

## Original Article

# Economic Justice as a Legal Strategy for Countering Terrorism in Nigeria: Learning from the United Kingdom

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## Abstract

*Nigeria continues to prioritise military intervention as the principal response to terrorism; however, persistent violence indicates that structural socio-economic inequalities, unemployment, and regional marginalisation sustain conditions conducive to radicalisation. In contrast, the United Kingdom integrates economic justice within its legal and policy framework, thereby complementing security measures with socio-economic regulation. This study analyses the role of economic justice as a lawful and sustainable counter-terrorism strategy through a comparative examination of the United Kingdom and Nigeria. This research aims to evaluate the legal basis for implementing economic justice measures in counterterrorism and to assess their relevance for long-term peacebuilding in Nigeria. The study employs a doctrinal research method, systematically examining legislation, public policy instruments, and scholarly works using the PRISMA framework to ensure transparent and rigorous source selection. The findings demonstrate that, first, the United Kingdom establishes a normative and institutional framework that links welfare regulation and social protection to the prevention of violent extremism; second, it enforces financial accountability and regulatory oversight to limit structural grievances and disrupt potential channels of radicalisation; and third, Nigeria maintains a predominantly securitised counter-terrorism regime that lacks enforceable economic rights and targeted development legislation. The study concludes that Nigeria should reform its legal framework by embedding inclusive economic governance, strengthening institutional accountability, and codifying socio-economic rights as integral components of a sustainable counter-terrorism strategy.*

**Keywords:** Economic Justice; Countering Terrorism; Nigeria; United Kingdom.

## Introduction

Terrorism is defined as the deliberate and politically motivated perpetration of violence by organised militant factions or clandestine operators, aimed at non-combatant populations. In Nigeria, the rise of terrorist activities has significantly compromised national stability and hindered young development.<sup>1</sup> Militant organisations such as Boko Haram, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, and breakaway groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers actively participate in the recruitment, indoctrination, abduction, and confinement of youth. These methods have diminished access to formal education, destabilised educational institutions, and caused enduring psychological and social damage among afflicted communities.<sup>2</sup>

The ongoing prevalence of insecurity has further impeded social and economic progress, as substantial state resources are diverted from education, infrastructure, and welfare development to military and counterterrorism spending. These fiscal reallocations have

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan G Ercanbrack, 'Hawala in the UK-Nigeria Remittance Corridor: Institutional Dynamics and Illicit Value Flows', *Journal of Economic Criminology*, 10 (2025), 100192 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconc.2025.100192>>.

<sup>2</sup> Mohamed Abdiaziz Muse, 'The Ambiguity, Opacity and Consequences of FATF's Remittance Regulatory Strategies: The Case Studies of Somalia and Nigeria', *Journal of Economic Criminology*, 8 (2025), 100156 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconc.2025.100156>>.



solidified structural underdevelopment and diminished the delivery of public services. Increasing poverty and unemployment, especially among the youth, have heightened vulnerability to recruitment by armed factions.<sup>3</sup> Marginalised persons frequently view association with these groups as a possible means for economic survival and advancement, particularly when these organisations offer financial incentives, material assistance, or symbolic empowerment that is otherwise unattainable in precarious economic conditions. The cumulative effect of these circumstances has garnered global attention; for example, the Global Terrorism Index released by the Institute for Economics & Peace routinely positions Nigeria as one of the countries most adversely affected by terrorism, trailing only Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup>

The ongoing presence of terrorism in Nigeria underscores deep-rooted systemic inequities. In areas characterised by poverty, unemployment, and social marginalisation, radical speech gains greater traction and diminishes the state's credibility. When communities view the state as predominantly coercive rather than protective, military-focused counterterrorism methods exacerbate popular hostility. Addressing terrorism exclusively as a security concern overlooks the legal and economic aspects crucial for enduring peacebuilding.<sup>5</sup> The pursuit of economic and legal justice is an essential element of a long-term counterterrorism strategy. The state has binding responsibilities to provide fair resource allocation, access to livelihoods, and the safeguarding of social welfare. Comparative evidence from the United Kingdom indicates that governments can more effectively combat violent extremism when focused security measures are augmented by legal reforms that foster economic inclusion, budgetary transparency, and community development. By tackling structural disparities and expanding socioeconomic prospects, legal frameworks diminish the appeal of extremist recruitment tactics.<sup>6</sup>

The escalation of initiatives to eradicate terrorism has sparked significant discourse over essential human rights. Responses to terrorism may seem warranted due to the infringement of human rights by such acts. However, counterterrorism measures must not be utilised as a justification for undermining the rule of law. Current human rights protections are flexible enough to provide national security, contingent upon the enforcement of stringent limitations to avert arbitrary actions. Utilising counterterrorism justifications to violate human rights may facilitate other injustices. Even jurisdictions with well-established legal frameworks are not immune to this issue; global trends increasingly justify excessive restrictions on rights under the pretext of counterterrorism.

Legal principles assert that the arrest or investigation of individuals for purported offences does not warrant the abrogation of their fundamental rights. All individuals, regardless of status, have inherent rights to essential protections. These rights arise independently of governmental authority and cannot be revoked by legislative measures.

<sup>3</sup> Melike Bildirici and Seyit M Gokmenoglu, 'The Impact of Terrorism and FDI on Environmental Pollution: Evidence from Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Syria, Somalia, Thailand and Yemen', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 81 (2020), 106340 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2019.106340>>.

<sup>4</sup> Adesoji Adelaja and Justin George, 'Terrorism and Land Use in Agriculture: The Case of Boko Haram in Nigeria', *Land Use Policy*, 88 (2019), 104116 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2019.104116>>.

<sup>5</sup> Annesha Sarmah and others, 'Analysing the Effects of Dual Time Delays and Terror Funding Class in Terrorism Dynamics', *Results in Control and Optimization*, 22 (2026), 100662 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rico.2026.100662>>.

<sup>6</sup> Hafiz Syed Mohsin Abbas and Xiaodong Xu, 'Topical Dynamics of Terrorism from a Global Perspective and a Call for Action on Global Risk', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 110 (2024), 104659 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2024.104659>>.



Thus, the formulation and execution of legal measures to combat terrorism must consistently uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms, irrespective of the perceived gravity of the offence. Nigeria must shift its counterterrorism policy from a reactive, militaristic strategy to one grounded in legal and preventive governance. The existing legal structure disproportionately emphasises monitoring, incarceration, and punitive actions, while providing minimal enforceable socioeconomic safeguards. This disparity raises the question of whether the state can effectively combat terrorism without enacting enforceable legislative measures to address economic inequity. Ongoing insecurity indicates that compulsion alone is inadequate. Integrating law-based economic inclusion with appropriate security measures provides a more cohesive and lasting solution. Integrating economic justice into national counterterrorism policies will increase state legitimacy, restore public confidence, and create a solid foundation for enduring peace and institutional resilience in Nigeria.<sup>7</sup>

Terrorism manifests in Nigeria not only as a security threat but as a legally constructed offence governed by a defined statutory framework. Nigerian law conceptualises terrorism as the intentional and politically motivated use of violence or threats of violence designed to intimidate a population, compel a government or international organisation, or destabilise constitutional order. This understanding aligns with global legal standards while reflecting domestic security realities. The evolution of terrorist activity within the country has therefore prompted the development of an increasingly structured regulatory regime aimed at prevention, suppression, prosecution, and institutional coordination.

The principal legislative instrument regulating terrorism in Nigeria is the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011, as amended in 2013. The Act criminalises acts of terrorism, the financing of terrorism, the provision of material support to terrorist groups, conspiracy, recruitment, training, and the harbouring of suspects.<sup>8</sup> It grants investigative and prosecutorial authority to designated security agencies while establishing procedural safeguards intended to align enforcement with constitutional guarantees. The statute further provides for the proscription of terrorist organisations through judicial processes and authorises the freezing and forfeiture of assets connected to terrorist financing. Through this framework, Nigeria integrates criminal liability, financial regulation, and intelligence coordination into a single legal structure. Complementary statutes reinforce this framework.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act empowers the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission to investigate and prosecute financial crimes, including terrorist financing.<sup>9</sup> The Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act imposes reporting obligations on financial institutions and designated non-financial businesses to detect suspicious transactions. Additionally, the National Security Agencies Act defines the mandates of intelligence bodies, including the Department of State Services, in matters relating to internal security and counterterrorism. These statutes collectively establish a regulatory ecosystem that addresses both violent conduct and its financial and logistical foundations. Nigeria also operates within international and regional legal frameworks. As a party to United Nations counterterrorism conventions and a member of the African Union,

<sup>7</sup> Sohiful Islam and others, 'Global Governance and Security Challenges: Transnational Pathways to Reducing Terrorism Mortality in a Globalized World', *Research in Globalization*, 11 (2025), 100312 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2025.100312>>.

<sup>8</sup> Umer Shahzad and others, 'USAID, Official Development Assistance and Counter Terrorism Efforts: Pre and Post 9/11 Analysis for South Asia', *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences*, 69 (2020), 100716 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2019.06.001>>.

<sup>9</sup> Yusuf Bala Zaria and Jasman Tuyon, 'Relationship between Unemployment and Policy Uncertainty in Nigeria: ARDL Evidence from 1990 to 2020', *International Journal of Social Economics*, 50.6 (2023), 800–820 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-08-2022-0555>>.



Nigeria aligns its domestic laws with global standards on terrorism suppression, financing controls, and mutual legal assistance. The designation and proscription of groups such as Boko Haram occur within this combined domestic and international legal architecture. Judicial affirmation of proscription orders reflects the attempt to balance executive security powers with court oversight.<sup>10</sup>

Despite these legal mechanisms, implementation challenges persist. Investigative capacity, prosecutorial delays, evidentiary standards, detention conditions, and interagency coordination often constrain effectiveness. Courts must frequently reconcile expansive security powers with constitutional protections enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, particularly rights to personal liberty, fair hearing, and the dignity of the human person. Nigerian jurisprudence consistently affirms that counterterrorism enforcement must remain subject to judicial review and procedural fairness. Arrest or suspicion does not extinguish fundamental rights; rather, enforcement authorities must operate within clearly defined statutory limits. Regulatory emphasis has increasingly shifted from coercive enforcement to preventive governance. Financial surveillance systems, biometric identification programs, and digital intelligence platforms complement statutory prohibitions by strengthening detection and monitoring capabilities.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, legal scholars and policy analysts observe that sustainable counterterrorism requires more than criminalisation and surveillance. Structural drivers such as poverty, youth unemployment, and regional inequality interact with extremist mobilisation strategies. The recurrent ranking of Nigeria among the countries most affected by terrorism in the Global Terrorism Index, published by the Institute for Economics & Peace, underscores the ongoing scale of the problem despite regulatory expansion. Accordingly, contemporary debate within Nigeria increasingly situates counterterrorism within a broader constitutional and developmental framework.

Previous research has examined the structural determinants of terrorism by emphasising the relationship between socio-economic inequality, redistribution, and political violence. Empirical analysis by Tim Krieger and Daniel Meierrieks (2019) demonstrates that higher income inequality significantly increases the incidence of domestic terrorism, while redistributive fiscal policies reduce its likelihood by mitigating economic grievances.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Ehi Eric Esoimeme (2019) show that uneven regional development and economic marginalisation create fertile conditions for radicalisation, thereby underscoring the importance of equitable growth within national security strategies.<sup>13</sup> In the context of the United Kingdom, Brandon Parsons and Ayoub Rabhi (2025) analyse the CONTEST counter-terrorism framework and observe that preventive policies extend beyond coercive enforcement to include community engagement, welfare governance, and regulatory

<sup>10</sup> Adegboyega Adekunle Ige, 'Appraisal of the Regulatory Frameworks for Combatting Money Laundering in Nigeria', *Journal of Money Laundering Control*, 25.2 (2021), 345–57 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/JMLC-02-2021-0013>>.

<sup>11</sup> Simplice A Asongu and Juste Somé, 'Corruption, Terrorism and Illicit Financial Flows Related to Extractive Commodity Trade in Africa', *Resources Policy*, 103 (2025), 105569 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2025.105569>>.

<sup>12</sup> Tim Krieger and Daniel Meierrieks, 'Income Inequality, Redistribution and Domestic Terrorism', *World Development*, 116 (2019), 125–36 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.12.008>>.

<sup>13</sup> Ehi Eric Esoimeme, 'The Nigerian Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Bill, 2016: A Critical Appraisal', *Journal of Money Laundering Control*, 20.1 (2017), 79–88 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/JMLC-07-2016-0025>>.



oversight aimed at addressing socio-economic vulnerabilities associated with extremism.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Asongu and Nwachukwu (2017) find that stronger redistributive governance and institutional accountability correlate with lower levels of internal conflict and terrorism in developing countries. Collectively, these studies establish a theoretical and empirical foundation for conceptualising economic justice as a legally grounded preventive strategy capable of addressing the structural causes of terrorism, rather than relying exclusively on security-centred or militarised responses.<sup>15</sup>

This research aims to critically examine the deficiencies in the current counter-terrorism legal framework in Nigeria, particularly its predominant emphasis on surveillance, arrest, and punitive enforcement, without incorporating enforceable socio-economic rights. The study seeks to address the fundamental question of whether terrorism can be sustainably mitigated without a legal commitment to economic justice. Persistent insecurity and recurring patterns of radicalisation suggest that a purely securitised legal response remains insufficient. Accordingly, this research aims to reconceptualise economic justice as a legitimate and strategic legal instrument in counter-terrorism policy. The purpose of this study is threefold. First, it evaluates the structural limitations of Nigeria's existing counter-terrorism laws in addressing socio-economic grievances that contribute to extremism. Second, it analyses the experience of the United Kingdom, where economic inclusion, welfare governance, and financial accountability operate alongside security mechanisms within a comprehensive counter-terrorism framework. Third, it formulates normative recommendations for integrating enforceable economic rights and targeted development legislation into Nigeria's legal architecture. By advancing a model in which law-driven economic inclusion complements security measures, this study aspires to propose a more sustainable, justice-oriented, and legally coherent strategy for reducing radicalisation and fostering long-term peace.

## Method

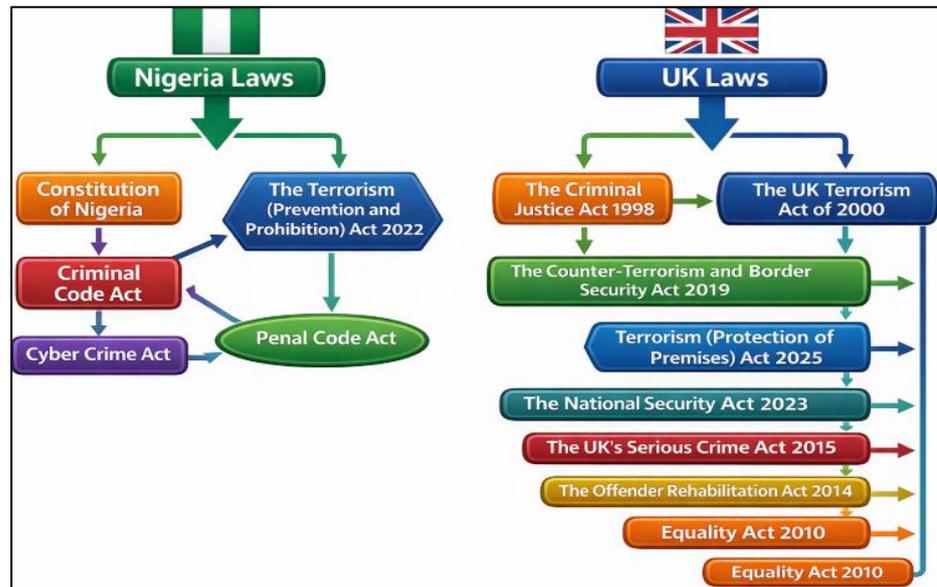
This research applies a doctrinal approach and systematically analyses legal standards, policies and authorities in Nigeria and the UK that relate to counterterrorism and economic justice. Following the PRISMA model, the primary and secondary sources were identified, screened, and selected through a rigorous, reproducible process. The primary documents included articles from the constitution, counter-terrorism laws, regulations of economic and social welfare, and policy documents from Nigeria and the UK. Below are the diagrammatic flows of secondary data:

<sup>14</sup> Brandon Parsons and Ayoub Rabhi, 'Redistribution, Income Inequality, and Conflict in Developing Countries: Is There Any Causality?', *World Development Perspectives*, 40 (2025), 100739 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2025.100739>>.

<sup>15</sup> Asongu and Somé.



**Figure 1:** Terrorism Laws in Nigeria and the UK concerning their alignment with Economic Justice



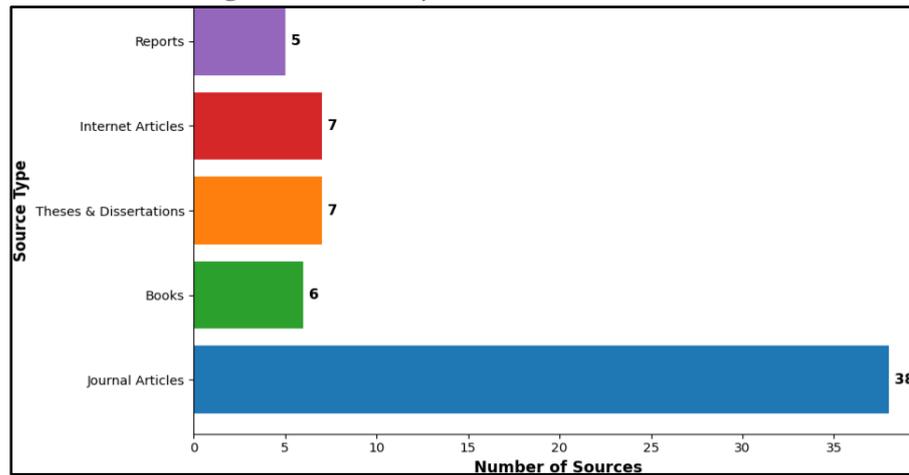
Sources: Design by authors based on data obtained

The figure presents a comparative overview of the legal frameworks governing criminal law and counterterrorism in Nigeria and the United Kingdom. It explains how each country structures its statutory instruments and how fundamental legal norms shape the development of more specific regulatory provisions within the national legal system. In Nigeria, the legal framework originates from the Constitution of Nigeria, which functions as the supreme legal authority and provides the normative basis for subsequent legislation. Based on this constitutional foundation, the Criminal Code Act operates as the principal instrument regulating general criminal law. The regulatory framework expands through specialized statutes, including the Cyber Crime Act, which addresses offenses arising from technological and digital developments. Within the field of counterterrorism, the Terrorism Prevention and Prohibition Act 2022 serves as the primary legislative instrument that regulates the prevention, prosecution, and suppression of terrorism related activities. These statutory provisions interact with the Penal Code Act, thereby forming an integrated legal structure in which general criminal law and specialized security legislation operate concurrently.

In contrast, the United Kingdom develops its counterterrorism framework through a more layered and incremental legislative process. The modern structure begins with the Criminal Justice Act 1998 and the Terrorism Act 2000, which establish the initial legal basis for contemporary counterterrorism regulation. The legislature subsequently strengthened this framework through additional statutes, including the Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 and the Terrorism Protection of Premises Act 2025, which respond to the evolving nature of national security threats. Complementary legislation such as the National Security Act 2023, the Serious Crime Act 2015, the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014, and the Equality Act 2010 further integrates counterterrorism policy with broader objectives of criminal justice administration, offender rehabilitation, and protection of fundamental rights. Furthermore, peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports, and publications from organisations such as the UN and the UK Home Office were the sources of secondary evidence. The PRISMA identification phase involved searching both legal and academic repositories, whereas during the screening and eligibility phases, duplicate and irrelevant sources were eliminated. Below are the diagrammatic flows of secondary data.



**Figure 2: Secondary Research Materials Utilise**



Sources: Design by authors based on data obtained

The analysis stage involved the selected materials undergoing qualitative doctrinal analysis, with particular focus on the normative aspects, legislative intent, and interpretation. The research applied comparative legal analysis to determine how the UK incorporates economic justice into its anti-terrorism framework and how well the same legal tactics could be transferred to Nigeria. Thematic synthesis was used to organise the results on economic inclusion, legal accountability, and preventive security governance. The study, through a PRISMA-guided doctrinal method, ensures methodological rigour, reduces selection bias, and provides a consistent legal evaluation of economic justice as a sustainable counter-terrorism strategy for Nigeria.

## Results and Discussions

### *Counter Terrorism Legal Framework and Economic Justice in Nigeria and the United Kingdom*

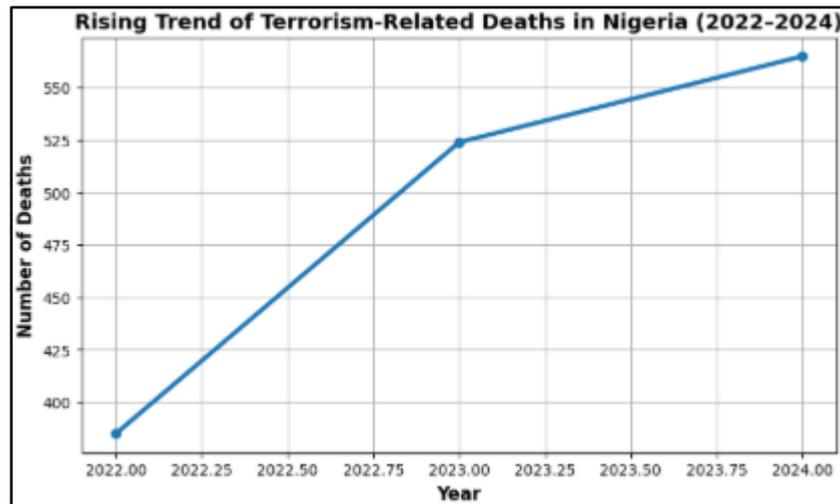
Terrorism in Nigeria has been a major factor in the worsening of insecurity, loss of human lives, economic decline, and poor governance. The Global Terrorism Index states that the number of deaths in Nigeria related to terrorism has constantly increased from 385 in 2022 to 524 in 2023, and then to 565 in 2024, which is the highest death toll since 2020. However, fewer attacks were recorded overall. The proportion of civilians among the dead increased significantly from 24% in 2022 to 62% in 2024, which means that the non-combatants were increasingly being targeted. Civil society groups reported at least 6,549 killings and 3,804 abductions during widespread violent crimes committed across the country between May 2024 and mid-2025, indicating security problems that persist even in areas not directly affected by the violence.<sup>16</sup> Among the terrorist organisations that still operate in Nigeria, Boko Haram and ISWAP not only use similar terror techniques to unsettle communities but also take advantage of the government’s incapacity to provide security, thereby revealing that the Nigerian state has not been able to guarantee its citizens’ security even with the ongoing counterinsurgency operations. Below is the graphical representation of terrorism related death incidence.



<sup>16</sup> Gabriel O. Adebayo, ‘Counter-Radicalization Policies and Policing in Education: Making a Case for Human Security in Europe’, *Helijon*, 7.2 (2021), e05721 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.helijon.2020.e05721>>.



**Figure 3:** Death-related incidence caused by terrorism



Sources: Nuredeen Akewushola, Nanji Nandang Venley

The high rates of kidnapping and banditry contribute to the already complicated security situation in Nigeria. The Northwest and Northeast regions are the worst affected by this problem, with the locals either paying huge amounts of ransom or losing their members in mass kidnapping without any immediate state protection, showing the security system has become strained and is not performing well. Conflict-related displacement has not significantly decreased, as millions of people have been forced to leave their homes, and rural areas have been devastated economically as farmers have had to leave their fields for safety. The occasional military victories, like reports of militants killed or arms seized, have not brought about permanent peace or less violence in the areas, thus confirming that just force has not been enough to conquer Nigeria’s multi-faceted terrorism crisis.

Nigeria's military-centred anti-terrorism strategy has been significantly budgeted; for instance, the N12.6 trillion allocated for the fight against insecurity has not worked out as expected. Security experts see, among others, corruption, ineffective institutions, and wrong direction of operations as major obstacles. Records of conflicts indicate that Boko Haram attacks, which are still among the deadliest in the region, are claiming the lives of innocent people and are still challenging the claim of military gains. The minor integration of economic and social measures, on the other hand, still opens up the door for the recruitment of extremists to go on, which in turn makes the discontent that primarily fuels violence even stronger and at the same time, delegitimises the state’s reactions more.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, the United Kingdom has been very inventive in designing a legally binding and institutionally based system that emphasises the four Ps of prevention, prosecution, protection, and preparation against terrorism. All these are incorporated in its CONTEST strategy. This kind of intervention, with its various battlefields, not only targets the disruption of the conspiracies but also aims at getting down to the radicalisation process at the roots by employing community empowerment, safeguarding, and intelligence sharing. British police and intelligence services are working under Counter Terrorism Policing and MI5 law to detect and minimise threats very early on, and this shows a very proactive legal culture.<sup>18</sup> The legal frameworks and prevention programmes in the UK are proven by the country’s statistical data. The Home Office statistics show a steady flow of referrals to the Prevent scheme, which aims to help people avoid radicalisation, with thousands of referrals

<sup>17</sup> Munnirul H. Nabin and others, ‘Terrorism and Uneven Economic Development’, *Economic Modelling*, 113 (2022), 105870 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2022.105870>>.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Meierrieks, ‘The Effect of Terrorism on Economic Inequality in Democracies and Non-Democracies’, *European Journal of Political Economy*, 86 (2025), 102640 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2024.102640>>.



evaluated and supported each year, enabling early intervention. In addition, the arrests and prosecutions carried out in conjunction with the application of the Terrorism Act 2000 point to a high level of operational success in disrupting terrorist activities and eliminating the risk posed by communities around them. The UK still faces terrorism threats such as state-linked plots and far-right radicalisation; nevertheless, the British system continues to emphasise both legal strictness and societal strength.<sup>19</sup>

The UK's model approach, which combines legal strategies, prevention, and law enforcement, highlights that adaptable legal frameworks can diminish the allure of terrorism and fortify social unity. The UK is proving to be a proactive, evidence-based country in counterterrorism by establishing early referral mechanisms, multi-agency responses, and ongoing legal reforms. In contrast, Nigeria reveals that the mere use of force will not suffice to prevent the constant insecurity and the growth of extremists if the anti-terrorism law and policy do not incorporate socio-economic justice, like that of legal integration.<sup>20</sup> While it looks good in statements, Nigeria's counter-terrorism legal framework is nonetheless practically ineffective, thus affording the terrorists an open territory to operate. The 1999 Constitution, counter and prohibit against violence and illegal takeover of power, its actual enforcement against terrorism reveals very serious structural weaknesses.<sup>21</sup>

Section 1(2) absolutely forbids any group from illegally taking over the authority of the government, but this constitutional assurance is negated by the fact that insurgent groups dominate certain areas of the country. The same goes for Sections 4(2) and 14(2)(b), where the National Assembly is granted the power to make laws for peace and to declare the security and welfare of the people the primary goal of government. Unfortunately, however, citizens still suffer from large-scale killings, forced relocations, and a lack of medical care due to the destruction of hospitals and social infrastructure. The situation is made worse by the categorisation of Sections 14, 17 and 24 under Chapter II, making them non-justiciable. Even though these provisions stress social justice, human dignity and civic duty, the citizens have no judicial remedies to claim them. This constitutional arrangement renders economic justice not achievable in legal terms, and the state's obligations turn out to be mere political slogans rather than enforceable duties. Thus, terrorism flourishes in poverty, marginalisation and institutional disintegration, while public health systems get worse due to the violence and displacement.<sup>22</sup>

The Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022 came into force in Nigeria to fill gaps in the constitution and institutions, yet it reinforced the country's inclination toward punitive actions over prevention grounded in economic measures. Sections 1 and 2 introduce a broad criminalisation model, making it possible to hold someone accountable for terrorism, as well as for financing, facilitating, and even not preventing the acts of terrorism. Although the law is very comprehensive, the extent of its application in judicial matters points to the weakness of law enforcement rather than the strength of legislation.<sup>23</sup> The law

<sup>19</sup> Ibrahim Abubakar and others, 'The Lancet Nigeria Commission: Investing in Health and the Future of the Nation', *The Lancet*, 399.10330 (2022), 1155–1200 <[https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(21\)02488-0](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02488-0)>.

<sup>20</sup> Lere Amusan and Ufuoma Patience Ejoke, 'The Psychological Trauma Inflicted by Boko Haram Insurgency in the North Eastern Nigeria', *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 36 (2017), 52–59 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2017.07.001>>.

<sup>21</sup> Ehi Eric Esoimeme, 'A Critical Analysis of the Anti-Corruption Policy of the Federal Executive Council of Nigeria', *Journal of Money Laundering Control*, 22.2 (2019), 176–87 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/JMLC-06-2017-0021>>.

<sup>22</sup> Steve Wakhu Khaemba, 'The Role of Social Enterprise in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, 15.1 (2025), 111–28 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/JEPP-06-2024-0106>>.

<sup>23</sup> Hadiza Sa'id, 'Exploring the Development of Islamic Banking in Nigeria Using an Actor-Network Theory Perspective', *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*, 11.5 (2020), 1083–99 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/JIABR-02-2018-0027>>.



under Sections 12, 13, and 15 has prescribed a maximum sentence of life imprisonment for most of the offences and terrorism-related acts, plus a minimum of 20 years' imprisonment, but these measures have not done much in the way of discouraging terrorist attacks. This situation shows that penalties, in the absence of proper mechanisms for detection, prosecution, and conviction, do not have a deterrent effect. Among the institutional changes brought about by the Act, the establishment of the National Counter-Terrorism Centre in Section 6 and the Nigerian Sanctions Committee in Section 9 are viewed as progressive, but in reality, they are negatively affected by poor coordination, politicisation, and a lack of effective intelligence-sharing. More than anything else, the Act sees terrorism as a security concern and thereby pushes economic and social consequences to the background. The loss of income, health problems in the camps for internally displaced persons, and the ongoing closure of health care centres due to fighting remain legally unaddressed, thereby making the failure of economic justice as a counter-terrorism strategy more obvious.<sup>24</sup>

The fact that Nigeria still depends on the Criminal Code Act and the Penal Code Act speaks volumes about the shortcomings of its legal provisions against the crimes in question. The laws regarding treason (s.37), homicide (ss. 306 and 315), kidnapping (s.364), and intimidation (ss. 366-367) were written for the traditional crimes and not for the case of terrorist networks that purposely attack unarmed civilians, disrupt economies, and destroy so-called social infrastructures.<sup>25</sup> The law treats terrorism as an ordinary crime and hence loses its character as ideological, planned, and global. The process is slow and unproductive, even though it prescribes extreme punishments like death and life imprisonment; thus, it indirectly promotes impunity. More importantly, these statutes do not provide for the public health and economic justice perspective; they do not see the diseases caused by displacements, the mental health issues, and the slow degrading of community health systems, etc. Terrorism is seen as a criminal law violation only, and thus as a human rights emergency as well as an economic one. The same deficiencies characterise the Penal Code, which merely provides duplications rather than new ideas. When viewed as a whole, Nigeria's legal landscape presents a façade of a punitive constitutional framework, anti-terrorism laws, and criminal codes. However, it is still rooted in prevention and remains disconnected from economic justice. This legal structure largely exists on paper, while the reality of insecurity gets deeper.<sup>26</sup>

The UK Terrorism Act of 2000 is a legal framework that is economically sensitive and highly effective against terrorism, a key feature of the UK counter-terrorism policy. The definition of terrorism provided in section 1 of the Act 1 is very clear and comprehensive, linking violence, ideological motivation, and public harm, to ensure legal certainty and accountable enforcement. Under the Act, the provisions on proscribed organisations, as stipulated in sections 11–12, treat the members and supporters as criminals, while at the same time allowing statutory defences, reflecting the principles of proportionality and protection against over-criminalisation.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, sections 4, 15-18 of the Act go so far as to directly address the financial aspect of terrorism by laying down the rules for the handling of terrorist property and finances, mandatory reporting of suspicious transactions in certain professions and businesses as provided in section 19, and large powers of

<sup>24</sup> Oludayo Tade and Yikwab Peter Yikwabs, "If You Kill Me, You Take the Cow": Victimization Experiences of Farming and Herding Communities in Nasarawa State, Nigeria', *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 11.4 (2019), 273–80 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-06-2019-0417>>.

<sup>25</sup> Felix E Eboibi, 'A Review of the Legal and Regulatory Frameworks of Nigerian Cybercrimes Act 2015', *Computer Law & Security Review*, 33.5 (2017), 700–717 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clsr.2017.03.020>>.

<sup>26</sup> Esoimeme, 'The Nigerian Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Bill, 2016: A Critical Appraisal'.

<sup>27</sup> Abena Asefuaba Yalley and Molatokunbo Seunfunmi Olutayo, 'Gender, Masculinity and Policing: An Analysis of the Implications of Police Masculinised Culture on Policing Domestic Violence in Southern Ghana and Lagos, Nigeria', *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 2.1 (2020), 100077 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2020.100077>>.



investigation as stipulated in sections 20–30, 32. These measures cripple the transfer of funds intended for illegal activities, secure the market composed of honest traders, and, hence, render the financial aspect of radicalism less attractive as a source of gain. In this way, the UK has succeeded in combining security with economic justice by making controls, transparency, and preventive justice part and parcel of counter-terrorism law. On the other hand, Nigeria’s anti-terrorism legislation is mainly repressive and militarised, and, as a result, lacks the same statutory integration of financial accountability and socio-economic prevention, which are the necessary preconditions for a sustainable counter-terrorism outcome.<sup>28</sup>

The comparison with the UK experience shows that the implementation of counter-terrorism legislation gradually aligns security goals with economic justice and social protection, which have, however, been largely absent in Nigeria’s legal system. Section 1-3 of the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 further promotes preventive justice through its measures including the prohibition of the distribution of malicious online content, the expansion of border security powers as stipulated in Sch 3, and the shift of focus from the use of excessive force to early disruption of activities which in turn leads to the protection of economic stability and the gaining of community trust. The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, also known as Martyn’s Law, requires public place operators to implement risk-based protective measures that are proportionate to their statutory duties. This reflects a shift from a focus on militarisation to promoting shared responsibility, as outlined in sections 5-9 of the law. These regulations indirectly promote economic justice by protecting workers, public spaces, and businesses from the effects of terrorism. On the other hand, Nigeria’s anti-terrorism measures are still mainly coercive and military oriented. It has therefore not been able to adopt the UK prevention, market-stabilising, and community-centred legal safeguards evident in the UK model.<sup>29</sup>

The Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Act 1998 and the National Security Act 2023 are prime examples of the United Kingdom’s adoption of preventive justice and economic stability as the basis for counter-terrorism laws, unlike Nigeria’s force-driven framework. Sections 1 and 2 of the 1998 Act’s provisions make conspiracies and preparatory acts liable to punishment no matter where they are carried out, thus allowing legal intervention before violence occurs and safeguarding economic activity, public confidence, and cross-border trade.<sup>30</sup> In a similar way, the National Security Act 2023 provides the UK with an updated legal response to the threats of espionage, foreign interference, and state-linked terrorism, through open judicial oversight and suitably balanced enforcement measures, as stipulated in Parts 1–3. Such acts emphasise not militarisation but prevention, accountability, and institutional resilience. Together, they reflect a legal approach that protects national security while also maintaining economic order, social trust, and the rule of law. It is an alignment that is almost completely lacking in Nigeria’s counter-terrorism legal regime.<sup>31</sup>

The UK’s Serious Crime Act 2015 illustrates the United Kingdom’s method of integrating counter-terrorism measures with elements of economic justice and social prevention in a manner very similar to Nigeria’s terrorism laws. The Act grants judicial officials the authority

<sup>28</sup> Adebisi Arewa, ‘Corruption, Money Laundering and Nigeria’s Crisis of Development’, *Journal of Financial Crime*, 26.4 (2019), 1133–45 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-08-2018-0082>>.

<sup>29</sup> Ehi Eric Esoimeme, ‘The Money Laundering Risks and Vulnerabilities Associated with MMM Nigeria’, *Journal of Money Laundering Control*, 21.1 (2018), 112–19 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/JMLC-01-2017-0002>>.

<sup>30</sup> Martin David Owens and Elizabeth Johnson, ‘Not Gone Away: How Domestic Terrorism Impacts Multinationals in Foreign Markets’, *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 20.4 (2024), 464–86 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-09-2022-0100>>.

<sup>31</sup> Mansoor Ahmad and others, ‘Can the Interplay of Calling Diminish the Negative Effects of the Fear of Terrorism? Recent Evidence from Pakistan’, *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 36.5 (2025), 1096–1125 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCM-01-2025-0002>>.



to impose Serious Crime Prevention Orders (SCPOs) under sections 1-25, which serve not only as punishments but also as means to control future behaviour through the application of proportional limitations and remedial actions.<sup>32</sup> Such orders may include restrictions on employment, controls over financial transactions, and obligatory participation in rehabilitation programs, thereby dismantling violent networks while facilitating legal economic reintegration. By attacking the economic and organisational bases of serious crime, the Act simultaneously lessens the appeal of radicalisation and of taking violent action. The preventative, court-supervised model displays how legal intervention can not only strengthen communities but also prevent extremists' recruitment and protect legitimate economic activity, all without excessive reliance on coercive force.<sup>33</sup>

The Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 is a clear representation of the UK's creative strategy, which involves the legal enforcement of economic justice and rehabilitation. Thus, it presents a model that is sharply opposed to Nigeria's force-centric counter-terrorism framework. The Act amends the Criminal Justice Act 2003, thereby offering ex-prisoners of less than two years' imprisonment the benefit of post-sentence supervision (s 256AA).<sup>34</sup> The section further establishes the compliance with the structured programmes by the probation services, youth offending teams, and supervision under detention and training order (ss 256AA (9) (11)). Furthermore, it compels prisoners to engage in rehabilitation activities such as skills development, employment support, restorative justice, and accredited programmes (ss 15, 200A), thereby laying a foundation for social reintegration. Importantly, section 10 of the Act introduces gender-sensitive provisions under the Equality Act 2010, ensuring that the specific needs of female offenders are considered. Addressing the socio-economic factors of terrorism and providing the necessary support to the offenders through these measures leads to breaking the cycle of criminality and thus eventually lowers the number. By establishing a legal link between supervision, economic empowerment, and social inclusion, the Act phrases out sustainable security outcomes. On the other hand, the laws against terrorism in Nigeria are mostly militarised and punitive, thus emphasising rehabilitation and economic justice, which consequently hampers long-term prevention and adheres to the use of coercive responses instead of legal strategies that tackle the root causes of radicalisation.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Economic Justice as a Tool of Countering Terrorism in the UK and A Lesson for Nigeria***

In the UK, the concept of economic justice is incorporated into counter-terrorism measures as a pre-emptive strategy to supplant extremism and lower terrorist ideologies. The Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 and the Serious Crime Act 2015 are examples of measures that connect monitoring, training, and prisoner re-entry programs with social inclusion as a broader purpose, ensuring convicted criminals receive support for employment, education, and structured rehabilitation (ss 15, 200A). The dispensation of funds to banned groups is hindered by financial regulations imposed under the Terrorism Act 2000, especially sections 4 and 15–18, which targets the economic base of terrorism. By tackling the financial and social aspects of extremism together, the UK indicates that legal enforcement and economic

<sup>32</sup> Kim-Kwang Raymond Choo, 'Chapter 14 - Cryptocurrency and Virtual Currency: Corruption and Money Laundering/Terrorism Financing Risks?', in *Handbook of Digital Currency (Second Edition)*, ed. by David Lee Kuo Chuen, Second Edition (San Diego: Academic Press, 2024), pp. 259–90 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-98973-2.00012-5>>.

<sup>33</sup> Peterson K Ozili, 'Impact of Terrorism on Financial Inclusion: Evidence from the Most Terrorized Countries in the World', *Safer Communities*, 23.4 (2024), 299–316 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/SC-08-2023-0037>>.

<sup>34</sup> Antonis Adam and Evi Tsavou, 'Do Natural Disasters Fuel Terrorism? The Role of State Capacity', *Economic Modelling*, 115 (2022), 105950 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2022.105950>>.

<sup>35</sup> Tobias Ide, 'Teaching Terrorism, Saving the State? Education and Geopolitical Imaginations of Terrorism in 12 Violently Challenged States', *Political Geography*, 77 (2020), 102125 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.102125>>.



opportunity must be paired to achieve sustainable security, which, in turn, would lessen the criminals' or terrorists' activities by reducing their multiplex motives.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, Nigeria depends mainly on military and punitive measures, as evidenced by the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011, which gives priority to arrest and armed interventions, rather than rehabilitation or economic empowerment. The combination of high unemployment and poverty, along with regional marginalisation, offers recruiters among terrorists and bandits the easiest access to new manpower. The lack of legal mechanisms that link economic rights and rehabilitation with counter-terrorism operations allows the spread of extremist ideologies, regardless of military strength and efforts, as the cases of Boko Haram and ISWAP attacks tell. If the UK-inspired economic justice measures are adopted, they could turn Nigeria's counter-terrorism policy upside down by legalising rehabilitation, skills development, and financial oversight.<sup>37</sup> Through the concurrent application of probation, structured reintegration, and employment programs with monitoring of terrorist financing, Nigeria might be able not only to reduce recidivism but also to undermine the socio-economic conditions that favour terrorism. Legal reforms focused on equitable economic governance, along with strong community participation, would support military operations, thereby forming a well-balanced, continuous, and socially tuned countermeasure to terrorism in Nigeria.<sup>38</sup>

Corruption and institutional weakness are likely to be among the major challenges of Nigeria in implementing the economic justice policy as a counter-terrorism strategy. The enforcement of the existing anti-terrorism laws, including the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011 and the Counterterrorism (Proscription) Regulations, is often hampered by the agencies' inadequate training, insufficient funding, and corruption entrenched in the system. The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2023 ranked Nigeria 150 out of 180 countries, indicating that corruption is significant problem in the country.<sup>39</sup> Having weak institutions means that the laws intended to help reintegrate economic victims into society through rehabilitation and supervision will not be enforced effectively, and this is very much to the advantage of the corrupt, who will then misappropriate funds allocated for the poor and less privileged. The issues mentioned above may reduce people's trust towards the government, if the government fails to tackle the individuals involved in the corrupt act. Hence, the communities are not likely to get involved in counter-terrorism initiatives, which only encourages the terrorists to carry on with their recruitment of new members, especially from the unemployed youth and marginalised groups, as they have already created a gap in society.<sup>40</sup>

One more major challenge is economic inequality and poverty, which play important role in the spread of terrorism in Nigeria. The World Bank (2023) mentions that around 40% of Nigerians are living below the national poverty line, and at the same time, youth unemployment is as high as 28.8%, thus making it easy for extremists to recruit new members. The process of incorporating economic justice into the anti-terrorism campaign

<sup>36</sup> Sisira Dharmasri Jayasekara, 'Deficient Regimes of Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Agenda of Digital Banking and Financial Inclusion', *Journal of Money Laundering Control*, 24.1 (2020), 150–62 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/JMLC-04-2020-0035>>.

<sup>37</sup> P Raja and Ankathi Raghu, 'A Critical Review of Terrorism Effects and Their Impacts on Tourist Destination Countries', *Materials Today: Proceedings*, 37 (2021), 3461–65 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.matpr.2020.09.332>>.

<sup>38</sup> Bashir Kurfi Babangida, Roslan Abdul Hakim and Hussin Bin Abdullah, 'Validating Second-Order Model for Economic Welfare Scale: Evidence from Nigeria', *International Journal of Social Economics*, 49.4 (2022), 509–28 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-06-2021-0327>>.

<sup>39</sup> William Bograkos, 'Convergence: A Review of Narco-Terrorism for the Osteopathic Family Physician', *Osteopathic Family Physician*, 4.2 (2012), 48–54 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.osfp.2011.09.004>>.

<sup>40</sup> Basia Spalek and Robert Lambert, 'Muslim Communities, Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Radicalisation: A Critically Reflective Approach to Engagement', *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 36.4 (2008), 257–70 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcrj.2008.08.004>>.



will be difficult because of the need for large funds for social welfare, vocational training, and job creation programs, but Nigeria's limited fiscal power will hinder such measures. Several parts of the Nigerian regions are suffering most from this situation due to the unequal distribution of wealth, as extreme poverty conditions in these regions attract terrorist groups due to the lack of government services and the poor state of living. Economic justice promoting legal strategies without backing economic support and reform is the same as not addressing the root socio-economic problems causing terrorism at all, and thus it will be just a symbolic action of no real value.<sup>41</sup>

The third challenge is the legal and policy fragmentation, which has made implementing economic justice measures more complex. Nigeria's counter-terrorism measures are defined by a range of laws, including the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps Act, and various regional regulations; however, there is very little coordination among the security agencies, social services, and those organisations engaged in economic development.<sup>42</sup> This problem of fragmentation results in poor monitoring of ex-offenders who have been rehabilitated and in the slow delivery of reintegration programmes, which is in stark contrast with the case in the UK, where the different departments involved work together to provide drug treatment, probation monitoring, and employment skills training. Besides, there are legislative gaps in the areas of the offender rehabilitation, financial monitoring and community engagement, which constrain Nigeria's ability to execute a comprehensive economic justice strategy. It would take significant reforms, inter-agency coordination, and political dedication to overcome these legal gaps, and such a situation could easily attract resistance from the established bureaucracies and the interests that benefit from them.<sup>43</sup>

At last, security threats along with the ongoing insurgency, create significant challenges for the implementation of economic justice measures. In the Northeast and Northwest, continuous assaults by Boko Haram, ISWAP, and bandit groups bring about the dislocation of rehabilitation programmes, vocational centres, and community development projects, besides spreading fear among the local populations. According to ACLED 2024, conflict-prone regions recorded more than 1,200 violent incidents, leading to the large-scale displacement of civilians and cutting off their access to government-supported economic interventions.<sup>44</sup> The lack of security also makes it difficult to monitor the movement of funds and the reintegration of ex-offenders who have been rehabilitated. Nigeria will have to juxtapose military counter-terrorism operations with community-based programmes, which require coordination among security forces, social workers, and local authorities. If this balance is not reached, the effectiveness of the economic justice approach as a long-term counter-terrorism strategy would be affected, leaving structural inequalities and the issue of extremist recruitment unresolved.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Bushra Zulfiqar and others, 'Asymmetric Impact of Human Development Index on Terrorism in Pakistan: New Findings from QARDL', *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences*, 100 (2025), 102226 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2025.102226>>.

<sup>42</sup> S Brock Blomberg, Nzinga H Broussard and Gregory D Hess, 'New Wine in Old Wineskins? Growth, Terrorism and the Resource Curse in Sub-Saharan Africa', *European Journal of Political Economy*, 27 (2011), S50–63 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2011.06.004>>.

<sup>43</sup> Marcel Fafchamps and Pedro C Vicente, 'Political Violence and Social Networks: Experimental Evidence from a Nigerian Election', *Journal of Development Economics*, 101 (2013), 27–48 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2012.09.003>>.

<sup>44</sup> Max Abrahms, Luis Alfonso Dau and Elizabeth M Moore, 'Should I Stay or Should I Go Now? Understanding Terrorism as a Driver of Institutional Escapism', *International Business Review*, 32.4 (2023), 102120 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2023.102120>>.

<sup>45</sup> John N Mordeson and Sunil Mathew, 'Chapter 4 - Terrorism and Bioterrorism' This Book Has a Companion Website Hosting Complementary Materials. Visit This URL to Access It: <https://www.elsevier.com/books-and-journals/book-companion/9780443339493>, in *Fuzzy Mathematics, Graphs, and Similarity Measures*, ed. by John N Mordeson and Sunil Mathew (Academic Press, 2025), pp. 37–58 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-44-333949-3.00012-X>>.



## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Nigeria cannot sustainably combat terrorism by relying predominantly on coercive security measures. The analysis establishes that the current counter-terrorism framework prioritises surveillance, arrest, and punitive sanctions while insufficiently addressing structural socio-economic inequalities that contribute to radicalisation. Persistent unemployment, regional marginalisation, inequitable resource allocation, and limited access to social protection continue to generate grievances that extremist groups exploit for recruitment and mobilisation. Consequently, a force-centred legal response fails to eliminate the underlying drivers of insecurity and weakens the prospects for long-term stability. A comparative evaluation of the United Kingdom demonstrates that integrating economic justice into legal and institutional governance strengthens preventive capacity and enhances public legitimacy. The United Kingdom incorporates welfare regulation, financial oversight, and community-based economic inclusion into its national security architecture, thereby reducing socio-economic vulnerabilities associated with violent extremism. Drawing on these findings, this study argues that Nigeria should reconstruct its counter-terrorism legal framework by codifying enforceable socio-economic rights, strengthening transparent legislation on employment creation and regional development, and institutionalising effective anti-corruption mechanisms supported by checks and balances. By embedding economic justice as a complementary and preventive legal strategy, Nigeria can enhance the legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability of its counter-terrorism policy while advancing durable national peace.

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