into informal work.	and livelihoods — a mechanism by which violent actors can undermine/command control of land and labour and thereby extract resources or coerce populations.	
Adelaja, A. & George, J., 2019. <i>Effects of conflict on agriculture: Evidence from the Boko Haram insurgency</i> (World Development) & <i>Terrorism and land use in agriculture</i> (Land Use Policy)	- Main verified quantitative claim: increased Boko Haram intensity significantly reduces total agricultural output and productivity, and reduces outputs of staple crops (sorghum, cassava, soya, yam).- Some replication attempts have questioned specific effect sizes; however, multiple World Bank/academic technical papers corroborate meaningful negative output and labour effects in conflict zones.	Micro-econometric analyses linking insurgent terror (Boko Haram) to measurable drops in agricultural production and labour availability — demonstrating how terrorism degrades land use/value and can functionally remove territory from formal production, which creates opportunities for resource appropriation or coercion. (Exact percent effect sizes reported in the articles' tables; access to full numeric tables may require journal access.)	(ScienceDirect)
Ojakorotu, V., 2022. <i>Insurgency and natural resource extraction in Nigeria: theoretical and empirical linkages</i>	- Qualitative/empirical synthesis showing insurgents have taken control of extractive processes in multiple theatres; documents impacts on oil production and illicit extraction (figures contextualised qualitatively rather than one headline percent).	Demonstrates the political-economic mechanism: where the state is weak, insurgents seize extractive opportunities (oil, artisanal mining), which converts violence into direct resource revenues — a central pathway for terrorism used as resource-control.	

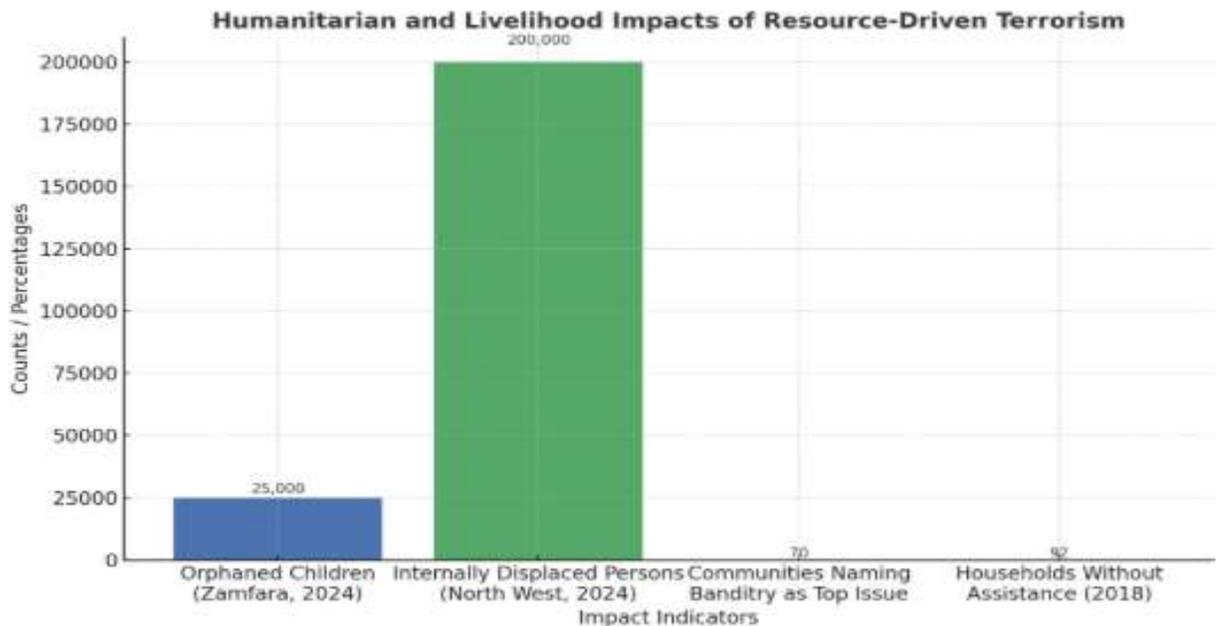
Source: Field Report, 2026

Figure 1



The empirical evidence shows how terrorism functions as a mechanism for resource control in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria. It highlights key quantitative findings from the major studies showing significant increases in violent incidents, widespread household exposure to conflict, and measurable economic impacts such as reduced agricultural labour and crop output

Figure 2



The bar chart shows the humanitarian and livelihood impacts of resource-driven terrorism in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria. It visualizes key empirical data such as the estimated 25,000 orphaned children, 200,000 displaced persons, 70% of communities citing banditry as their main problem, and 92% of affected households receiving no assistance. This underscores how terrorism deliberately destabilizes populations to gain control over land and local resources.

Thus, the literature reveals enduring debates and analytical tensions over whether terrorism in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria should be interpreted primarily as an ideologically driven phenomenon or as a deliberate strategy embedded within the political economy of resource control. A dominant strand of scholarship emphasizes religious extremism, radicalization, and identity-based mobilization, portraying groups such as Boko Haram as motivated chiefly by theological objectives and anti-Western ideology (Crenshaw, 2011; Hoffman, 2006; Schmid, 2011). In contrast, political economy-oriented studies argue that terrorist violence increasingly operates as a rational mechanism for controlling access to land, grazing routes, agricultural production, and extractive resources, particularly in contexts of weak state regulation and contested authority (Ross, 2001; Le Billon, 2012; Ikelegbe, 2013). This perspective highlights how violence is used strategically to depopulate territories, impose informal taxation, regulate rural labour, and capture rents, thereby blurring the boundaries between terrorism, banditry, and organized criminality (Basedau and Lay, 2009; Uche and Iwuoha, 2020; Braimah, 2024). A further tension concerns agency and beneficiaries: while some studies frame terrorist groups as autonomous non-state actors exploiting governance vacuums (Agbibo, 2015; Onuoha, 2014), others emphasize the complicity or indirect benefits accrued by political elites, security actors, and local power brokers through militarization, patronage, and conflict-driven rent-seeking (Watts, 2008; Ezeani, 2021). Additionally, scholars disagree on whether terrorism reflects a collapse of governance or constitutes an alternative form of governance that regulates markets, mobility, and resource access in ungoverned spaces (Suberu, 2001; Ross, 2015). These debates point to the need for an integrated analytical framework that moves beyond ideological explanations to examine terrorism as a deliberate, adaptive mechanism within broader struggles over resource control and state authority in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria.

Effectiveness of existing state and regional counter-terrorism policies in addressing the resource-control dimensions of terrorism in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria

Scholarly and policy analyses point to a persistent gap between Nigeria's formal counter-terrorism frameworks and the evolving tactics of violent actors who exploit resource scarcity and weak governance for territorial control. The National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) of 2016 established a comprehensive architecture—emphasising prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships; but several studies argue that implementation has been uneven, with an over-reliance on kinetic measures and limited integration of resource-governance remedies (NCTC, 2016). Critics note that while NACTEST outlines multi-agency coordination, operational coordination on the ground (land tenure, local dispute resolution, livelihoods restoration) remains fragmented, reducing the strategy's ability to address why groups target resource assets in the first place.

Regional mechanisms and multinational responses (for example, Lake Chad Basin coordination, ECOWAS engagements and intelligence-sharing initiatives) have improved operational

cooperation against cross-border insurgent movements, but they too face limits when countering locally-embedded resource control strategies. UN and regional assessments emphasise that military successes against insurgent cells often produce short-term gains, yet fail to secure long-term resource governance or community resilience—conditions that allow armed groups or bandit networks to reconstitute and reassert control over land, grazing corridors and illicit extractive opportunities (UN Security/UNOWAS analyses; 2022). These assessments recommend combining security operations with local governance reforms, dispute-settlement mechanisms and economic recovery programs to reduce the incentives for territorial predation.

Empirical evaluations of more recent offensives indicate mixed outcomes. Nigerian military operations have neutralised leaders and disrupted some criminal networks, but reportage and independent monitoring suggest that such gains often coincide with humanitarian displacement and do not necessarily dismantle the political-economy foundations of resource-oriented violence (Reuters reporting on 2024 operations; independent analyses). In short, force-dominant approaches decrease immediate threat levels yet leave the extraction of rents and the informal control of resource-rich spaces largely intact allowing terrorism and banditry to persist in a different form.

Recent technical reviews and policy critiques, therefore, call for a reorientation: integrate data-driven threat analysis with targeted socio-economic interventions (land-tenure reform, community policing, conditional cash and livelihood support) and strengthen institutional capacities for natural-resource governance at sub-national levels (research on data-driven models and recent national reviews). Early pilot programs that combine non-kinetic measures (community dialogue, reintegration, and local dispute mediation) show promise, but they are small, inconsistently funded and lack rigorous evaluation at scale leaving policymakers without robust evidence on what best reduces the resource-control incentives for terrorism.

In conclusion, Nigeria's and regional counter-terrorism policies have improved coordination and tactical response, yet remain insufficiently attuned to resource governance and livelihoods - the very drivers that incentivise terrorism as a tool for resource control. Addressing this shortfall requires policy packages that couple security operations with durable governance reforms, sustained community investments and transparent mechanisms that reduce the rents available to violent actors.

Thus, the literature on counter-terrorism in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria reflects significant debates over the effectiveness of existing state and regional policies in addressing the resource-control dimensions of terrorism. A dominant policy-oriented strand emphasizes militarized responses—such as joint task force operations, counter-insurgency campaigns, and regional security cooperation frameworks—arguing that these measures have weakened terrorist networks and reduced large-scale attacks (National Counter Terrorism Centre, 2016; UNOWAS, 2022). However, a contrasting body of scholarship contends that such approaches largely treat terrorism as a security problem while neglecting its embeddedness in struggles over land, natural resources, and rural livelihoods, thereby limiting their long-term effectiveness (Ezeani, 2021; Akinyetun, 2022). Critics argue that counter-terrorism strategies often fail to address the political economy drivers of violence, including contested land tenure systems, herder–farmer conflicts, illicit resource extraction, and informal taxation regimes that sustain armed groups (Ikelegbe, 2013; Uche

and Iwuoha, 2020). Moreover, scholars highlight tensions between national security objectives and local governance realities, noting that heavy-handed military interventions can exacerbate displacement, disrupt agricultural production, and reinforce grievance-based recruitment, particularly in resource-dependent rural communities (Adelaja, 2019; UNHCR, 2024). At the regional level, while multinational cooperation frameworks are frequently presented as evidence of policy progress, analysts question their capacity to dismantle transboundary resource economies—such as arms trafficking, cattle rustling, and cross-border banditry—that finance terrorist activity (UNIDIR, 2024; Musa, 2025). These debates suggest that prevailing counter-terrorism policies remain only partially effective because they insufficiently integrate resource governance, livelihood protection, and political accountability into security responses, underscoring the need for a more holistic policy framework that aligns counter-terrorism with resource management and inclusive development in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria.

Implications of Resource-Driven Terrorism for National Security Governance and Sustainable Peace in Nigeria

The rise of resource-driven terrorism in Nigeria has profound implications for national security governance and the pursuit of sustainable peace. Scholars argue that the convergence of terrorism and resource competition has redefined the nature of internal security threats, shifting them from purely ideological insurgencies to complex political–economic conflicts (Agbiboa, 2015; Ikelegbe, 2013; Nwambuko & Iloh, 2021). This shift challenges the conventional security architecture of the Nigerian state, which was historically structured to address external threats rather than protracted internal conflicts over land, minerals, and economic opportunities. The result has been an overstretched security apparatus, fragmented command structures, and persistent inter-agency rivalry (Ezeani, 2021).

Empirical analyses demonstrate that resource-motivated terrorism has eroded state authority in several northern and Middle Belt regions, creating “ungoverned spaces” where non-state armed groups exercise de facto control over resources and populations (Uche & Iwuoha, 2020). In these areas, violent actors impose taxes, regulate markets, and control access to land, mimicking state functions and undermining public trust in government institutions. This erosion of state legitimacy contributes to the weakening of democratic governance and complicates post-conflict reconstruction and peace building efforts (Basedau & Lay, 2009). Furthermore, diverting national resources to security operations (including counter-insurgency and humanitarian relief) constrains investment in social and economic development, thereby reinforcing poverty and grievances that sustain cycles of violence (Ross, 2015).

Studies on Nigeria’s peace building and governance reforms highlight that the persistence of resource-linked terrorism has impeded progress towards sustainable peace by disrupting local economies, displacing populations, and inflaming ethnic and religious divisions (Akinyetun, 2022). These dynamics have rendered peace building initiatives largely reactive, focusing on conflict containment rather than structural transformation. The inability of national and regional institutions to integrate resource management and inclusive development into security governance has perpetuated insecurity in affected zones (Onuoha, 2014; Ezeani, 2021).

Thus, the literature identifies resource-driven terrorism as having profound and contested implications for national security governance and the prospects for sustainable peace in Nigeria. One strand of scholarship argues that the persistence of violence rooted in competition over land, extractive resources, and rural economies exposes fundamental weaknesses in Nigeria's security architecture, particularly its overreliance on militarized responses at the expense of preventative governance and conflict-sensitive resource management (Suberu, 2001; National Counter Terrorism Centre, 2016). From this perspective, terrorism not only threatens territorial integrity but also erodes state legitimacy by undermining the state's capacity to regulate access to resources and deliver basic security in peripheral regions (Ezeani, 2021; World Bank, 2018). In contrast, a more critical body of literature contends that security governance itself can become implicated in the political economy of conflict, as prolonged insecurity enables rent-seeking, militarization of resource spaces, and the entrenchment of informal power structures that benefit from instability (Watts, 2008; Ross, 2015). This tension is particularly evident in debates on sustainable peace, where some scholars advocate for stabilization through strengthened state authority and security sector reform, while others emphasize that durable peace is unlikely without addressing structural inequalities, land tenure disputes, displacement, and livelihood loss that fuel resource-based grievances (Ikelegbe, 2013; Adelaja, 2019; UNHCR, 2024). Furthermore, analysts note that failure to integrate resource governance into peacebuilding frameworks risks reproducing cycles of violence, as post-conflict interventions that prioritize security without economic inclusion or environmental sustainability may inadvertently reinforce the conditions that sustain terrorist mobilization (Le Billon, 2012; World Bank, 2023). These debates underscore the conclusion that national security governance and sustainable peace in Nigeria are inextricably linked to the state's ability to confront terrorism not merely as a violent threat, but as a symptom of deeper political and economic struggles over resource control.

In summary, the literature converges on the view that resource-driven terrorism undermines Nigeria's national security governance by eroding state authority, diverting development resources, and fragmenting local governance systems. Sustainable peace remains elusive because counter-terrorism responses have not adequately addressed the economic roots of violence or built community resilience. Scholars therefore advocate a holistic security governance model that links counter-terrorism with resource justice, inclusive governance, and socio-economic empowerment to secure a durable peace in Nigeria's conflict-prone regions (Agbibo, 2015; Ikelegbe, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Resource Curse Theory as its guiding theoretical framework. The Resource Curse Theory, first articulated by Richard Auty (1993) and later expanded by Ross (2001, 2015), posits that countries endowed with abundant natural resources often experience slower economic growth, weak governance, corruption, and violent conflict compared to resource-scarce nations. Contrary to expectations, resource wealth can generate political instability and insecurity when revenues from natural resources are mismanaged or unequally distributed. The theory provides a critical lens for examining how resource-driven terrorism has evolved in Nigeria's Northern and Middle Belt regions.

According to the theory, competition over resource control often creates economic grievances and political exclusion, leading marginalized groups to adopt violent strategies to assert access or ownership (Basedau & Lay, 2009). In contexts where state institutions are weak, corruption is high, and governance is uneven (as in parts of Nigeria), natural resources become both an incentive and a target for violent actors. This theoretical explanation aligns with the reality in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria, where terrorist groups, bandits, and militia networks have used violence to dominate territories rich in gold, fertile farmland, and other extractive resources (Uche & Iwuoha, 2020; Ezeani, 2021).

The Resource Curse Theory also illuminates the governance implications of terrorism. When terrorist groups seize control of resource-rich areas, they disrupt state authority and extract rents from illicit mining, cattle rustling, and taxation of local populations. This process reproduces what scholars term a “*shadow economy of violence*,” where non-state actors operate as alternative authorities (Le Billon, 2012). As state control weakens, the resulting insecurity perpetuates underdevelopment and erodes national cohesion.

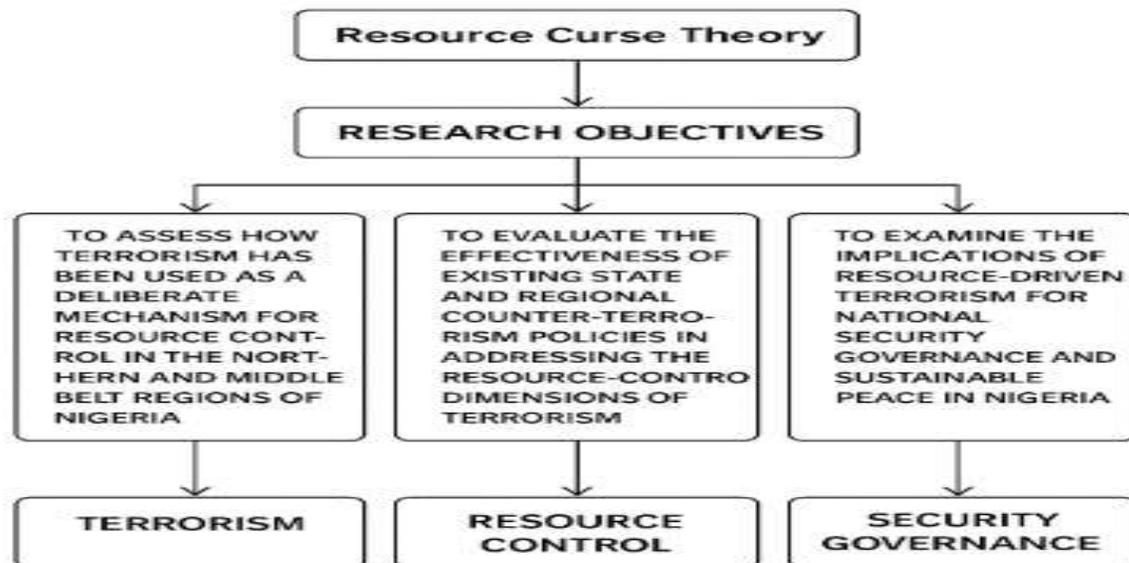
Applying this theory to the present study, resource-driven terrorism in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria can be seen as a manifestation of the governance failures and distributive injustices associated with resource mismanagement. The unequal allocation of wealth, pervasive corruption, and exclusion of local communities from decision-making foster resentment that extremist groups exploit to mobilise support. Therefore, understanding terrorism through the lens of the Resource Curse Theory helps to explain why counter-terrorism policies that focus narrowly on military responses have failed to address the economic roots of violence.

Table 2: Conceptual Linkage in the Study

Theory Component	Study Application
Resource Abundance	Minerals, grazing land, fertile farmland in the Northern & Middle Belt regions
Institutional Weakness	Poor regulation, weak security governance, and corruption
Incentive for Conflict	Terrorist/bandit groups use violence to control resources
Outcomes	National insecurity, disrupted livelihoods, displacement, and undermined peace

Thus, the Resource Curse Theory provides a robust theoretical lens to analyze how terrorism emerges as a strategic mechanism for resource control, explaining both the motivation of non-state actors and the vulnerabilities in Nigeria’s security governance.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework Diagram Linking the Resource Curse Theory to the Research Objectives and Variables (Terrorism, Resource Control, and Security Governance)



Source: *Nwambuko, Njoku & Ugwu, 2026*

In conclusion, the Resource Curse Theory offers a robust framework for analyzing the interplay between natural resource competition, terrorism, and governance breakdown in Nigeria. It underscores the need for a comprehensive security governance model that integrates economic justice, inclusive resource management, and sustainable peace building as essential components of counter-terrorism policy.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research design complemented by descriptive elements to examine how terrorism functions as a deliberate strategy for resource control in the Northern and Middle Belt regions of Nigeria and to assess its implications for policy, national security governance, and sustainable peace. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth exploration of the perceptions, motivations, and experiences of individuals and communities affected by resource-driven terrorism, as well as the perspectives of policymakers and security actors involved in counter-terrorism efforts. Furthermore, the study covered selected states within the Northern and Middle Belt regions of Nigeria that have been most affected by terrorism and violent conflicts linked to resource control. These include Borno, Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, Plateau, and Benue States. These states represent diverse conflict dynamics ranging from insurgency (Borno) to banditry and illegal mining (Zamfara and Niger), and farmer–herder conflicts (Plateau and Benue).

The target population comprised key stakeholders relevant to the study such as community leaders and victims in affected rural areas; officials from the Nigerian Police Force, Department of State Services (DSS), Nigerian Army, and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC);

representatives of State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMA) and Ministry of Mines and Steel Development; Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on peace building and resource governance; and Academics and policy experts on security and development. Based on data obtained from security agencies and humanitarian reports, the estimated population of individuals and stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in or affected by terrorism and resource conflicts in the selected states is approximately 3,250,000 persons (UNHCR, 2024; NBS, 2024).

Given the size and diversity of the population, a purposive sampling technique was used to select 210 participants drawn from the key stakeholder categories. This sample size was determined as adequate to represent the various conflict contexts while allowing for depth of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2014). The sample was distributed as follows:

Table 3: Sample Distribution

Stakeholder Category	Number of Respondents
Security officials (Army, Police, DSS, NSCDC)	60
Community leaders and victims	70
Government and agency representatives	30
NGO/CSO representatives	25
Academics and policy experts	25
Total	210

Source: Field Report, 2026.

This sample size provided a balanced perspective between security, community, and policy stakeholders and generated sufficient qualitative data to support valid thematic analysis and interpretation.

Table 4: Demographic Distribution of Respondents in the Study (N = 210)

Category	Region	Gender Distribution (M/F)	Occupation/Role	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Security Officials (Army, Police, DSS, NSCDC)	Northern & Middle Belt	48 / 12	Security and Law Enforcement	60	28.6
Community Leaders and Victims	Borno, Zamfara, Benue, Plateau	50 / 20	Traditional rulers, displaced persons, farmers	70	33.3
Government and Agency Representatives	Federal and State levels	22 / 8	Policy officers, administrators, mining officials	30	14.3

NGO / CSO Representatives	Conflict- affected states	15 / 10	Peacebuilding and humanitarian workers	25	11.9
Academics and Policy Experts	Universities and think tanks	18 / 7	Researchers, policy analysts	25	11.9
Total	—	153 / 57	—	210	100

Source: Field Report, 2026.

Thus, table 4 shows that the largest group of respondents were community leaders and victims (33.3%), representing those directly affected by terrorism and resource-related violence. Security officials (28.6%) formed the second-largest group, providing critical perspectives on operational responses and counter-terrorism policies. Gender representation showed that 72.9% were male and 27.1% female, reflecting the male-dominated nature of security and leadership structures in conflict regions. The balanced inclusion of government, NGO, and academic respondents (about 38%) ensured that the study integrated diverse institutional perspectives.

The study employed semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and documentary analysis. The interviews were conducted with security officials, community leaders, and policy experts, while FGDs were held in selected conflict-affected communities. Relevant secondary data were obtained from government reports, journal articles, and verified online publications on terrorism, resource conflicts, and governance in Nigeria. Additionally, data collected through interviews and FGDs were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Emerging themes were categorized around the study objectives - How terrorism is used as a deliberate mechanism for resource control; the effectiveness of counter-terrorism policies in addressing the resource-control dimension of terrorism; and the implications of resource-driven terrorism for national security governance and sustainable peace.

Themes in this study were generated through a systematic, inductive–deductive thematic analysis process. First, interview transcripts and documentary materials were subjected to open coding, during which recurring concepts, patterns, and meanings related to terrorism, resource control, governance, and security dynamics were identified. These initial codes were then refined through axial coding, allowing related codes to be clustered into broader analytical categories. Finally, selective coding was employed to consolidate these categories into core themes that directly addressed the study’s research questions and theoretical framework on the political economy of resource-driven terrorism. Throughout this process, themes were iteratively reviewed against the data to ensure internal coherence and clear differentiation across themes.

To manage researcher bias, several safeguards were employed. Reflexive memo-writing was used throughout data collection and analysis to document the researcher’s assumptions, positionality, and interpretive decisions. Coding decisions were consistently cross-checked against the raw data to minimize over-interpretation, and alternative explanations were actively considered during theme development. Where feasible, triangulation across data sources—including interviews, policy documents, and secondary literature—was used to enhance analytical rigor and reduce

reliance on a single perspective. In addition, peer debriefing was conducted at key stages of analysis to challenge emerging interpretations and strengthen credibility.

Sampling within stakeholder groups followed purposive and criterion-based selection to ensure relevance and analytical depth. Key stakeholder categories included security officials, policymakers, community leaders, civil society actors, and affected residents in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria. Inclusion criteria were defined by demonstrated involvement in counter-terrorism, resource governance, conflict mediation, or direct experience of terrorism-related violence and displacement. Participants were selected to reflect diversity in institutional roles, geographic locations, and exposure to resource-related conflicts. This approach ensured that the thematic analysis captured a range of perspectives while remaining aligned with the study's analytical focus.

The analysis integrated both qualitative narratives and descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to support interpretation. The outcomes of the study indicated that resource-driven terrorism significantly undermines national security governance, while state responses have been largely militarized, failing to address the economic and governance roots of the conflict. And to ensure validity, interview guides were reviewed by experts in security and peace studies. Triangulation of data sources (security reports, interviews, and documents) was employed to enhance credibility. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

A total of 210 respondents participated in the study, representing security officials, community leaders, government officers, NGO representatives, and academics. Of these, 198 valid responses (94%) were included in the analysis, while 12 were incomplete and excluded. Data were analyzed thematically and descriptively to reflect trends and patterns linked to the study's objectives. The findings are presented according to the three research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question One: How has terrorism been used as a deliberate mechanism for resource control in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria?

Findings: Analysis of interviews and focus group discussions revealed that terrorism in the study areas is strategically linked to the struggle over control of natural and land-based resources, particularly gold, farmland, and grazing routes. Respondents emphasized that terrorist and bandit groups often control access to illegal mining sites (Zamfara, Niger States); levy taxes on farmers and traders in Benue, Kaduna, and Plateau States; and enforce control over grazing routes and agricultural produce markets.

Table 5: Empirical Patterns (Descriptive Summary)

Resource-related Activity Controlled by Terrorist Groups	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Illegal gold mining (Northwest states)	52	26.3
Cattle rustling and grazing taxation	48	24.2
Land seizures and forced displacement of farmers	41	20.7
Taxation of local markets and road users	35	17.7
Kidnapping for ransom (linked to resource extortion)	22	11.1
Total	198	100

Source: Field Report, 2026.

Interpretation: The results show that terrorism has evolved beyond religious and ideological motives to a political-economic enterprise for territorial and resource control. This supports the argument of Agbiboa (2015) and Uche & Iwuoha (2020) that terrorism in Nigeria has become a “*shadow economy of violence*”, where criminal-terrorist networks use coercion to extract rents and dominate local economies. Thus, terrorism serves as a deliberate mechanism for economic domination and informal governance, reinforcing the Resource Curse Theory’s assumption that resource abundance, when poorly managed, fosters violent competition.

Research Question Two: How effective are existing state and regional counter-terrorism policies in addressing the resource-control dimension of terrorism?

Findings: Respondents generally rated government and regional counter-terrorism policies as moderately effective but poorly coordinated. The National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST, 2016) and regional frameworks such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) were recognized for reducing insurgent movement in the northeast but found inadequate in tackling economic and resource dimensions of terrorism.

Table 6: Empirical Summary (Perceived Effectiveness Levels)

Perceived Effectiveness Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly Effective	18	9.1
Moderately Effective	54	27.3
Minimally Effective	79	39.9
Ineffective	47	23.7
Total	198	100

Source: Field Report, 2026

Interpretation: The majority (63.6%) of respondents viewed counter-terrorism policies as minimally effective or ineffective, indicating a gap in linking security interventions to resource governance and economic justice. This aligns with Ezeani (2021) and Le Billon (2012), who argue that militarized counter-terrorism approaches fail to address the structural economic causes of

conflict, particularly those tied to natural resource exploitation. Thus, the state’s overreliance on kinetic (military) approaches without integrating livelihood restoration, inclusive resource management, and local governance participation has limited the success of counter-terrorism strategies.

Research Question Three: What are the implications of resource-driven terrorism for national security governance and sustainable peace in Nigeria?

Findings: Respondents highlighted several key impacts such as erosion of state authority in conflict-affected zones, decline in agricultural productivity and food security, mass displacement and humanitarian crises, and diversion of budgetary resources from development to security.

Table 7: Empirical Summary (Key Impact Areas Identified)

Impact Area	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Weakening of security institutions	62	31.3
Economic stagnation and livelihood loss	55	27.8
Ethno-religious tension and community fragmentation	45	22.7
Decline in peace building and governance trust	36	18.2
Total	198	100

Source: Field Report, 2026

Interpretation: The data indicate that resource-driven terrorism undermines national cohesion, institutional legitimacy, and long-term peace building efforts. This reflects Ross’s (2015) view that the “resource curse” manifests through both economic mismanagement and governance breakdowns in resource-rich yet insecure regions. Thus, sustainable peace cannot be achieved without addressing the resource-based political economy of terrorism, emphasizing the need for inclusive governance, equitable resource sharing, and transparent state accountability mechanisms.

Table 8: Hypotheses Testing (Qualitative Logical Validation)

Hypothesis	Findings Summary	Decision
H ₀₁ : Terrorism is not deliberately used as a mechanism for resource control in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria.	Evidence shows organized control over mining, land, and grazing resources by terrorist actors.	Rejected
H ₀₂ : Existing counter-terrorism policies are effective in addressing the resource-control dimension of terrorism.	The majority rated policies as minimally effective, with poor integration of resource governance.	Rejected
H ₀₃ : Resource-driven terrorism has no significant implications for national security governance and sustainable peace in Nigeria.	Data confirm governance erosion, displacement, and loss of legitimacy in affected regions.	Rejected

In summary, terrorism in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria is economically motivated, with clear evidence of resource exploitation and territorial control; the state and regional counter-terrorism efforts remain militarized and poorly integrated with socio-economic and governance reforms; and resource-driven terrorism has weakened Nigeria's national security architecture, deepened poverty, and prolonged instability, obstructing sustainable peace building.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the Resource Curse Theory, which posits that the abundance of natural resources in weakly governed states often leads to economic mismanagement, political instability, and violent conflict (Auty, 1993; Ross, 2015). Evidences from the Northern and Middle Belt regions of Nigeria shows that terrorism has increasingly become a deliberate instrument for controlling and exploiting natural and land-based resources, particularly gold deposits, agricultural land, and grazing routes. This aligns with Le Billon's (2012) argument that the spatial concentration of valuable resources in fragile contexts transforms these areas into "conflict commodities," incentivizing violent actors to seize control and profit from them.

The study's results confirm that terrorist and bandit groups in Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, and Benue States have taken advantage of weak governance and porous security systems to monopolize access to illegal mining sites and impose informal taxation on communities. These findings are consistent with Uche and Iwuoha (2020) and Agbiboa (2015), who both emphasized that Nigeria's internal conflicts increasingly reflect the characteristics of a shadow economy, where violence is not just ideological but economically strategic. Within the framework of the Resource Curse Theory, this pattern illustrates how resource abundance, rather than fostering prosperity, can produce competition, corruption, and insecurity when institutions are fragile or exclusionary.

Furthermore, the study's second major finding reveals that existing counter-terrorism policies have been minimally effective in addressing the economic roots of terrorism—echoes critiques by Ezeani (2021) and Basedau and Lay (2009). They argue that conventional counter-terrorism measures in resource-rich developing states are largely reactive and militarized, focusing on insurgency suppression rather than structural governance reforms. The Nigerian government's heavy reliance on kinetic approaches, such as military offensives under *Operation Hadin Kai* and regional cooperation via the *Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)*, has yielded temporary containment of violence but failed to curb the resource-control motivations behind terrorism. This supports the Resource Curse Theory's proposition that without equitable distribution of resource rents and transparent management systems, violence tends to persist as an alternative form of resource governance.

The third finding underscores the far-reaching implications of resource-driven terrorism for national security governance and sustainable peace. The erosion of state authority, institutional fragmentation, and persistent displacement of communities reveal the depth of the governance crisis in affected regions. These outcomes are consistent with Ross (2001) and Ikelegbe (2013), who maintain that states suffering from the resource curse often experience weakened legitimacy and chronic conflict over distributional grievances. The study demonstrates that terrorism not only

undermines public safety but also delegitimizes the state's capacity to manage natural resources in a just and transparent manner.

A critical dimension emerging from the findings is the interconnectedness between economic exclusion and violent extremism. Many respondents pointed out that unemployment, environmental degradation, and perceived injustice in resource allocation drive young people toward insurgent recruitment. This observation supports Onuoha's (2014) conclusion that socio-economic grievances provide fertile ground for extremist mobilization. Therefore, addressing resource-driven terrorism requires integrating inclusive resource governance, livelihood restoration, and community participation into Nigeria's security and development policies.

In theoretical terms, the study expands the application of the Resource Curse Theory by illustrating how non-state actors, rather than state elites alone, can become rent-seekers within conflict economies. In Nigeria's Northern and Middle Belt regions, terrorists and bandits have effectively become "*informal governors*" of resource flows, exercising coercive control over gold mining, cattle trade, and farmland taxation. This dynamic exemplifies what Le Billon (2012) termed the *privatization of state violence* in resource-endowed conflict zones. Consequently, terrorism should be understood not merely as an ideological or religious phenomenon but as a political-economic project rooted in resource mismanagement and governance failure.

While the study emphasizes terrorism as a deliberate mechanism for resource control, it is important to acknowledge alternative explanations for violence in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria. Some scholars highlight criminality and organized banditry as primary drivers, arguing that acts of violence—including cattle rustling, kidnapping, and ransom-seeking—may be motivated more by economic gain than by political or ideological objectives (Musa, 2025; UNIDIR, 2024). Others underscore identity-based conflicts, particularly between ethnic and religious communities, where historical grievances, competition over land, and perceived marginalization exacerbate intergroup violence independent of resource capture strategies (Agbibo, 2015; Suberu, 2001). Recognizing these perspectives provides a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between terrorism, criminality, and communal tensions, and helps avoid over-attributing all forms of violence solely to resource-driven political strategies.

In conclusion, the discussion reveals that Nigeria's experience of resource-driven terrorism is a textbook manifestation of the Resource Curse Theory. Resource abundance, when combined with weak institutions and inequitable governance, creates the conditions under which terrorism thrives as a parallel system of economic control. Thus, effective counter-terrorism and peacebuilding in Nigeria must transcend military containment to include transparent resource management, inclusive governance, anti-corruption mechanisms, and community-based development without which sustainable peace will remain elusive.

Conclusion

This study examined how terrorism operates as a deliberate mechanism for resource control in Nigeria's Northern and Middle Belt regions, and how this dynamic undermines national security governance and sustainable peace. Guided by the Resource Curse Theory, the research established

that the persistence of terrorism in these regions is not only ideologically motivated but also economically rational, driven by the competition for access to natural and productive resources such as gold, farmland, and grazing routes. The findings revealed that the structural weaknesses in Nigeria's governance system, characterized by corruption, poor security coordination, weak institutional oversight, and inequitable resource distribution, have created enabling conditions for terrorist networks and bandit groups to flourish. These actors have evolved from being mere insurgents into resource entrepreneurs, engaging in illegal mining, extortion, and control of local economies.

Empirical evidence from both primary and secondary sources suggests that current state and regional counter-terrorism policies, including military operations and regional security coalitions, have produced short-term security containment but failed to dismantle the underlying economic and governance roots of terrorism. The study concludes that terrorism in the Northern and Middle Belt regions has become a functional tool of informal resource governance, sustained by poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, and exclusionary politics. Ultimately, the study reaffirms the central thesis of the Resource Curse Theory - *that resource wealth, when mismanaged and unevenly distributed, becomes a source of insecurity rather than prosperity*. For Nigeria to achieve sustainable peace, it must transition from a militarized counter-terrorism approach to an inclusive and developmental governance framework that prioritizes justice, equity, and local participation in resource management.

Thus, addressing the resource-control dimension of terrorism in Nigeria demands a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. The state must reorient its security policies from reactive militarization to preventive development, while simultaneously fostering transparency and community participation in resource governance. Only through this multidimensional approach can Nigeria overcome the cycle of violence and build a foundation for sustainable peace, inclusive development, and resilient national security governance.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the reliance on purposive sampling of key stakeholders may limit the generalizability of findings beyond the selected communities and institutions in Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria. Second, the analysis is primarily qualitative, which, while rich in contextual detail, may not fully capture broader quantitative patterns of resource-driven violence. Third, access constraints and security risks restricted engagement with some affected communities, potentially narrowing the diversity of perspectives. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating larger-scale quantitative analyses, longitudinal studies to track the evolving dynamics of terrorism and resource control, and comparative studies across different regions or countries facing similar political economy challenges. Additionally, exploring the intersections of resource governance, social identity, and climate change could provide deeper insights into the structural drivers of violence and inform more integrated policy responses.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for national and regional policymakers:

- i. *Strengthen Resource Governance and Transparency:* Nigeria should fully implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) standards and adopt community-inclusive frameworks for managing mineral resources in Zamfara, Niger, and Kaduna States. Strengthening local oversight will reduce the incentive for illegal mining and break the economic linkages between resource exploitation and terrorism (Le Billon, 2012).
- ii. *Integrate Economic Development into Counter-Terrorism Strategy:* Security responses should go beyond kinetic operations. Policies must incorporate livelihood restoration, vocational training, agricultural modernization, and microcredit programmes for displaced and at-risk youth. This approach will undercut recruitment incentives for violent groups and promote human security (Onuoha, 2014).
- iii. *Reform Security Governance:* Nigeria's security architecture requires decentralization and improved inter-agency coordination. Regional collaboration under the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) should be expanded to address the transnational dimensions of terrorism, particularly in border areas of Niger and Chad (Ezeani, 2021).
- iv. *Promote Inclusive Political and Resource Participation:* Marginalized communities must have representation in local resource management committees to prevent feelings of exclusion and marginalization. The establishment of peace building councils in each affected state could help mediate conflicts between herders, farmers, and miners (Uche and Iwuoha, 2020).
- v. *Enhance Intelligence and Community Policing:* Investing in intelligence-driven policing and community-based surveillance will facilitate early detection of terrorist financing networks and illegal trade routes. Collaboration between traditional rulers, vigilante groups, and formal security agencies should be institutionalized to improve local response capacity.
- vi. *Regional Cooperation on Resource Security:* Nigeria should deepen partnerships with ECOWAS and the Lake Chad Basin Commission to harmonize policies on cross-border resource trade, weapons control, and anti-money laundering systems. A coordinated regional framework will reduce the cross-border mobility of terrorist groups and illicit minerals.
- vii. *Promote Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation:* Sustainable peace requires long-term investment in post-conflict reconstruction, including the rehabilitation of displaced persons, rebuilding of destroyed infrastructure, and community reconciliation programmes to restore social cohesion in affected areas (Ikelegbe, 2013).

REFERENCES

- Adelaja, A. (2019). Terrorism and land use in agriculture: The case of Boko Haram. *Land Use Policy*.
- Agbibo, D. E. (2015). The political economy of Boko Haram: Poverty, conflict and religious fundamentalism. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(2), 337–357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1024433>
- Akinyetun, T. S. (2022). Terrorism and internal security challenges in Nigeria: A focus on Boko Haram insurgency. *African Security Review*, 31(1), 45–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2022.2038795>

- Arinze, U. C. (2025). *Review and analysis of Nigeria's national counter-terrorism and CBRNE risk mitigation strategies*. Sandia National Laboratories.
- Auty, R. M. (1993). *Sustaining development in mineral economies: The resource curse thesis*. Routledge.
- Basedau, M., & Lay, J. (2009). Resource curse or rentier peace? The ambiguous effects of oil wealth and oil dependence on violent conflict. *Journal of Peace Research*, 46(6), 757–776. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343309340500>
- Braimah, J. O. (2024). Data-driven strategies to counter Boko Haram in Nigeria. *F1000Research*. <https://f1000research.com>
- Crenshaw, M. (2011). *Explaining terrorism: Causes, processes and consequences*. Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Ezeani, E. O. (2021). Governance, insecurity and counter-terrorism policies in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 15(3), 60–72. <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJPSIR2021.1324>
- Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside terrorism* (2nd ed.). Columbia University Press.
- Ikelegbe, A. (2013). Resource governance and conflict in the Niger Delta: Implications for peace and security in Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 15(4), 1–16.
- Le Billon, P. (2012). *Wars of plunder: Conflicts, profits and the politics of resources*. Hurst & Co.
- Musa, S. Y. (2025). Banditry and modern slavery: (In)security dynamics in Nigeria. *Journal/Report*.
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *Nigeria security and displacement report 2024*. NBS. <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng>
- National Counter Terrorism Centre. (2016). *National counter-terrorism strategy (NACTEST)*. NCTC.
- Nwambuko, T. C. (2021). Political leadership and the developmental state in Nigeria: An overview. *International Journal of Management, Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict Studies*, 4(2), 440–450.
- Nwambuko, T. C., & Iloh, A. U. (2021). Security and sustainable development goals: A focus on Nigeria. *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies*, 4(2), 450–463.

- Onuoha, F. C. (2014). *Why do youth join Boko Haram?* United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2014/06/why-do-youth-join-boko-haram>
- Reuters. (2024, September 26). Nigeria military says dozens of militia group leaders killed over past three months. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com>
- Ross, M. L. (2001). Does oil hinder democracy? *World Politics*, 53(3), 325–361. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2001.0011>
- Ross, M. L. (2015). What have we learned about the resource curse? *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18, 239–259. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-052213-040359>
- Schmid, A. P. (2011). The definition of terrorism. In A. P. Schmid (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of terrorism research* (pp. 39–98). Routledge.
- Suberu, R. T. (2001). *Federalism and ethnic conflict in Nigeria*. United States Institute of Peace Press. <https://www.usip.org>
- Uche, O., & Iwuoha, V. (2020). The political economy of resource conflicts and terrorism in Nigeria's Middle Belt. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 55(8), 1163–1180. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909620925305>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2024). *Nigeria internal displacement monitoring report*. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org>
- United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. (2024). *Banditry violence in Nigeria's North West: Insights from affected communities*. UNIDIR. <https://unidir.org>
- United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. (2022). *S/2022/521: Report on security and humanitarian impacts in the region*. United Nations. <https://undocs.org/S/2022/521>
- Watts, M. (2008). *Curse of the black gold: 50 years of oil in the Niger Delta*. Powerhouse Books.
- World Bank. (2018). *Conflict and violence in Nigeria: Results from the North*. World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org>
- World Bank. (2023). *Herder-related violence, agricultural work, and the rural economy* (Policy Research Working Paper No. 10607). World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/40517>