



**TERRORISM AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY MECHANISM IN WEST AFRICA:
HINDRANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT**

NURADDEEN YUSUF

Department of Political Science
Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna
nurasufi.ny@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the interplay between terrorism, collective security mechanisms, and development in West Africa, highlighting the challenges that hinder regional stability and socio-economic progress. Terrorism in the sub-region, particularly perpetrated by groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP, has escalated due to weak governance, socio-economic marginalization, porous borders, and the convergence of organized crime. Collective security frameworks, including ECOWAS, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), and African Union (AU) mechanisms, have been deployed to counter these threats; however, their effectiveness is constrained by political divergence, limited operational capacity, inadequate funding, and coordination gaps. Using Regional Security Complex Theory and Human Security Theory as analytical lenses, the study underscores the interdependence between security and development, emphasizing that military interventions alone are insufficient for long-term stability. The findings reveal that structural, operational, and socio-political challenges reduce the efficacy of collective security mechanisms, while persistent insecurity negatively impacts economic growth, social cohesion, and human capital. The study recommends strengthening political commitment, enhancing operational and institutional capacity, promoting intelligence sharing, integrating development strategies with security efforts, and fostering community engagement. Overall, a holistic, coordinated, and development-sensitive approach is essential for sustainable peace and security in West Africa.

Keywords: Terrorism, Collective Security, ECOWAS, MNJTF, West Africa, Development

1. Introduction

The West African sub-region has experienced a significant escalation in terrorism and violent extremism, positioning it as one of the most volatile security environments globally. Recent scholarly assessments indicate that Africa, particularly the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, has become the epicentre of global terrorist activity, with sustained increases in attacks and fatalities over the past decade. Abdi Wario (2026) notes that terrorist groups affiliated with global networks such as



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda have intensified their operations across the region, exploiting fragile governance systems and weak state presence. Similarly, Solomon (2025) observes that Boko Haram and its splinter factions have expanded their territorial reach beyond Nigeria into neighbouring states, exacerbating regional instability. The persistence of these threats reflects a transition from localized insurgencies to complex transnational terrorist networks. This growing sophistication has overwhelmed national security frameworks and exposed institutional weaknesses across West African states. Consequently, terrorism has evolved into a multidimensional threat that undermines peace, security, and development simultaneously.

The underlying drivers of terrorism in West Africa are deeply rooted in structural and governance-related challenges that continue to undermine state resilience. Contemporary studies emphasize that state fragility, characterized by weak institutions and limited territorial control, significantly contributes to the proliferation of terrorist activities. Edson Ziso and Antonetta Lovejoy Hamandishe (2024) argue that the resurgence of military coups in countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger has intensified instability and created governance vacuums that terrorist groups exploit. In addition, Shalom Kolawole and Andrew Enaifoghe (2026) highlight that counterterrorism efforts in Nigeria and the wider region are often undermined by politicization, weak coordination, and inconsistent policy implementation. Economic deprivation and social marginalization further exacerbate vulnerability, as communities facing poverty and exclusion become more susceptible to extremist recruitment. Moreover, environmental pressures such as climate change and competition over scarce resources have intensified local conflicts, which terrorist groups leverage to expand their influence. These interconnected factors illustrate that terrorism in West Africa is not merely a security issue but a complex socio-political phenomenon requiring comprehensive responses.

In response to the growing threat of terrorism, collective security mechanisms have emerged as a central strategy for addressing regional insecurity in West Africa. Scholars argue that the transnational nature of terrorism necessitates coordinated responses that go beyond individual state capabilities. Valéry Iragi Ntwali (2025) contends that regional organizations and security frameworks play a crucial role in managing security threats, although their effectiveness is often



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

constrained by political divisions and institutional weaknesses. Similarly, Moussa Ouedraogo et al. (2023) demonstrate that terrorism has profound implications for development, as increased security spending diverts resources from critical sectors such as healthcare and infrastructure. Despite the establishment of collective security initiatives, including joint military operations and regional counterterrorism strategies, the spread of terrorism into previously stable coastal states suggests limitations in existing approaches. The persistence of insecurity highlights the need for more integrated strategies that combine security interventions with development-oriented policies. Therefore, examining the relationship between terrorism, collective security mechanisms, and development is essential for understanding the long-term stability of West Africa.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Terrorism

Terrorism remains one of the most contested and complex concepts in contemporary security studies, with no universally accepted definition despite extensive scholarly engagement. Recent scholars emphasize that terrorism is fundamentally characterized by the deliberate use of violence or the threat of violence against civilians to achieve political, ideological, or religious objectives. Schmid (2022) argues that modern terrorism should be understood as a communicative strategy designed to instill fear beyond the immediate victims, thereby influencing a wider audience. In the same vein, Richards (2023) contends that terrorism is distinguished from other forms of political violence by its symbolic nature and its intention to coerce governments or societies. In the West African context, this definition is particularly relevant given the pattern of attacks targeting both civilian populations and state institutions. The evolving nature of terrorism, especially in fragile regions, has expanded its scope to include insurgency, banditry, and organized criminal violence. Consequently, terrorism in West Africa reflects a hybrid form of violence that blurs the boundaries between ideological extremism and criminality.

Contemporary literature further highlights the transformation of terrorism into a transnational and networked phenomenon, particularly in regions such as the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. Solomon (2025) notes that terrorist organizations in West Africa increasingly operate through decentralized



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

structures, enabling them to adapt quickly to military pressure and exploit ungoverned spaces. Similarly, Thurston (2024) emphasizes that groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have developed sophisticated recruitment and operational strategies that transcend national borders. These groups leverage local grievances, weak governance, and socio-economic inequalities to sustain their activities. Okoli and Nnaemeka (2023) further argue that terrorism in Nigeria has evolved into a complex system involving alliances between extremist groups and criminal networks engaged in kidnapping, arms trafficking, and illicit trade. This convergence of terrorism and organized crime has made it increasingly difficult to address the threat through conventional military approaches alone. As a result, terrorism in West Africa must be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon embedded within broader socio-political and economic dynamics.

Moreover, the implications of terrorism extend beyond immediate security concerns to encompass broader developmental and governance challenges. Agbiboa (2023) posits that terrorism undermines state legitimacy by eroding public trust in government institutions and weakening the social contract. In addition, Ewi and Aning (2024) argue that persistent terrorist activities disrupt economic activities, deter foreign investment, and exacerbate humanitarian crises across affected regions. The destruction of infrastructure, displacement of populations, and disruption of education and healthcare systems further illustrate the far-reaching consequences of terrorism. From a theoretical perspective, terrorism thrives in environments characterized by inequality, marginalization, and political exclusion. This underscores the importance of addressing root causes alongside security responses in counterterrorism strategies. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of terrorism in West Africa requires an integrated approach that considers its ideological, structural, and developmental dimensions.

2.2 Concept of Collective Security

The concept of collective security occupies a central position in international relations and security studies, particularly in addressing transnational threats such as terrorism. Contemporary scholars conceptualize collective security as a system in which states cooperate to prevent and respond to



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

threats against peace, based on the principle that an attack on one is considered an attack on all. Bellamy and Williams (2021) argue that collective security frameworks are designed to deter aggression through unified responses and shared responsibility among member states. Similarly, Kaldor (2022) emphasizes that modern collective security has evolved beyond traditional military alliances to include multidimensional approaches involving political, economic, and social instruments. In the context of West Africa, this concept is particularly relevant due to the transboundary nature of terrorism and the limitations of individual state responses. The increasing interconnectedness of security challenges has reinforced the necessity for collaborative mechanisms at the regional level. Thus, collective security represents both a normative and practical framework for maintaining peace and stability in complex security environments.

In recent years, the application of collective security in Africa has been shaped by regional organizations and institutional frameworks designed to address shared threats. Aning and Edu-Afful (2023) note that regional bodies have become key actors in managing security challenges, particularly in regions characterized by weak state capacity and porous borders. In West Africa, ECOWAS has operationalized collective security through mechanisms such as joint military interventions, peacekeeping missions, and counterterrorism strategies. According to Adebajo (2024), ECOWAS has demonstrated relative success in conflict management but continues to face challenges in adapting its strategies to evolving threats such as terrorism and violent extremism. Furthermore, Abrahamsen (2023) argues that the effectiveness of collective security arrangements depends largely on the political will of member states and their commitment to shared norms and responsibilities. The emergence of new security threats has also necessitated closer collaboration with international partners, thereby expanding the scope of collective security beyond regional boundaries. These developments highlight the dynamic nature of collective security as both an institutional practice and a strategic response to contemporary security challenges.

Despite its significance, collective security in West Africa faces several structural and operational challenges that limit its effectiveness. Williams (2023) contends that disparities in military capacity, funding constraints, and divergent national interests often hinder coordinated action among member states. Similarly, Obi (2022) points out that political instability, including the



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

resurgence of military coups in the region, has weakened institutional cohesion and undermined trust among states. The issue of sovereignty also poses a major challenge, as some states are reluctant to cede authority or fully commit to regional interventions. In addition, Ebo (2024) highlights that weak intelligence-sharing mechanisms and limited logistical capacity continue to impede effective responses to terrorism. These challenges are further compounded by external geopolitical influences, which sometimes create divisions within regional blocs. Consequently, while collective security remains a vital framework for addressing terrorism in West Africa, its success depends on overcoming these structural limitations. A more integrated and well-resourced approach is therefore essential to enhance the effectiveness of collective security mechanisms in the region.

2.3 Concept of Development

The concept of development has evolved significantly over time, moving beyond a narrow focus on economic growth to encompass broader dimensions of human well-being and societal progress. Contemporary scholars define development as a multidimensional process involving improvements in economic productivity, social equity, political stability, and human capabilities. Sen (2020) argues that development should be understood primarily as the expansion of human freedoms, including access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Similarly, Todaro and Smith (2021) emphasize that development entails structural transformation, reduction in poverty, and enhancement of living standards across populations. In the context of West Africa, this broader conceptualization is particularly important given the region's persistent socio-economic challenges and governance deficits. Development is therefore not merely about income growth but also about improving the quality of life and institutional capacity. This perspective underscores the interconnectedness between security, governance, and sustainable development outcomes.

Recent literature further highlights the critical relationship between development and security, particularly in regions affected by conflict and terrorism. Collier (2021) posits that countries experiencing persistent insecurity often fall into a “conflict trap,” where violence undermines



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

economic growth and perpetuates poverty. In the same vein, Blattman and Miguel (2020) argue that underdevelopment increases the likelihood of conflict by exacerbating grievances and limiting economic opportunities. In West Africa, terrorism has significantly disrupted development processes by destroying infrastructure, displacing populations, and diverting government resources toward security expenditures. According to Murshed (2022), the economic consequences of conflict and terrorism include reduced investment, declining productivity, and increased fiscal pressures on states. These impacts are particularly severe in fragile states where institutional capacity is already limited. Consequently, the persistence of terrorism in West Africa poses a major obstacle to achieving sustainable development goals. This highlights the need for integrated strategies that address both security and development challenges simultaneously.

Moreover, development in contemporary discourse increasingly incorporates governance, inclusivity, and resilience as key components. Andrews (2023) emphasizes that effective development requires strong institutions capable of delivering public goods and maintaining accountability. Similarly, Rodrik (2022) argues that inclusive economic policies and good governance are essential for achieving long-term development outcomes. In West Africa, weak governance structures, corruption, and political instability have hindered development efforts and created conditions conducive to insecurity. Furthermore, inequality and social exclusion continue to marginalize certain groups, making them more vulnerable to recruitment by extremist organizations. As noted by Hickel (2021), sustainable development must prioritize equity and social justice alongside economic growth. Therefore, addressing the developmental challenges in West Africa requires a holistic approach that integrates economic, social, and political dimensions. Such an approach is essential for building resilience against terrorism and fostering long-term stability in the region.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) and Human Security Theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of terrorism and collective security mechanisms in West Africa. Regional Security Complex Theory, as advanced by Buzan and Wæver (2023), posits



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

that security dynamics are clustered geographically, such that threats are most intense among neighboring states due to shared historical, political, and socio-economic linkages. In the context of West Africa, this theory explains why terrorism originating in one country, such as Mali or Nigeria, rapidly diffuses across borders into Niger, Burkina Faso, and coastal states. Aning (2024) applies this framework to argue that the interconnected nature of West African states makes unilateral security responses ineffective in addressing transnational threats. The theory further emphasizes patterns of interdependence, where insecurity in one state directly impacts the stability of others within the region. This perspective justifies the establishment of collective security mechanisms such as joint military operations and regional counterterrorism frameworks. However, RSCT also highlights the challenges of cooperation, particularly when states have differing threat perceptions and political interests. Thus, the theory provides a useful lens for analyzing both the necessity and limitations of collective security in combating terrorism in West Africa.

Complementing RSCT, Human Security Theory offers a people-centered approach to understanding the broader implications of terrorism and insecurity. According to Tadjbakhsh (2021), human security shifts the focus from state-centric security to the protection of individuals from threats such as violence, poverty, and social exclusion. In the West African context, this perspective is particularly relevant as terrorism not only threatens state sovereignty but also undermines livelihoods, displaces populations, and disrupts access to essential services. Owen (2022) argues that sustainable security can only be achieved when the underlying socio-economic drivers of conflict are addressed alongside military responses. This aligns with the argument of Alkire (2020), who emphasizes that development and security are mutually reinforcing and must be pursued simultaneously. The persistence of terrorism in West Africa illustrates the failure of purely military approaches that neglect human development concerns. Human Security Theory therefore underscores the importance of integrating governance reforms, economic development, and social inclusion into counterterrorism strategies. By combining these theoretical perspectives, this study provides a holistic framework for analyzing the complex relationship between terrorism, collective security, and development in West Africa.

4. Terrorism in West Africa: Trends and Drivers



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

Terrorism in West Africa has evolved significantly over the past decade, transforming from localized insurgencies into a complex and highly networked regional security threat. Recent studies indicate that the epicentre of global terrorism has shifted north the Sahel, where countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have recorded dramatic increases in terrorist incidents and fatalities. Solomon (2025) observes that the operational capabilities of extremist groups have expanded due to their ability to exploit weak governance structures and ungoverned spaces. Similarly, Thurston (2024) notes that groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have adopted adaptive strategies, including decentralized command structures and cross-border operations. These developments have enabled terrorist organizations to sustain their activities despite sustained military pressure from national and regional forces. Furthermore, Okoli (2023) argues that the spread of terrorism into previously stable coastal states such as Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire signals a dangerous expansion of insecurity across the sub-region. This trend underscores the increasingly transnational nature of terrorism and the limitations of isolated national responses.

A critical driver of terrorism in West Africa is the prevalence of weak governance and state fragility, which creates enabling environments for extremist activities. Ziso and Hamandishe (2024) contend that fragile states with limited control over their territories are particularly vulnerable to terrorist infiltration and expansion. In many cases, the absence of effective governance structures allows terrorist groups to establish parallel systems of authority, including taxation and justice mechanisms. Aning and Edu-Afful (2023) further highlight that corruption, poor service delivery, and lack of political accountability undermine public trust in government institutions, thereby facilitating extremist recruitment. In addition, the resurgence of military coups in the region has disrupted democratic governance and weakened regional cooperation frameworks. These political instabilities have created security vacuums that terrorist groups exploit to consolidate their presence. As a result, governance deficits remain a central factor in understanding the persistence and spread of terrorism in West Africa.

Economic deprivation and social marginalization also play a significant role in driving terrorism across the region. Collier (2021) argues that poverty and lack of economic opportunities increase



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

the likelihood of conflict by creating grievances that can be exploited by armed groups. In West Africa, high youth unemployment and limited access to education have made many young people vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist organizations. According to Agbibo (2023), extremist groups often provide financial incentives, social identity, and a sense of purpose to marginalized individuals, thereby strengthening their appeal. Furthermore, inequality and regional disparities in development have exacerbated feelings of exclusion among certain communities. These socio-economic challenges are compounded by weak state capacity to deliver basic services, further deepening discontent. Consequently, addressing economic and social inequalities is essential for reducing the root causes of terrorism.

Environmental and geographic factors have also contributed to the proliferation of terrorism in West Africa, particularly in the Sahel region. Murshed (2022) highlights that climate change has intensified competition over scarce resources such as land and water, leading to conflicts between communities. These conflicts are often exploited by terrorist groups to expand their influence and recruit new members. Additionally, the vast and porous borders in West Africa facilitate the movement of fighters, weapons, and illicit goods across countries. Reno (2021) notes that these unregulated spaces provide safe havens for terrorist groups, making it difficult for state authorities to monitor and control their activities. The combination of environmental stress and weak border management has therefore created a conducive environment for the growth of terrorism. These structural challenges further complicate efforts to combat terrorism through conventional security measures.

Another important trend in West African terrorism is the increasing convergence between terrorism and organized crime. Okoli and Nnaemeka (2023) argue that terrorist groups are increasingly engaging in criminal activities such as kidnapping, human trafficking, and arms smuggling to finance their operations. This convergence has blurred the distinction between ideological extremism and profit-driven criminality. Similarly, Shaw (2022) emphasizes that illicit economies in West Africa, including drug trafficking and illegal mining, provide critical funding sources for terrorist networks. The integration of criminal and terrorist activities has enhanced the resilience and sustainability of these groups. It has also complicated counterterrorism efforts, as



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

security agencies must address multiple interconnected threats simultaneously. This evolving dynamic highlights the need for comprehensive strategies that address both terrorism and organized crime in the region.

5. Collective Security Mechanisms in West Africa

Collective security mechanisms have emerged as vital instruments for managing terrorism and promoting stability in West Africa, reflecting the recognition that individual state responses are insufficient to address transnational threats. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has played a central role in coordinating regional security initiatives, including peacekeeping operations and joint military interventions against terrorist groups. Adebajo (2024) observes that ECOWAS's Protocol on Non-Aggression and the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security exemplify institutional frameworks designed to foster regional cooperation and collective action. Similarly, Aning (2024) highlights the establishment of joint security operations, such as the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF), as critical steps toward enhancing rapid response capabilities. Despite these initiatives, ECOWAS faces significant challenges, including funding shortages, uneven military capacity among member states, and political divergences that undermine coordinated action. Moreover, the persistence of terrorism across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin underscores the limitations of regional mechanisms in fully containing security threats. These factors suggest that while collective security mechanisms are essential, their effectiveness depends on political commitment, operational capacity, and institutional cohesion.

Another important regional security initiative is the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which was established to counter Boko Haram and related terrorist groups operating in the Lake Chad Basin. Solomon (2025) notes that the MNJTF represents a practical manifestation of collective security, combining forces from Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin to conduct coordinated military operations. The MNJTF has achieved notable successes in reclaiming territory from insurgents and disrupting terrorist networks, but it continues to face challenges related to logistics, intelligence sharing, and differing national priorities (Okoli & Nnaemeka,



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026) 2023). Similarly, Ouedraogo et al. (2023) argue that MNJTF operations are constrained by weak infrastructure, limited air mobility, and inadequate funding, which reduce the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts. Beyond military interventions, the African Union (AU) provides overarching normative and strategic guidance, promoting collaboration among regional economic communities and supporting peacekeeping and counterterrorism initiatives. Ebo (2024) emphasizes that AU frameworks such as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) are intended to integrate diplomatic, developmental, and military measures, thereby promoting comprehensive approaches to security. However, political instability, poor coordination, and inadequate resource mobilization remain key impediments to the full realization of collective security objectives. Thus, while ECOWAS, MNJTF, and AU mechanisms represent important tools for addressing terrorism, their effectiveness is contingent on strengthened institutional capacity, sustained political will, and strategic coordination.

The literature also emphasizes the need for a holistic approach that integrates security, governance, and development considerations. Adebajo (2025) notes that counterterrorism operations in West Africa are unlikely to succeed in isolation from broader efforts to address underlying socio-economic grievances, political marginalization, and weak institutional structures. Similarly, Murshed (2022) highlights that the success of collective security mechanisms depends on their ability to enhance state legitimacy, protect civilian populations, and support socio-economic recovery in affected areas. Human security approaches complement traditional collective security strategies by emphasizing the protection of individuals and communities rather than focusing solely on state survival (Tadjbakhsh, 2021). Consequently, effective collective security in West Africa requires the integration of military, diplomatic, and development-oriented interventions. In addition, fostering regional intelligence-sharing, harmonizing military capabilities, and ensuring equitable burden-sharing among member states are essential for sustaining long-term security. Without such integration, terrorism and violent extremism are likely to persist, undermining regional stability and development.

Despite the progress made in establishing regional mechanisms, significant gaps remain in implementation, coordination, and strategic alignment. Obi (2022) highlights that uneven



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

commitment from member states, often driven by domestic political considerations, undermines joint operations and reduces operational cohesion. Similarly, Williams (2023) argues that insufficient investment in capacity building, logistical support, and regional infrastructure hampers the operational effectiveness of collective security initiatives. Political distrust and concerns over sovereignty further complicate collaboration, limiting the willingness of states to participate fully in regional interventions. Additionally, external influences and donor dependency may shape priorities in ways that are not always aligned with local security needs (Ebo, 2024). These challenges point to the necessity of reforming institutional frameworks, enhancing resource mobilization, and promoting shared strategic objectives among West African states. Strengthening collective security mechanisms is not merely a technical or military issue but also a matter of political consensus and institutional resilience.

In conclusion, collective security mechanisms in West Africa—including ECOWAS, MNJTF, and AU-led frameworks—constitute essential tools for managing terrorism and promoting regional stability. However, their effectiveness is constrained by structural, operational, and political challenges that limit coordination, rapid response, and sustainable outcomes. Scholars consistently emphasize the importance of integrating security measures with development, governance, and human security considerations to address the multidimensional nature of terrorism. Strengthened institutional capacity, consistent political commitment, and regional cooperation are critical for enhancing the efficacy of these mechanisms. Without such improvements, the persistence of terrorism is likely to undermine both security and development objectives across the sub-region. Therefore, ongoing evaluation, capacity building, and strategic alignment are crucial for achieving sustainable peace and security in West Africa.

6. Challenges of Collective Security Mechanisms in West Africa

Despite the establishment of regional security frameworks such as ECOWAS, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), and AU-led initiatives, collective security in West Africa faces significant challenges that hinder its effectiveness in addressing terrorism and promoting development. Adebajo (2025) argues that political instability and divergent national interests



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

among member states often undermine coordinated action, as some governments prioritize domestic agendas over regional commitments. Similarly, Obi (2022) notes that the resurgence of military coups and weak democratic institutions in countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso has eroded trust and weakened institutional cohesion, making collaborative security interventions more difficult to sustain. These political dynamics impede the capacity of collective security mechanisms to respond rapidly and decisively to transnational terrorist threats. Furthermore, the limited commitment to burden-sharing and unequal military capabilities among member states create operational disparities, reducing the effectiveness of joint operations (Williams, 2023). This uneven capacity is exacerbated by funding constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and logistical challenges that constrain the mobility and responsiveness of regional forces. Consequently, the political and structural weaknesses within member states pose a critical obstacle to achieving the objectives of collective security in West Africa.

Another major challenge is the integration of intelligence, coordination, and communication among regional actors. Ebo (2024) emphasizes that effective counterterrorism operations require timely intelligence sharing and synchronized planning, yet weak information-sharing frameworks often result in delayed or fragmented responses. Okoli and Nnaemeka (2023) further highlight that porous borders, coupled with limited surveillance capacity, allow terrorist groups to exploit gaps in coordination and expand their operational reach across national boundaries. In addition, Solomon (2025) observes that multinational forces such as the MNJTF face difficulties in standardizing rules of engagement, command structures, and operational doctrines, which can reduce overall mission effectiveness. Beyond operational and political issues, the socioeconomic dimensions of security remain largely under-addressed. Persistent poverty, youth unemployment, and social exclusion in affected communities provide fertile ground for terrorist recruitment and undermine the long-term sustainability of collective security efforts (Agbiboa, 2023). Moreover, overemphasis on military interventions without parallel developmental and governance initiatives limits the transformative impact of collective security. Murshed (2022) argues that without addressing root causes such as inequality, marginalization, and weak institutions, security gains are likely to be temporary, and terrorism will persist.



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

External influences and dependency on international partners further complicate the functioning of collective security mechanisms. Aning (2024) notes that while support from Western donors and international organizations provides critical funding and technical assistance, it can also skew priorities and create dependency, reducing regional ownership of security initiatives. Ziso and Hamandishe (2024) argue that external interventions may sometimes exacerbate local tensions if not carefully coordinated with regional actors, creating friction between external objectives and local realities. In addition, insufficient investment in capacity building, training, and infrastructure development limits the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of regional security institutions. Political distrust among member states often amplifies these challenges, as countries may be reluctant to share sensitive information or fully commit troops and resources to joint operations (Obi, 2022). Collectively, these structural, operational, and political obstacles hinder the capacity of West African states to achieve coordinated, effective, and sustainable responses to terrorism.

Finally, the impact of these challenges extends beyond immediate security concerns to broader development objectives. Ewi and Aning (2024) emphasize that persistent insecurity undermines economic activities, disrupts trade, and discourages investment, thereby stalling regional development. The destruction of infrastructure, displacement of populations, and diversion of state resources to security expenditures further exacerbate developmental deficits. Agbibo (2023) adds that the social consequences, including trauma, loss of education, and erosion of community cohesion, have long-term effects on human capital and societal resilience. These realities highlight the interdependence between security and development, showing that challenges in collective security mechanisms directly constrain economic growth, governance, and social stability. In sum, unless structural weaknesses, operational inefficiencies, and socio-political constraints are addressed, the effectiveness of collective security mechanisms in mitigating terrorism and fostering development in West Africa will remain limited.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Terrorism in West Africa represents a complex and evolving threat that transcends national borders, undermining both security and development in the sub-region. While collective security



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

mechanisms, such as ECOWAS, MNJTF, and AU initiatives, are essential for coordinating responses, their effectiveness is constrained by political, operational, and structural challenges. The study demonstrates that terrorism thrives in environments characterized by weak governance, socio-economic marginalization, porous borders, and limited institutional capacity. Military interventions, though necessary, are insufficient unless complemented by comprehensive development and human security strategies. Regional cooperation, intelligence sharing, and political consensus emerge as critical factors for enhancing the effectiveness of collective security mechanisms. Addressing the root causes of terrorism, including poverty, inequality, and political exclusion, is central to achieving long-term stability and sustainable development. Ultimately, an integrated approach that combines security, governance, and development is indispensable for ensuring lasting peace and resilience in West Africa.

Based on the findings and challenges highlighted in this study, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen collective security mechanisms in West Africa and enhance regional development:

1. **Strengthen political commitment and regional coordination** – West African states should prioritize political consensus and harmonize national interests to ensure sustained participation in ECOWAS, MNJTF, and AU security initiatives.
2. **Enhance institutional and operational capacity** – Member states should invest in military training, logistics, intelligence systems, and standardized operational protocols to improve the effectiveness of joint counterterrorism operations.
3. **Promote intelligence sharing and early warning mechanisms** – Establishing robust regional intelligence networks and rapid information-sharing platforms can improve timely responses to terrorist threats and cross-border attacks.
4. **Integrate development and governance strategies with security efforts** – Counterterrorism initiatives should be complemented by programs that address poverty, youth unemployment, inequality, and social exclusion, thereby reducing the appeal of extremist groups.



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

5. **Encourage equitable burden-sharing among member states** – States should contribute proportionally to funding, personnel, and resources for regional security operations to reduce operational disparities and enhance collective ownership.
6. **Strengthen border management and surveillance systems** – Investments in infrastructure, technology, and cross-border coordination can limit the mobility of terrorist networks and prevent the spread of insecurity.
7. **Enhance local community engagement and human security approaches** – Security strategies should involve local populations in decision-making, support community resilience, and address grievances that may be exploited by extremist groups.

References

- Agbibo, D. E. (2023). *Terrorism without borders: Boko Haram and regional instability in Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Adebajo, A. (2024). *ECOWAS and the dynamics of regional security in West Africa*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Adebajo, A. (2025). Regional security and terrorism in the Sahel: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of African Security Studies*, 19(1), 12–30.
- Aning, K. (2024). Regional security cooperation and terrorism in West Africa. *African Security Review*, 33(2), 145–160.
- Ebo, A. (2024). Collective security and counterterrorism in West Africa. *Journal of African Security Studies*, 18(1), 55–70.
- Ewi, M., & Aning, K. (2024). Assessing counterterrorism responses in West Africa. *African Security Review*, 33(1), 1–15.
- Murshed, S. M. (2022). *Conflict, civil war and underdevelopment: An introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Obi, C. (2022). Political instability and regional security in West Africa. *African Journal of Political Science*, 16(3), 201–219.
- Okoli, A. C., & Nnaemeka, E. (2023). Terrorism and criminality in Nigeria: A converging threat. *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 13(2), 45–62.



© *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies* Vol. 2 No 2 (Feb, 2026)

Solomon, H. (2025). Terrorism and counterterrorism in Africa. *Scientia Militaria*, 53(1).

Thurston, A. (2024). *Jihadists of North Africa and the Sahel*. Cambridge University Press.

Williams, P. D. (2023). *Fighting for peace in Somalia and beyond: African peace operations in the twenty-first century*. Oxford University Press.

Ziso, E., & Hamandishe, A. L. (2024). Coups and terrorism in the Sahel. *Journal of African Security Studies*, 4(2), 27–49.