INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS AND THE COUNTERING OF IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA: EVIDENCE FROM BORNO AND YOBE STATES

Internal Security Operations and the Countering of Improvised Explosive Devices in Northeast Nigeria: Evidence from Borno and Yobe States: Maikomo, J. M. & Chudi, O. A.

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Abstract

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to investigate the strategies of countering improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in internal security operations in Nigeria's North-East Geopolitical Zone, focusing on Borno and Yobe States. The research integrates quantitative data from official security reports with qualitative insights from interviews with military personnel, law enforcement officers, and local stakeholders. The study hinges on collective security theory, the study revealed that combating insurgency in the North-East region of Nigeria, particularly in Borno and Yobe States, necessitates a multidimensional approach involving military, political, socio-economic, and international strategies. Key military interventions include Operation Lafiya Dole, which reclaimed territories from Boko Haram, and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which disrupted cross-border insurgent supply chains. Community-based initiatives, such as intelligence-sharing with vigilante groups and public awareness campaigns, have enhanced Improvised Explosive Device (IED) detection and reporting. Additionally, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) units and strengthened border security measures have significantly reduced the flow of explosive materials. On the political front, the North-East Development Commission (NEDC) has spearheaded rehabilitation and relocation efforts by restoring critical infrastructure. This study recommends among others a comprehensive approach that integrates advanced counter-IED technologies, enhanced intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and targeted capacity-building for security forces. Moreover, addressing the root causes of insurgency, such as poverty, and unemployment, is crucial for reducing the recruitment and radicalization of vulnerable populations.

Keywords: Internal Security Operations, Improvised Explosive Devices, Counterterrorism Strategies, Borno and Yobe State, North-East Nigeria

Introduction

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have long posed a significant challenge to Nigeria's internal security operations (ISOs), particularly in the North-East geopolitical zone. The persistent use of IEDs by insurgent groups, especially Boko Haram, and criminal elements has not only escalated violence but has also tested the operational capacity and strategies of ISOs. This challenge highlights the critical need for understanding and addressing the interplay between IED proliferation and the countermeasures employed by ISOs to mitigate their impacts (Liu & Pond, 2016; Seddon & Malaret, 2020).

The North-East region, comprising Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Yobe, Gombe, and Taraba States, has borne the brunt of this menace. Insurgents have consistently used IEDs as a tactical weapon in

guerrilla warfare, targeting both military and civilian infrastructure to instill fear and disrupt socio-economic activities. This region's strategic significance and vulnerability have made it a focal point of Nigeria's counter-IED operations. For instance, coordinated responses such as bomb disposal units, intelligence gathering, and regional collaborations have formed the backbone of ISOs aimed at neutralizing the threat posed by these devices (Nwakaudu, 2012).

According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHLS, 2017), between 2011 and 2017, IED attacks were reported in 58 countries, highlighting the global implications of this threat. Nigeria's internal security challenges resonate with this global pattern but are particularly acute due to the scale of insurgency and terrorism in the North-East. The proliferation of IEDs has significantly impeded ISOs, necessitating adaptive measures to reduce their effectiveness in the operational strategies of groups like Boko Haram (Global Terrorism Index, 2015).

Boko Haram's insurgency exemplifies the devastating use of IEDs in Nigeria. Notable attacks, such as the 2016 explosion at a Dikwa IDP camp that killed 58 individuals and the 2018 Damboa suicide bombings that claimed 31 lives, underscore the critical role of IEDs in the group's campaign of terror (Al Jazeera, 2016; Reuters, 2018). These events not only reflect the tactical evolution of insurgents but also underline the necessity for ISOs to enhance counter-IED capabilities, including surveillance, community engagement, and technological advancements in explosive detection.

Efforts by Nigeria's military and security agencies have yielded mixed outcomes in countering IED-related threats. While successes have been recorded in disarming and decommissioning explosive devices, challenges persist in intelligence sharing, resource allocation, and addressing the root causes of insurgency. Moreover, the adaptive tactics of insurgents demand continual updates to counter-IED measures (AOAV, 2014).

This paper critically examines Internal Security Operations and the Countering of Improvised Explosive Devices in Northeast Nigeria with a specific focus on Borno and Yobe States. It evaluates the implications of these devices on security efforts and explores the strategies employed by internal security operations to mitigate their impact. By analyzing the dialectical interplay between insurgent tactics and state responses, the study sheds light on the successes, challenges, and evolving nature of counter-IED operations. Ultimately, this research aims to provide a nuanced discourse on how state responses in Borno and Yobe States have shaped internal security operations, highlighting their broader implications for regional stability and security.

Internal Security Operations and Improvised Explosive Devices: A Systematic Review of the Literature.

Concept of Improvise Explosive Device

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are explosive devices that are constructed and deployed in a non-standardized manner, often by non-state actors, for the purpose of causing destruction, chaos, and fear. Unlike conventional explosives, which are produced through standardized industrial processes for specific applications such as construction, mining, or military use, IEDs are typically crafted using available materials and repurposed components. This definition encompasses a wide range of devices,

from those that repurpose conventional explosives to those created entirely from improvised materials (Gill et al., 2011; Khomeriki et al., 2015).

Historically, the concept of IEDs dates back to early instances such as the 'fougasses' of the 17th century, which used makeshift components combined with explosive substances for defensive purposes (Spiteri, 1999). The differentiation between standardized explosives and IEDs became more pronounced in the 19th century with the advent of industrial explosives like TNT and nitroglycerin (Meyers & Shanley, 1990). The term "improvised explosive device" itself first appeared in 1946 but gained prominence in the 1990s due to its association with conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan (Wilson, 2007).

Improvised Explosive Device are characterized by their components, delivery methods, initiation techniques, and the types of substances used. They can be deployed in various forms, such as bombs, mines, or grenades, often adapted to the specific needs and constraints of the user (Gill et al., 2011). In the context of this study, IEDs refer specifically to devices used by non-state actors for terrorist activities, including bombings, ambushes, and targeted attacks within the North-East Region of Nigeria.

Improvised Explosive Device (IED): within the context of this study refers to any explosive device constructed and deployed in an improvised manner, typically used by non-state actors for terrorist activities, including but not limited to bombings, ambushes, or targeted attacks within the North East Region of Nigeria.

Concept of Internal Security Operations

Internal Security Operations (ISOPs) encompass the systematic and ongoing endeavors orchestrated by domestic security entities, such as the police, civil defense, customs services, and immigration services, aimed at managing and mitigating domestic threats within a country's borders (Azinge, 2013). These threats range from civil unrest, riots, and demonstrations to communal clashes and acts of terrorism, all of which fall under the purview of these agencies, distinct from the military's constitutional responsibilities (Azinge, 2013). The Nigeria Police Act, particularly Section 4, delineates the primary duties of the police force, emphasizing the preservation of law and order, protection of life and property, and enforcement of laws and regulations within society, underscoring the critical role of internal security operations in addressing internal conflicts within the nation (Azinge, 2013).

In essence, Internal Security Operations (ISOPs) involve meticulously planned, coordinated, and often protracted activities conducted within a nation's territorial boundaries to ensure public order, safety, and the countering of various internal security threats (Azinge, 2013). These operations necessitate collaborative efforts among law enforcement agencies, military units, and at times, civilian organizations, to effectively tackle multifaceted challenges to internal security, including communal conflicts, religious tensions, and acts of terrorism (Azinge, 2013).

Moreover, the framing and classification of security threats play a crucial role in determining the responsiveness of security measures. While external aggression by another state constitutes a clear-cut

threat, internal security threats originate within the nation-state's borders, encompassing a diverse range of challenges (Alumona et al., 2019). These threats, which include safeguarding lives, property, vital institutions, and economic interests, necessitate a holistic approach to security, ensuring a conducive environment for citizen welfare, economic prosperity, and national development (Folahanmi, John, & Samuel, 2023). As internal security threats increasingly exhibit complexities and potential external implications due to the involvement of non-state actors, a comprehensive response strategy must prioritize citizen safety while leveraging the professionalism and capabilities of the military (Momodu, 2019). Synergizing the threat concerns of the state with those of citizens is imperative for crafting effective and inclusive security measures (Momodu, 2019). Internal Security Operations (ISOPs): Internal security operation within the context of this study is operationalised to mean the coordinated efforts of security agencies and personnel within Nigeria, aimed at maintaining law and order, protecting citizens, and preventing and countering threats to internal security, including but not limited to terrorism, insurgency, and criminal activities, particularly within the North East Region.

Global Overview of Improvised Explosive Devices and Their Usage

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) remain a critical global security challenge due to their accessibility, adaptability, and devastating effects. These devices are typically constructed from readily available materials, making them inexpensive yet potent tools for insurgents, terrorists, and other non-state actors. Their use spans various purposes, including ideological, religious, and criminal motivations, such as bank robberies and other violent crimes, with profound impacts on political stability and social cohesion (Mwinga & Ichani, 2021). The global prevalence of IEDs underscores the urgent need for adaptive security responses.

Recent studies highlight the widespread use of IEDs in countries like Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and Pakistan, where groups such as ISIS and the Taliban have employed these devices to devastating effect (Overton & Dathan, 2017; Seddon & Malaret, 2023). Africa has also experienced a surge in IED incidents, particularly in Somalia, Mali, and Nigeria, attributed to militant groups such as Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. For example, Somalia reported over 2,000 IED-related incidents in 2022 alone, leading to substantial casualties and widespread socio-economic disruptions (UNODC, 2023).

IEDs typically consist of an initiating mechanism, detonator, explosive charge, and container, often supplemented with metal fragments to maximize damage. They can be activated using a variety of mechanisms, such as remote controls, tripwires, and pressure plates (Chepkenen, 2020). The ease of construction and deployment has made IEDs a preferred weapon for insurgents and criminals alike. For instance, armed robbers in Nigeria have utilized IEDs to breach bank security systems during heists, demonstrating their versatility beyond traditional terrorism (Adamu & Abubakar, 2023).

From 2013 to 2023, global IED incidents have shown an alarming upward trend. A study by Action on Armed Violence (2023) revealed that between 2011 and 2022, IED attacks across 72 countries resulted in over 75,000 fatalities, with civilians disproportionately affected. This trend is mirrored in

Africa, where over 5,000 IED attacks during the same period caused over 80,000 casualties, primarily in Nigeria and Somalia (AOAV, 2023).

Efforts to combat IEDs in Nigeria have seen mixed results. The Nigerian Police Force and military have launched community engagement initiatives to enhance intelligence gathering, recognizing the crucial role of local populations in detecting and preventing attacks. Programs such as Operation Lafiya Dole have focused on dismantling Boko Haram's supply chains for IED materials, but challenges persist in addressing the root causes of insurgency, such as poverty and governance deficits (Adeyemi & Bamidele, 2024).

The global and African contexts of IED usage highlight the urgent need for robust, multifaceted responses. Effective counter-IED strategies require international collaboration, technological advancements in detection, and community-based approaches. In Nigeria, addressing the socio-political drivers of insurgency alongside tactical military operations is critical to mitigating the IED threat. Future research should focus on adaptive strategies for countering evolving IED technologies and their broader implications for security and development.

Overview of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Nigeria

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) have become a significant security threat in Nigeria, particularly due to the activities of Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). IEDs are defined as unconventional explosive devices made from readily available materials such as fertilizers, gas canisters, and electronic triggers, often designed to evade detection (Onuoha & Ezirim, 2020). Akinyemi and Lawal (2022) identify the primary types of IEDs used in Nigeria, including Vehicle-Borne IEDs (VBIEDs), Person-Borne IEDs (PBIEDs), and Command-Operated IEDs (COIEDs). These devices have become central to the operational tactics of insurgent groups due to their versatility and capacity to inflict mass casualties. Boko Haram's deployment of IEDs has grown in sophistication over the years, evolving from crude explosive devices to more advanced forms that can be remotely detonated (Adesoji, 2020). This shift underscores the insurgents' adaptation to countermeasures by Nigerian security forces, demonstrating the dynamic nature of asymmetric warfare.

Theoretical Framework

Whenever a discourse about Internal security operations and countering Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) is launched, theories, models and conjectures are design to provide a sense of direction for the discourse The military's function in mitigating security threats could also be understood within the framework of the theory of collective security has its roots in liberal internationalism and is most prominently associated with thinkers like Immanuel Kant, who proposed the concept of perpetual peace in his 1795 essay. Modern proponents include Woodrow Wilson, who championed the League of Nations, and David Mitrany, who advocated for cooperative international efforts to address common threats. These scholars emphasize the role of joint action and mutual support among members of a community or state system to counter security threats.

Collective security operates on the principle that common threats require joint action, necessitating that states or entities collaborate to address dangers jeopardizing the security of all members. It emphasizes shared responsibility, asserting that security is indivisible and that a threat to one member constitutes a threat to the entire collective. The effectiveness of this framework hinges on trust, shared norms, and established rules that guide cooperative mechanisms to ensure coordinated responses. A unified approach to aggression not only enables immediate action but also serves as a deterrent to potential threats. While originally conceived for global application, as seen in the United Nations' efforts, collective security has proven equally effective at regional levels, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) addressing security challenges in West Africa.

Critics of collective security theory highlight several limitations that undermine its effectiveness, particularly in addressing modern security challenges. One major critique is its ineffectiveness against non-state actors like Boko Haram, as the framework was originally designed for interstate conflicts.

The application of collective security theory to internal security operations (ISOs) and the countering of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Borno and Yobe States demonstrates its relevance in addressing contemporary security challenges. Boko Haram's use of IEDs poses a threat not only to these states but to the broader North-East region and neighboring countries, necessitating collective action. ISOs, involving Nigeria's military, local security agencies, and regional alliances like the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), align with the theory's emphasis on joint responses to common threats. Regional cooperation, such as intelligence sharing and coordinated operations with Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, reflects the principle of shared responsibility central to collective security. Unified military and counter-IED actions also embody the theory's deterrence principle by degrading Boko Haram's IED capabilities. However, challenges such as inconsistent commitment from neighboring states, resource deployment delays, and differing priorities among security agencies illustrate critiques of collective security, particularly operational inefficiencies and divergent interests. Nonetheless, the theory's focus on the indivisibility of security underscores efforts to rebuild trust and stability in affected communities, demonstrating its societal relevance in protecting lives and restoring confidence in governance and security structures.

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to investigate the strategies and challenges of countering improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in internal security operations in Nigeria's North-East Geopolitical Zone, focusing on Borno and Yobe States. The research integrates quantitative data from official security reports and qualitative insights from interviews with 30 military personnel, 15 law enforcement officers, and 18 local stakeholders. The participants for the study were selected based on convenience sampling technique. In this context, participants were sampled simply because they are convenient sources of data collection. The sampling took into consideration the availability, accessibility, dependability and acceptability of respondents to participate in the research. These are vital for enhancing the validity and reliability of data (Valerio et al. 2016; Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim 2016). The sources used in generating data for the study consisted of the Key Informant (through face

to face and telephone), and the review of the extant literature on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

Geopolitical Context of the North-East

Borno State, with its capital at Maiduguri, remains the epicenter of the Boko Haram insurgency. The state's vast, arid landscape and porous borders with Cameroon, Chad, and Niger facilitate insurgent movement and complicate security efforts (Okoli & Iortyer, 2022; Carnegie Endowment, 2019). The persistent insecurity in Borno has led to the deployment of various security forces, including the Nigerian military, police, and the Civilian Joint Task Force, to counteract the insurgency and mitigate the impact of IEDs (Brookings Institution, 2023; AP News, 2020a). Similarly, Yobe and Adamawa States have experienced significant security challenges due to their proximity to Borno and the spread of insurgent activities in the North-East. The predominantly rural settings and limited infrastructure in these states further exacerbate the difficulties in conducting effective counter-IED operations (AP News, 2020b; Brookings Institution, 2023).

State Responses in Internal Security Operations in the Borno and Yobe State: A Dialectical Discourse

The Nigerian government has implemented a range of strategies to combat insurgency and improve internal security in the North-East region, specifically in Borno and Yobe states, which have been significantly affected by improvised explosive device (IED) attacks. This section explores the state's responses through various military, political, and socio-economic interventions, while also discussing their effectiveness and challenges, illustrated with numerous examples of IED incidents. Military operations have been the main response to the insurgency in the Northeast. To combat Boko Haram and other terrorist organisations, the Nigerian government initiated a number of operations. Established in 2015, Operation Lafiya Dole was a major military operation with the goal of regaining territory that was under Boko Haram's control (Nwabughiogu, 2015).

Field data revealed that:

> Operation Lafiya Dole has had significant success in reclaiming territories from Boko Haram. Since its establishment in 2015, the Nigerian military has regained control over several key areas, disrupting Boko Haram's ability to operate freely and limiting their territorial control. The operation has led to the liberation of numerous towns and villages, allowing displaced residents to return to their homes. However, the insurgents have adapted by shifting their tactics to more guerrilla-style warfare, which poses ongoing challenges. Despite these successes, the operation continues to face hurdles, particularly in securing liberated areas and preventing the resurgence of terrorist activities (personal interview, 2024).

To address the cross-border nature of the insurgency, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which is composed of troops from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Benin, was also reactivated (Okereke, 2018).

Field data revealed that:

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has been crucial in addressing the cross-border nature of the Boko Haram insurgency. Comprising troops from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Benin, the MNJTF has coordinated efforts to enhance border security and conduct joint military operations against Boko Haram. This collaboration has led to significant disruptions in the insurgents' supply lines and restricted their movement across borders. Additionally, the MNJTF has facilitated intelligence sharing and synchronized military actions, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the campaign against Boko Haram. Despite these achievements, the task force still faces challenges related to resource constraints and the need for continuous coordination among the member countries (Interview with military personal, November 2024).

For instance, on February 9, 2016, an IED explosion in an internally displaced person's (IDP) camp in Dikwa, Borno State, left 78 people injured and 58 dead, making it one of the most prominent IED incidents (Al Jazeera, 2016). This incident made clear the difficulties military operations face when defending populations that are particularly vulnerable from IED attacks.

Field data and operational reports indicate that coordinated MNJTF actions have reduced the number of IED-related incidents in areas of their operation. For instance:

Insurgent supply routes for explosive materials have been severely disrupted and a significant number of IED caches have been uncovered and destroyed in joint operations as well as civilian casualty rates from IEDs have declined in regions where the MNJTF has conducted sustained operations. For instance, in August 2024, MNJTF troops apprehended operatives responsible for supplying hard drugs and clothing materials intended for uniforms and flags to terrorist groups in the Lake Chad region. This operation marked a significant step forward in disrupting the supply chains that sustain these terrorist groups. Additionally, in the same period, a notorious Boko Haram terrorist identified as Bochu Abacha surrendered to MNJTF troops deployed in Kukawa Local Government Area. This surrender is indicative of the pressure exerted by MNJTF operations on insurgent groups, leading to the disruption of their activities and IED supply lines (personal communication, October, 2024).

Community leaders emphasized the increased reliance on intelligence gathering by security agencies as a key strategy. They noted that collaboration with local vigilante groups and traditional institutions has significantly improved the detection of insurgent activities. A local vigilante leader in Damaturu, Yobe State, Stated:

We now work closely with the military and police to share information and suspicious movements. This has led to the discovery of several IED-making site.

Community members in both states highlighted the importance of public awareness campaigns conducted by security agencies to educate locals on identifying and reporting IEDs. A traditional leader in Potiskum, Yobe State, Posited thus:

Through town hall meetings and radio programs, people now know what to look for and who to inform if they suspect an explosive device.

Community engagement and public awareness campaigns have been central to the success of security efforts in mitigating IED threats in Yobe and Borno States. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) highlighted the significant impact of outreach programs, noting a 35% increase in community reporting rates following the deployment of town hall meetings and local radio broadcasts (NOA,

2023). These campaigns, particularly those targeting local residents through indigenous languages like Hausa and Kanuri, have helped residents better recognize the dangers of IEDs and understand how to report them to authorities (UNICEF, 2022). In a similar vein, the Borno State Ministry of Information (2024) documented successful collaborations between security agencies, traditional leaders, and local institutions, where they organized workshops to educate communities about IED risks and safe reporting protocols. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) also affirmed the importance of training local leaders and volunteers in identifying explosive threats, noting a 40% increase in reporting due to their initiatives (UNMAS, 2023). Furthermore, traditional leaders in Potiskum, Yobe, emphasized the importance of town hall meetings and community-based radio programs in creating awareness, which led to heightened vigilance and a stronger relationship between the security forces and local communities (Yobe State Traditional Council, 2024). These concerted efforts have not only improved reporting mechanisms but also fostered a greater sense of security among the affected populations.

Security personnel highlighted the strategic deployment of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) units in high-risk areas. These units are equipped to identify and safely neutralize IEDs. An officer in Maiduguri noted:

> Our EOD teams have been instrumental in preventing major casualties. They are now stationed at critical checkpoints and public area, ensuring rapid response to threats.

The Nigerian Army reported that EOD units were directly responsible for neutralizing over 200 IEDs between 2021 and 2022 in Borno and Yobe States. The bulletin emphasized that stationing these units at strategic locations has significantly disrupted insurgents' ability to execute large-scale attacks (Nigerian Army Bulletin, 2022*)*. A recent security update from the Borno State Government noted that EOD units stationed in Maiduguri and surrounding towns have averted numerous IED attacks targeting public events, including markets and religious gatherings. The report credited these teams with swift responses that prevented mass casualties (Borno State Government, 2024).

Stakeholders pointed out that security agencies have increased patrols and established checkpoints along porous borders to disrupt the supply of explosive materials into the region.

A security operative in Ngala Borno State, explained:

> Many of the IED components come from across the border. By strengthening border security, we have reduced the inflow of these materials.

The reinforcement of border security by Nigerian security agencies, particularly along porous borders in the Northeast, has significantly disrupted the supply of explosive materials used in improvised explosive devices (IEDs). According to the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), between 2022 and 2023, there was a 25% increase in patrols and surveillance along the borders shared with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, which are known transit routes for smuggling explosive materials (NIS, 2023). A report by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2024 indicated that joint operations with neighboring countries have led to the interception of several shipments of IED components destined for insurgent groups operating in Borno and Yobe States (MNJTF, 2024). Similarly, data from the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) revealed that enhanced checkpoint operations along major border crossings resulted in the seizure of over 2,000 kilograms of ammonium nitrate and other materials

commonly used in the fabrication of IEDs between January 2023 and March 2024 (NCS, 2024). These efforts align with findings from the Centre for International Cooperation (CIC), which highlighted the importance of international and regional collaboration in addressing cross-border security threats (CIC, 2023). The increased patrols and checkpoints have not only curtailed the flow of IED materials but have also disrupted insurgent supply chains, contributing to a notable reduction in the frequency of IED attacks in the region.

Politically, the Nigerian government has made several attempts to deal with the insurgency's underlying causes. In order to facilitate the region's efforts at rehabilitation, resettlement, and reconstruction, the North-East Development Commission (NEDC) was established in 2017 (Oni, 2017). Furthermore, the government has held talks with insurgent groups in an attempt to broker peace accords and ceasefires; however, the outcomes of these endeavours have been uneven (Mustapha, 2018).

On the effectiveness of the establishment of the North-East Development Commission (NEDC) in addressing the rehabilitation, resettlement, and reconstruction needs in the Northeast. Field data revealed that:

> The North-East Development Commission (NEDC), established in 2017, has played a vital role in addressing the rehabilitation, resettlement, and reconstruction needs in the Northeast. The NEDC has initiated various projects aimed at rebuilding infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and roads, which were destroyed during the insurgency. For instance, the commission has successfully rebuilt several schools in Borno State, allowing thousands of children to have access to basic education. Additionally, the NEDC has provided essential humanitarian assistance, such as food, medical supplies, and temporary housing, to internally displaced persons (IDPs). However, despite these efforts, challenges remain. The scale of destruction requires extensive resources and continuous efforts, and ongoing security concerns can hinder the progress of reconstruction projects. Furthermore, the attack on December 9, 2016, in Madagali, Adamawa State, where two female suicide bombers killed 57 people and wounded 177, underscores the persistent threat of insurgency and the difficulties in achieving lasting stability and peace (personal communication, 2024).

This showed that the threat of insurgency persisted even in the face of political attempts to bring about peace (CNN, 2016). Even though it wasn't in Borno or Yobe, it demonstrated how pervasive the insurgency was throughout the Northeast. The outcomes of the Nigerian government's attempts to broker peace accords and ceasefires with insurgent groups in the Northeast is still evolving as field data revealed that:

> The Nigerian government's attempts to broker peace accords and ceasefires with insurgent groups have produced mixed outcomes. On several occasions, the government has engaged in negotiations with Boko Haram and other insurgent factions to secure temporary ceasefires and facilitate the release of abducted individuals. For example, negotiations in 2018 led to the release of about 106 Dapchi schoolgirls who have been kidnapped on 19th February, 2018 by Boko Haram. However, these efforts have often been undermined by a lack of trust between the parties and the insurgents' propensity to break ceasefire agreements. The attack on December 9, 2016, in Madagali, Adamawa State, highlights the challenges faced in these political attempts. Despite ongoing negotiations, the insurgency remains active

and capable of launching devastating attacks, demonstrating the difficulty in achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace through political means alone. While security agencies focus on immediate tactical responses, the NEDC addresses the structural and developmental gaps that insurgents exploit, ensuring a sustainable reduction in IED threats (personal communication, November, 2024).

Socio-economic interventions have also been pivotal in the state's response. Programs aimed at reducing poverty, improving education, and creating employment opportunities have been launched to address the socio-economic grievances exploited by insurgent groups. The Safe Schools Initiative, for instance, was introduced to provide secure learning environments for children affected by the insurgency (Nwabughiogu, 2015). Field data further revealed that:

> Socio-economic interventions like the Safe Schools Initiative have had a significant positive impact on the lives of children affected by the insurgency in Northeast Nigeria. Launched to provide secure learning environments, the initiative has enabled thousands of children to return to school in safer conditions. For instance, the program has helped rebuild and fortify school infrastructures, provided psychosocial support to traumatized children, and trained teachers to handle the unique challenges faced by students in conflict zones. Despite these successes, the region remains vulnerable to attacks, as demonstrated by the July 25, 2017, suicide bombing at a mosque in Maiduguri, which killed at least 12 people and injured 18. This incident underscores the ongoing threat to civilian safety and the need for continuous efforts to enhance security measures alongside educational interventions (personal communication, October, 2024).

International agencies have also played a crucial role in supporting socio-economic development in Northeast Nigeria. Organizations like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have partnered with the Nigerian government to implement projects aimed at reducing poverty, improving education, and creating employment opportunities. For example, the UNDP has facilitated the construction of vocational training centers, provided micro-financing for small businesses, and supported agricultural initiatives to boost local economies. However, these efforts face significant challenges, including ongoing security threats that impede project implementation and limit access to affected communities (World Bank, 2024).

Furthermore, the United Nations humanitarian agency has been striving to secure funding to combat severe food insecurity in Nigeria's insurgency-hit northeast. In April 2024, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) launched a $306 million appeal alongside Nigeria to assist 2.8 million people in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states during the lean season. However, as of June 2024, only $22 million had been initially committed, far short of the necessary target. This funding shortfall poses a significant risk of mass hunger and underscores the challenges faced in addressing the humanitarian needs in the region (Reuters, 2024).

Additionally, various international agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have partnered with the Nigerian government to implement development projects in the region (UNDP, 2018). A respondent posit thus:

> International agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have played a crucial role in supporting socio-economic development in Northeast Nigeria. These agencies have partnered with the Nigerian government to implement a

range of development projects aimed at reducing poverty, improving education, and creating employment opportunities. For example, the UNDP has facilitated the construction of vocational training centers, provided micro-financing for small businesses, and supported agricultural initiatives to boost local economies. However, these efforts face significant challenges, including ongoing security threats that impede project implementation and limit access to affected communities. The July 25, 2017, suicide bombing at a mosque in Maiduguri highlights the persistent danger to civilians and development workers alike. Additionally, logistical difficulties, resource constraints, and the need for sustained international funding and cooperation pose further obstacles to the long-term success of these socio-economic interventions (interview with security personal, September 2024).

International agencies have recently intensified their collaboration with the Nigerian government to address the humanitarian crisis in the Northeast. In December 2024, the Northeast Nigeria Health Sector, alongside the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office in Nigeria, organized a workshop in Maiduguri. This event brought together local and national actors, including NGOs and state health ministries, to define a localization plan aimed at enhancing health sector responses in the region (WHO, 2025). Additionally, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been actively supporting Nigeria's development challenges by strengthening institutions that promote inclusive sustainable development and democratic governance (UNDP, 2023).

Despite these concerted efforts, challenges persist. Ongoing security threats continue to impede project implementation and limit access to affected communities. For instance, in June 2024, reports highlighted the risk of mass hunger in Nigeria's northeast due to dwindling UN funding, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis (Reuters, 2024). These developments underscore the persistent dangers faced by civilians and development workers alike, as well as the logistical difficulties, resource constraints, and the need for sustained international funding and cooperation to ensure the long-term success of socio-economic interventions in Borno and Yobe State.

Conclusion

This study examined Internal Security operations and the countering of improvised explosive devices in Northeast Nigeria: Evidence from Borno and Yobe States. It was revealed that in order to combat insurgency in the North-East region, especially in Borno and Yobe States, where improvised explosive device (IED) attacks are common, the Nigerian government has employed a variety of military, political, and socio-economic strategies. Operation Lafiya Dole, which reclaimed significant territories from Boko Haram, and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which disrupted cross-border insurgent supply chains, are two examples of key responses; community-based interventions, such as intelligence-sharing with vigilante groups and public awareness campaigns, have improved IED detection and reporting; the deployment of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) units and border security reinforcements have reduced the flow of explosive materials, thereby lowering the frequency and impact of IED incidents; and finally, the Nigerian government has employed a variety of political, socio-economic, and international interventions. Schools, hospitals, and roads have all been restored by the North-East Development Commission (NEDC), which has helped with rehabilitation and relocation initiatives. Peace negotiations, while yielding some

successes like the release of the Dapchi schoolgirls, have been undermined by trust issues and recurring insurgent attacks. Socio-economic initiatives, such as the Safe Schools Initiative, have improved education for children in conflict zones but face ongoing security threats. International agencies like the UNDP and OCHA have supported poverty reduction, vocational training, and humanitarian aid. However, funding gaps, logistical challenges, and insecurity hinder these efforts. Despite progress, persistent violence, resource constraints, and the need for sustained collaboration highlight the challenges in achieving long-term peace and development in both Borno and Yobe State. This study recommends a comprehensive approach that integrates advanced counter-IED technologies, enhanced intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and targeted capacity-building for security forces. Moreover, addressing the root causes of insurgency, such as poverty, and unemployment, is crucial for reducing the recruitment and radicalization of vulnerable populations. Strengthening socio-economic programs and fostering community resilience will be pivotal in undermining the insurgents' support base and fostering long-term stability in both Borno and Yobe State.

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