STATE FRAGILITY AND TERRORISM: EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN GOVERNANCE GAPS AND THE RISE OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN NIGERIA AND SOMALIA

Akuche, C. Chukwuebuka
Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria.
akuche.chukwuebuka@lcu.edu.ng
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Abstract

The persistence of violent extremism in Africa has drawn increasing scholarly and policy attention, with Nigeria and Somalia representing two of the most affected states. Both countries illustrate how fragile governance and weak state institutions enable extremist groups to rise and sustain themselves. Violent organizations such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, and Al-Shabaab have exploited poverty, marginalization, and the absence of effective state authority to entrench themselves as alternative providers of order and services. The problem lies in the inability of fragile states to adequately respond to the needs of their citizens while simultaneously confronting the threats posed by extremist actors. In Nigeria, insurgents thrive in regions where unemployment, corruption, and poor governance have alienated local populations. In Somalia, Al-Shabaab has embedded itself deeply in areas where the State has been absent for decades, offering rudimentary governance and exploiting clan divisions. These dynamics demonstrate that violent extremism is not merely a product of ideology but a reflection of profound governance gaps. The main objective of this study is to analyze the link between state fragility and terrorism, using Nigeria and Somalia as case studies, and to highlight the broader implications for peace and security. The findings show that extremist groups gain legitimacy by filling governance vacuums, and that purely military responses have failed to deliver long-term stability. The study concludes that countering violent extremism requires more than force; it requires governance reform, development, and regional cooperation. It recommends prioritizing inclusive governance, economic empowerment, accountable security institutions, and cross-border collaboration as essential steps toward addressing the root causes of extremism and fostering lasting peace.

Keywords: State Fragility, Violent Extremism, Terrorism, Governance Gaps, Human Security, Regional Stability

INTRODUCTION

The ongoing prevalence of terrorism in Africa has elicited heightened apprehension among academics and policymakers, especially in areas characterized by ineffective governance and vulnerable state institutions. Violent extremism in fragile contexts is not solely the result of ideological motivations; it flourishes at the intersection of structural vulnerabilities, governance deficiencies, and constrained state legitimacy. Nigeria and Somalia serve as two pivotal case studies for analyzing the correlation between state fragility and terrorism.

Over the last twenty years, both countries have become important examples in talks about violent extremism. Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have made large parts of northeastern Nigeria less stable, and Al-Shabaab still has power in Somalia. To explain why violent extremism has been so hard to stop after years of counterterrorism efforts, there is a need to understand the governance aspects of these crises.

State fragility often denotes the inability of governments to do basic things like keep the peace, provide public services, and uphold the rule of law (Ferreira, 2017). In weak states, the breakdown of the social contract between the government and its people makes it easier for violent non-state actors to grow. Corruption, politics that leave some people out, weak security institutions, and bad service delivery are all signs of governance gaps. In these situations, extremist groups often take advantage of the anger of people who feel left out by the government by offering them different forms of authority or material rewards. These governance deficiencies are indicative of fragility and are directly associated with the proliferation and persistence of terrorism.

Nigeria's situation is a clear example of how weak institutions can lead to violent extremism. Even though it has the largest economy in Africa, there are still big disparities between the south and the north (Akindoyin & Alade, 2025). The northeastern part of the country has a lot of problems, like high poverty rates, bad infrastructure, and not enough government presence. Boko Haram has grown because of these problems with governance. The group took advantage of people's anger by claiming to be able to fight against state neglect and corruption. The group's transformation into ISWAP has exacerbated insecurity in the region, with assaults directed at civilians, security personnel, and infrastructure (Akindoyin & Alade, 2025). The Nigerian government's inability to consistently protect its citizens has led to a loss of faith in government institutions. This has created a vicious cycle in which violence makes the government even less able to protect its citizens.

Somalia is a more extreme example of a weak state. After its central government fell apart in 1991, the country has had a hard time putting together coherent national institutions again. Somalia has a weak system of government, especially outside of the capital city of Mogadishu, because of decades of civil war, clan rivalries, and outside interference (Ahmad, 2022). Al-Shabaab has exploited the absence of an effective central government to penetrate local communities, establish parallel governance structures, and provide basic social services within territories under its control. Some communities see the group's consistent enforcement of rules as a contrast to the sporadic and often corrupt presence of state officials. This parallel governance structure illustrates how the lack of effective state authority can enhance the legitimacy of violent extremist organizations.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative design to investigate the relationship among state fragility, governance deficiencies, and the emergence of violent extremism in Nigeria and Somalia. The qualitative approach is suitable as it facilitates a comprehensive examination of the intricate political, social, and economic conditions that influence terrorism in fragile states.

The research predominantly utilizes secondary data sources, encompassing academic publications, policy reports, and reputable institutional documents. These materials shed light on the historical and current contexts of fragility in both nations, along with the tactics utilized by extremist groups like Boko Haram, ISWAP, and Al-Shabaab. Utilizing existing

literature facilitates a critical examination of patterns and trends that demonstrate the correlation between governance failures and security challenges.

The comparative case study methodology is utilized for Nigeria and Somalia. This approach offers a structure for discerning the similarities and differences in the relationship between fragility and terrorism in the two contexts. Nigeria exemplifies a scenario in which a relatively robust central government grapples with localized governance deficiencies, whereas Somalia illustrates a near-complete disintegration of state structures. Looking at both cases next to each other shows how violent extremism and weak governance can work together in different ways.

The analysis is thematic, concentrating on governance, legitimacy, security, and development. This approach guarantees that the research not only uncovers causal relationships but also extrapolates wider ramifications for peacebuilding and counterterrorism strategies.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

State fragility: State fragility simply denotes the situation where the institutions of a state do not have the power, legitimacy, or authority to carry out important political, social, and economic duties (Elagin, 2021). Fragile states have a hard time making sure that people are safe, following the law, regulating business, and making sure that everyone has fair access to public goods. They have weak institutions, widespread corruption, politics that leave people out, and limited control over their territory (Elagin, 2021). This kind of weakness makes it possible for non-state actors to challenge the state's authority and legitimacy.

In addition, state fragility is often associated with poor governance and the erosion of public trust in government institutions. The inability of the state to meet citizens' basic needs, such as security, healthcare, and education, often results in social unrest and loss of confidence in political leadership. Fragile states also tend to experience high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, which further deepen discontent among the populace. These conditions make the state vulnerable to internal conflict, violent extremism, and external interference. Furthermore, the absence of effective institutions limits the implementation of policies aimed at economic growth and human development. The persistence of fragility undermines national cohesion, hinders democratic consolidation, and perpetuates cycles of instability and underdevelopment.

Governance gaps: Governance gaps are the real-world problems that state institutions have when they are not up to par in discharging their responsibilities (Akindoyin, 2025). That is, services cannot be provided, citizens cannot be protected, and accountability cannot be upheld. When there are big gaps in governance, the state cannot meet the needs of its citizens, which affects trust and weakens the social contract. These governance failures frequently incite resentment, marginalization, and frustration among citizens, which extremist groups can leverage for recruitment and mobilization.

Moreover, governance gaps manifest in weak institutional frameworks, a lack of transparency, and ineffective policy implementation. They are often reinforced by corruption, political patronage, and exclusionary practices that benefit a small elite while alienating the broader population. Such conditions foster socio-economic inequalities and undermine the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its citizens. In fragile or conflict-prone societies, these governance deficits create an enabling environment for violence, criminality, and the rise of non-state actors who fill the void left by the government. Also, governance gaps hinder

sustainable development, as inefficient institutions fail to manage resources equitably or deliver essential services such as education, healthcare, and justice. Over time, persistent governance gaps can entrench cycles of poverty, insecurity, and underdevelopment, making state recovery difficult.

Violent extremism: frequently manifested through terrorism, entails the employment or promotion of violence by groups or individuals motivated by ideological, religious, or political objectives (Stephens, 2021). Terrorist groups in weak states often get their resolve from both their ideology and their ability to take advantage of gaps in government. When governments do not provide security and basic services, extremist groups often step in and act as protectors, providers, or enforcers of order. The relationship between weak statehood, gaps in governance, and violent extremism is what sustains terrorism in Africa.

It is important to know that violent extremism thrives in environments where poverty, unemployment, social injustice, and political exclusion persist. Similarly, extremist organizations capitalize on citizens' grievances and feelings of neglect to spread their ideologies and recruit followers. They often manipulate religious or ethnic narratives to justify violence and to legitimize their cause among vulnerable populations. Moreover, porous borders, limited state presence in rural areas, and corruption among security agencies create additional spaces for extremist networks to operate freely. The persistence of violent extremism further undermines national stability, discourages investment, and triggers mass displacement, which compounds humanitarian crises.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Various theoretical frameworks elucidate the relationship between fragility and terrorism. The *failed state theory* is one relevant approach. It says that terrorism and violent extremism are more likely to happen when state institutions break down or don't work well (Rotberg, 2024). From this point of view, failed states create areas that are not governed, which is where violent groups thrive. This literature frequently characterizes Somalia as a quintessential instance of state failure, wherein Al-Shabaab thrived amidst the disintegration of national institutions.

The *human security approach* is another perspective elucidating the relationship between fragility and terrorism. Human security is different from traditional state-centered security models in that it focuses on keeping people safe from poverty, hunger, disease, violence, etc. (Persaud, 2022). From this point of view, violent extremism is related to both the weakness of state institutions and the inability to meet the basic needs of citizens. This framework can be used to look at how Boko Haram grew in northeastern Nigeria. The group used poverty, unemployment, and poor service delivery to gain support.

The *relative deprivation theory* is another important framework. Its proponents argue that violence is inevitable when people or groups feel like there is a big difference between what they expect and what they actually experience (Sari, 2021). In fragile states, governance deficiencies exacerbate perceptions of deprivation, especially among marginalized groups. Feelings of unfairness and exclusion create a good environment for extremist stories that promise power and justice through violence.

Lastly, the *legitimacy theory* shows how important state legitimacy is for keeping peace and stability. Legitimacy comes not only from forceful authority, but also from how fair, accountable, and effective citizens think their government is (Adeoye, 2024). When legitimacy is lacking, citizens may pursue alternatives, thereby facilitating opportunities for violent extremist groups. Nigeria and

Somalia both show how a decline in the legitimacy of the state has helped extremist groups get a foothold in local communities.

Justification of the Theoretical Framework

Synthesizing the aforementioned provides a robust framework for looking into expatriating why violent extremism persists in Nigeria and Somalia. State fragility has been established as the inherent vulnerabilities within both states, while governance gaps, on the other hand, elucidate the routine failures that undermine public trust, and violent extremism underscores the methods by which extremist factions exploit these circumstances. The theoretical perspectives emphasize that terrorism in fragile contexts cannot be solely attributed to ideology; it must be comprehended in the context of profound governance failures and unfulfilled human security needs. The analysis in the following sections will illustrate how governance deficiencies in Nigeria and Somalia have fostered conditions favourable to terrorism, and why rectifying these deficiencies is crucial for enduring counterterrorism initiatives.

Governance Gaps in Nigeria

In Africa, Nigeria is often regarded as a paradox as it has the most people and the biggest economy in Africa, while a lot of its people are poor, underdeveloped, and unsafe (Nwankwo, 2021). Governance failures are especially obvious in the northeastern region, which is where the Boko Haram insurgency started. Weak state institutions have had a hard time providing basic services like education, healthcare, and infrastructure. For example, many young people are at risk of being radicalized because there are not enough schools or jobs. Extremist groups take advantage of this by offering a sense of belonging and purpose (Gomez, 2021).

Corruption makes it even harder for the Nigerian government to be more functional in discharging its duties. People do not trust the government as much because of how poorly they manage public resources (Agbo, 2023). This has made it harder for the state to carry out important development projects. Embezzling money meant for security and development has been especially bad in places where there is a lot of conflict. People often think that government officials are only looking out for themselves, which has led to disappointment and anger. This widespread belief that the government does not care has made it easier for people in marginalized groups to either put up with or support insurgent activities.

Another significant facet of Nigeria's governance deficit is its uneven development and regional inequalities (Audu, & Adeiza, 2024). The southern parts of the country are doing better than the northern parts, especially the northeast, because they have been able to generate more Internal Generated Revenue (IGR) and have better infrastructure (Audu, & Adeiza, 2024). This inequality between regions has made people feel more marginalized and excluded, which extremist groups use in recruiting new members. The state's failure to address these grievances has exacerbated instability and fostered conditions conducive to violent extremism.

Nigeria's security governance has also been challenging. The state has sent a lot of combatants in the fight against terrorism and insurgency in the state; however, the security forces themselves are poorly trained, do not have sophisticated equipment like the West, and are poorly paid, which breeds a lack of motivation (Akindoyin, 2025). Claims that security forces have violated people's rights have made people less likely to trust them and have led to a cycle of violence and revenge. Many communities do not trust the military, which makes it harder for them to work together to fight terrorism.

Governance Gaps in Somalia

Somalia exemplifies an acute form of state fragility. Somalia has had a hard time building working institutions since the central government fell apart in 1991. Without a stable central government, there was a long time when there was no state, and clan-based militias and warlords fought for power. This fragmentation made it harder to rebuild the state and made it impossible for the national government to reach many parts of the country. Even after the creation of transitional and later federal institutions, state power is still weak and relies heavily on help from other countries (Menkhaus, 2014).

One of the main things that makes Somalia's governance gap so bad is that services aren't being delivered well. In a lot of places, basic services like education, healthcare, and justice are either not available or not reliable. Al-Shabaab has filled this gap by setting up its own government structures in the areas it controls. The group has gained some legitimacy among communities that feel abandoned by the state by providing basic services and enforcing a strict form of order. The fact that Al-Shabaab can act as a de facto authority shows how bad Somalia's government is.

Corruption and the splitting up of the elite make Somalia even more unstable. Clan loyalties often drive political competition more than national interests. This makes for a government system that puts small networks ahead of greater state-building efforts. External assistance, although essential, has occasionally exacerbated dependency instead of enhancing autonomous governance capacity. The dependence on foreign peacekeepers for security highlights the fragility of Somali institutions and casts doubt on the durability of state authority following the withdrawal of external forces (Menkhaus, 2014).

Security governance remains deeply inadequate in Somalia. As noted by Ali (2024), the Somali state continues to struggle with fragmented security institutions, overlapping mandates, and reliance on foreign interventions, which hinder the development of a unified national security framework. Likewise, Hashi (2024) argues that the persistence of clan-based power structures and limited territorial control further weakens the government's ability to ensure effective security governance.

The national army does not have enough resources and is not well-coordinated, so it can't project authority very far outside of major cities. Al-Shabaab, on the other hand, works together and follows rules, which lets it keep control in rural areas. The state's failure to provide security has made people less safe and less trusting of government institutions. This lack of security shows how directly linked bad government is to the rise of violent extremism.

COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS

While it is important to expatiate that governance gaps are more predominant in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, Nigeria and Somalia have different histories and government structures, but both show how gaps in governance can keep things weak. Even in a country with a lot of resources, Nigeria shows how weak institutions, corruption, and differences between regions can lead to grievances that extremist groups can use. Somalia is an even more extreme example because the central authority was almost gone, which allowed violent groups to take over and run things in a parallel way. In both cases, the lack of security, services, and accountability has made the state less legitimate and given terrorists a chance to grow.

The comparison shows that fragile states are not all the same, but they do have some common problems with governance that lead to violent extremism. Fixing these problems with governance is important not only for stopping

terrorism but also for making states that are strong and legitimate.

Violent Extremism and Terrorism Dynamics: Nigeria

Boko Haram and its later offshoot, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), are two of the most violent extremist groups in Africa. Boko Haram started in the early 2000s as a religious reform movement led by Mohammed Yusuf. In the beginning, its rhetoric was about fighting corruption and moral decay in Nigeria. This struck a chord with people who had been living in poverty, inequality, and bad government for a long time. After Yusuf died in 2009 and the group became militarized, Boko Haram became a violent insurgency that directly challenged the Nigerian government's authority (Thurston, 2017).

Boko Haram and ISWAP have used the lack of government in northeastern Nigeria to keep doing what they do. High levels of poverty, lack of education, and unemployment made it easy for people to join. Many young men joined these groups not just because they believed in their ideas, but also because they didn't have any job prospects and were promised material rewards. The resilience of security institutions was also due to failures in governance. Reports of human rights violations and harsh tactics by the Nigerian military hurt the trust between communities and the state. This made people less likely to work with security forces and sometimes pushed them towards insurgents (Agbiboa, 2021).

ISWAP has strategically embedded itself in local communities by providing services and keeping the peace in areas it controls. This has included setting up ways for people to pay taxes, providing basic justice, and keeping people safe in ways that the state has not been able to do. ISWAP has gained legitimacy among some groups by presenting itself as a more trustworthy authority. This shows how violent

extremist groups can take advantage of gaps in governance to gain power.

Violent Extremism and Terrorism Dynamics: Somalia

Al-Shabaab is a more entrenched form of violent extremism in Somalia. Somalia's central government fell apart in 1991, and the country was without a government for a long time (Dahir & Sheikh Ali, 2024). This made it easier for extremists to get people to join their cause. Al-Shabaab started as a radical part of the Islamic Courts Union. It claimed to be both a religious movement and a nationalist group fighting against foreign intervention. Over time, it became the most powerful insurgent group in Somalia, using terrorist tactics in Somalia and nearby countries like Kenya and Uganda (Dahir, & Sheikh Ali, 2024).

Al-Shabaab is an extremist force to reckon with, as it can take advantage of the holes in Somalia's government. In rural areas where the government is not too effective, the group provides important services, makes sure laws are followed, and settles disagreements (Gambo, 2021). Al-Shabaab has built a reputation for order and consistency, even if it has done so through force, by providing some level of government. The Somali government, on the other hand, is often seen as corrupt, ineffective, and dependent on help from other countries. Consequently, numerous communities endure or even collaborate with Al-Shabaab out of necessity rather than ideological commitment.

Al-Shabaab has also been able to stay alive thanks to its financing strategies. The group has set up complex ways to make money through taxes, extortion, and controlling trade, which lets it keep going and show its power over large areas. Its ability to change its military strategy, retreat when necessary, and take advantage of clan dynamics has also helped it last. These dynamics demonstrate that violent extremism

in Somalia cannot be comprehended merely as an ideological conflict; it must be contextualized within the framework of ineffective governance and enduring instability.

Comparative Dynamics

Even though Nigeria and Somalia are different in many ways, the dynamics of violent extremism in both countries are very similar. Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab both do well in areas where there is poverty, a weak government, and people are unhappy with their communities. Both groups take advantage of gaps in governance by providing different kinds of authority, such as justice, tax systems, or basic services. In every instance, governance failures within security institutions, characterized by corruption, inefficiency, or abuses, have eroded state legitimacy and inadvertently bolstered extremist factions.

However, there are also some big differences. Nigeria, despite its problems, still has a strong central government and a lot of resources. The ongoing presence of Boko Haram and ISWAP indicates localized governance failures, especially in the northeast, rather than a complete breakdown of state authority (Brechenmacher, 2019). Somalia, on the other hand, shows a nearly complete lack of government at the national level. Al-Shabaab has taken advantage of this by becoming deeply entrenched in the country (Ibrahim Shire, 2023). These differences show that violent extremism changes to fit the specific gaps in governance in each situation.

Synthesis

The situations in Nigeria and Somalia demonstrate that violent extremism is perpetuated not solely through ideology or coercion, but also through the exploitation of governance deficiencies. When extremist groups offer protection and services in places where the government is not there or is not doing its job, they become more legitimate.

This situation makes it hard to tell the difference between insurgency and governance, since groups like ISWAP and Al-Shabaab want to take over the government instead of just fighting it.

Linkages and Implications

Governance Gaps as Enablers of Extremism

One of the most important links between fragility and extremism is the lack of good governance that extremist groups take advantage of. Boko Haram and ISWAP have become more pronounced in Nigeria by pretending to be better options than a government that has always failed to meet basic needs in the northeast (Ali, 2024). In the same way, Al-Shabaab has become a part of Somalia by providing government services where the government has not been since the early 1990s. These groups are not just rebels; they also act as de facto authorities in some areas, making laws, collecting taxes, and providing services. The implication is that counterterrorism policies that ignore governance deficits risk being ineffective, as military gains can be undermined if the state continues to neglect service delivery and justice.

The Security-Development Nexus

Another important link is the relationship between security and development. Violent extremism flourishes in contexts characterized by economic marginalization and limited opportunities. According to the *global economy* (2024), young people between the ages of 18 and 24 are unemployed in Nigeria's northeast. This makes it easy for extremist groups to recruit new members (Ocheli, 2022). In Somalia, chronic underdevelopment, along with a lack of infrastructure and ways to make a living, has pushed people to Al-Shabaab for help (Simuziya, 2024). This means that dealing with violent extremism needs a mix of security measures and long-term development plans. Not dealing with the developmental aspect

could lead to more cycles of violence and recruitment.

Regional and Transnational Implications
The situations in Nigeria and Somalia also show how violent extremism can spread to other areas. Boko Haram and ISWAP have moved their operations into Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, which has made the Lake Chad Basin less stable (Nyelade, 2024). Al-Shabaab has attacked civilians and international peacekeepers in Kenya and Uganda (Nyelade, 2024). These connections between regions show how easy it is for people to cross African borders and how weak states cannot effectively control their own land. This means that violent extremism in one country can quickly turn into a regional crisis that needs cooperation that goes beyond national strategies.

Transnational extremist networks also give local insurgent groups ideological, financial, and logistical help. Boko Haram's connection to the Islamic State and Al-Shabaab's connection to Al-Qaeda show how weak states can become breeding grounds for global terrorism. This is bad for international security because unchecked extremism in unstable areas can spread to other parts of the world through recruiting foreign fighters and terrorist financing networks. The situations in Nigeria and Somalia also show how violent extremism can spread to other parts of the world.

Social Cohesion and Legitimacy
There is a connection between state fragility, extremist mobilization, and the breakdown of social cohesion. Governance failures that lead to corruption, exclusion, and unfair resource distribution create anger among groups that are already on the outside. Extremist groups take advantage of these complaints by claiming to be defenders of justice and protectors of communities against powerful elites. This situation has made people in both Nigeria and Somalia less trusting of the government, which

has made government institutions less legitimate. The implication is that rebuilding legitimacy must be at the centre of responses to extremism.

Synthesis
The cases of Nigeria and Somalia show that violent extremism is linked to the larger problem of fragility. Extremist groups thrive because governance institutions fail to provide basic goods and services, and because citizens lose confidence in the state's ability to protect and empower them. The implications are evident: without rectifying the governance deficiencies that perpetuate instability, military successes against Boko Haram or Al-Shabaab will be ephemeral. Achieving long-term stability entails addressing the root causes of extremism by closing gaps in governance, promoting development, improving regional cooperation, and restoring legitimacy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions
In conclusion, the analysis of state fragility and terrorism in Nigeria and Somalia illustrates that violent extremism arises not only from radical ideologies but also from enduring governance deficiencies. Both countries show how weak institutions, bad service delivery, corruption, and exclusion can help extremist groups grow. Boko Haram, ISWAP, and Al-Shabaab have all been able to establish themselves by filling gaps in governance and showing authority in ways that weaken already weak states. Their capacity to recruit, mobilize, and sustain operations indicates structural deficiencies that extend well beyond the battlefield.

The study leads to the conclusion that terrorism in unstable environments cannot be mitigated exclusively through military intervention. While security measures are necessary to mitigate the immediate threat of violence, they are inadequate for addressing the fundamental

causes of extremism. Insurgent groups are still active in Nigeria and Somalia, which shows that insecurity will persist even after major military victories if governance problems are not fixed. To build lasting peace and stability, we need all-encompassing plans that focus on governance, legitimacy, and development.

Recommendations

The study hereby makes the following recommendations;

1. Governments in weak states must first focus on governance reforms that make things more accountable, open, and inclusive. People need to see the government as a real provider of safety, justice, and growth. To rebuild trust between governments and their people, it is important to fight corruption, strengthen institutions, and make sure everyone has fair access to services.

2. Economic empowerment must be central to countering violent extremism. Both Nigeria and Somalia suffer from high levels of poverty and unemployment, particularly among youth, who often become the primary targets for extremist recruitment. Expanding opportunities through vocational training, education, and entrepreneurship initiatives can reduce vulnerability to radicalization. In rural areas where state presence is minimal, investment in infrastructure, agriculture, and community development can help bridge long-standing grievances.

3. Security sector reform is urgently needed to ensure that state responses to terrorism do not alienate local communities. In both case studies, excessive use of force and human rights violations by security forces have eroded public trust and, at times, strengthened the appeal of insurgent groups. Professionalizing the security sector, improving accountability, and fostering closer cooperation between communities and security agencies can enhance effectiveness and legitimacy.

4. Regional and international cooperation remains vital. Terrorist groups in Nigeria and Somalia operate across porous borders and receive support from transnational networks. National responses alone are insufficient to contain such threats. Regional organizations must play a stronger role in coordinating intelligence, harmonizing policies, and sharing resources. International partners should also provide support in ways that strengthen local capacities rather than foster dependency.

5. Finally, counter-narratives that challenge extremist ideologies should be integrated into broader policies. Extremist groups thrive not only through coercion but also by presenting themselves as moral or political alternatives. Community leaders, religious figures, and civil society actors can play an important role in reshaping narratives and offering alternative visions of justice and security that resonate with local populations.

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