

RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT (R2P) AND MASS ATROCITIES PREVENTION: ASSESSING UNITED STATES ENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

One of the major challenges confronting Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine is the gap between its normative commitments and its practical implementation, particularly in complex security environment such as Nigeria. This raises concerns regarding the doctrine's legitimacy, consistency, and effectiveness in practice. This study examines the extent to which United States engagement in Nigeria reflects the principles of R2P or primarily serves broader counterterrorism and strategic objectives. The study is anchored in liberal humanitarianism, which conceptualises sovereignty as conditional upon the state's responsibility to protect its population, while authorising external intervention where this responsibility is unmet. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative research design relying on secondary sources, including academic literature, government publications, policy reports, United Nations documents, and reports from international organisations. This facilitates systematic interrogation of prevailing interpretations and policy practices. Findings indicate that the United States' engagement in Nigeria involved military assistance, including training, intelligence sharing, and the provision of security support aimed at strengthening state capacity. Other areas of US intervention include economic assistance, promotion of democratic values, and governance support to enhance institutional performance. However, its effectiveness is constrained by sovereignty sensitivities, inconsistent political will, and structural operational limitations. The study concludes that while R2P remains normatively compelling, its implementation in Nigeria is contextually constrained, requiring a more integrated and sustained approach to security, governance, and development interventions.

KEYWORDS: Liberal Humanitarianism; Mass Atrocity Prevention; Responsibility to Protect (R2P); State Sovereignty; United States Engagement;

INTRODUCTION

The early twenty-first century has been marked by a significant reconfiguration of global governance norms, driven by sustained international efforts to develop more effective mechanisms for the prevention of mass violence and large-scale human suffering. Within this evolving normative environment, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) emerged as a pivotal doctrine designed to address the persistent failure of both states and the international system to prevent mass atrocity crimes, including genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Formally endorsed at the 2005 United Nations World Summit, R2P represents a paradigmatic shift away from the conventional "right to intervene" toward a responsibility-centered framework that reconceptualises sovereignty as contingent upon the protection of populations.

The intellectual origins of R2P can be traced to the establishment of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) by the Canadian government in 2000. The doctrine was strongly influenced by the international community's failure to prevent the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and the 1995 Srebrenica massacre (Kofi, 2000; ICISS, 2001). The Commission was constituted to address the longstanding normative tension between the principles of state sovereignty and humanitarian intervention by advancing a framework grounded in legality, legitimacy, and operational feasibility (Alexandra & Garrett, 2020). Its landmark 2001 report fundamentally reframed the discourse by asserting that the primary responsibility for protecting populations resides with the state, while the international community assumes residual responsibility in circumstances where states are unwilling or unable to fulfill this obligation. This conceptual innovation was subsequently consolidated within global governance structures, thereby institutionalising R2P as a norm of collective international responsibility (Abida, Abdul, Akhtar, & Chohan, 2026).

Despite its normative appeal and institutional recognition, the operationalisation of R2P remains highly contested in both scholarly and policy discourse. Central debates revolve around issues of sovereignty, legitimacy, selectivity, and the potential instrumentalisation of humanitarian norms by powerful states. Critics such as Adebajo and Ishola (2020) contend that R2P risks eroding the Westphalian principle of non-intervention, while simultaneously enabling selective enforcement shaped by geopolitical interests rather than consistent moral principles. These concerns have been reinforced by empirical controversies, most notably the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, which has been widely cited as an illustration of the tension between humanitarian justification and strategic political calculation, thereby undermining confidence in the neutrality and universality of R2P application.

Within this broader normative and empirical context, Nigeria presents a compelling case for examining the practical challenges of R2P implementation. Although substantial literature exists on R2P and humanitarian intervention, limited attention has been devoted to evaluating United States engagement in Nigeria through the analytical lens of R2P. Existing studies tend to focus either on counterterrorism operations against Boko Haram or on broader debates concerning humanitarian intervention, leaving insufficient examination of how R2P principles intersect with external security assistance in the Nigerian context. This study seeks to fill that gap.

It should be noted that the country has experienced prolonged insecurity characterised by insurgency, religious extremism, and recurrent communal violence, most prominently the Boko Haram insurgency. This conflict has resulted in extensive civilian casualties, mass displacement, and severe humanitarian crises, thereby underscoring the continued relevance of R2P while simultaneously exposing the constraints associated with its application in complex domestic and asymmetric conflict environments.

As a major global power and prominent advocate of R2P, the United States has played a significant role in Nigeria's security architecture through military assistance, intelligence cooperation, and diplomatic engagement. While such involvement is frequently framed in terms of counter-atrocity prevention and humanitarian concern, it is also embedded within broader strategic imperatives, including counterterrorism objectives and regional stability considerations. This duality creates an important analytical dilemma regarding the extent to which external intervention aligns with the normative principles underpinning R2P. More so, Nigeria represents a significant case because of the widescale violence associated with Boko Haram insurgency and its affiliate, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), as well as banditry/kidnaping, communal conflicts, farmer-herder clashes, and widespread violence. Therefore, how has R2P been applied in Nigeria? what forms has U.S. engagement taken? to what extent has U.S. engagement advanced R2P objectives? what challenges constrain the effectiveness of R2P in Nigeria? It is in attempt to provide answers to these questions that this study examines the application of R2P within the contexts of mass atrocity risk, with particular emphasis on assessing the rationale, consistency, and effectiveness of United States engagement in Nigeria in response to escalating insecurity.

Conceptual Clarification

Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is a principle of international law that was first introduced in 2001 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). It was later endorsed by the United Nations in 2005, as outlined in the World Summit Outcome Document (UN General Assembly, 2005). The R2P principle is based on the idea that states have a responsibility to protect

their own citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, as well as to prevent and respond to these crimes when they occur. When a state is unable or unwilling to protect its citizens, the international community has a responsibility to intervene to prevent or stop the occurrence of these crimes (Abida, Abdul, Akhtar, & Chohan, 2026). The R2P principle is not just a moral imperative, but also a legal obligation, as it is enshrined in international law and is a key principle of the United Nations Charter (UN Charter, 1945). The concept of R2P is often seen to balance the principles of state sovereignty and human rights, and to promote the protection of human life and dignity.

Mass Atrocities

Mass atrocities are seen as a severe violation of human rights that result in widespread suffering, often involving genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity (Stanton, 2013). These atrocities typically occur during armed conflicts, political upheavals, or regimes characterised by systemic violence and discrimination. They are distinguished by their scale, intent, and impact on vulnerable populations, often leading to significant loss of life, displacement, and long-term destabilisation of societies (Mamdani, 2014). The causes of mass atrocities are complex, involving political, social, economic, and historical factors that create environments conducive to violence. International efforts to prevent and respond to such crimes have been guided by principles like the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which emphasises the international community's role in safeguarding populations from mass violence when national authorities fail to do so (UN General Assembly, 2005). Despite these frameworks, challenges remain in early detection, intervention, and holding perpetrators accountable, highlighting the need for continued vigilance and effective international cooperation to prevent future atrocities (Power, 2015).

Humanitarian Intervention

Humanitarian intervention is associated with the use of military force by one or more states or international organisations to prevent or stop widespread suffering, violations of human rights, or mass atrocities within a sovereign state, without the state's consent (Saka, 2025). This concept is grounded in the moral and legal obligation to protect innocent civilians from severe harm, such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, or war crimes, especially when the state responsible is unable or unwilling to do so. Humanitarian interventions often involve a delicate balance between respecting state sovereignty and addressing urgent human rights violations, raising complex legal and ethical questions about legitimacy, sovereignty, and the use of force (Thakur & Weiss, 2009). While the doctrine has gained prominence in international discourse, especially with the development of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), its application remains controversial due to concerns over potential misuse, unintended consequences, and the politicisation of humanitarian motives (Bellamy & Williams, 2011).

State Sovereignty

State sovereignty is one of the foundational principles of international law and political theory, referring to the supreme authority of a state to govern itself within its territorial boundaries without external interference (Singh, 2024). In order words, it is the exclusive authority and autonomy of a state to govern itself without external interference. At its core, lies the complete and exclusive control of all the people and property within their territory. More formally, sovereignty is a power and right, recognised or effectively asserted in respect of a defined part of the globe, to govern in respect of that part to the exclusion of other nations, states, or peoples.

It should be noted that the same body of international law that sees state sovereignty within the context of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states, codify universality as the foundational pillar of human rights protection. This convergence carries far-reaching legal, moral, and institutional implications for all states and individuals across the globe. Universality means that human beings are endowed with equal human rights simply by virtue of being human, wherever they live and whoever they are, regardless of their status or any characteristics. Universality must be understood as closely related to other core human rights principles of interdependence, indivisibility, equality and dignity. This was reinforced by The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, the first legal document that set out the fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it continues to be the foundation of all international human rights law. Its 30 articles provide

the principles and building blocks of current and future human rights conventions, treaties and other legal instruments.

It's therefore means that since human rights enjoy the universality principle, they transcend geographical location, nationality, culture, or political system. Human rights are universal and inalienable. Everyone in the world is entitled to them and must be protected at all costs. Once state fails or appears to be incapable or is itself a perpetrator, the international community has the moral and cosmopolitan responsibility to intervene under humanitarian ground.

Atrocity Prevention

The term "atrocities" generally refers to genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing. The first three are crimes under international law that emerged in the context of establishing individual criminal accountability for some of humanity's worst crimes. Genocide as a crime under international law is enshrined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), which defines genocide as the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" through killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm, inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction, imposing measures to prevent births, or forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Atrocity prevention, therefore, refers to the body of international norms, legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms, and political commitments designed to anticipate, forestall, and respond to these gravest violations before they occur or escalate. Preventing mass atrocities is important for both moral and strategic reasons. Morally, the principle of humanity necessitates considered and effective responses from those who are in a position to assist a principle embedded in existing international law and foundational to states that view human rights as central to the rules-based international order. Strategically, atrocity prevention advances wider foreign policy objectives by preventing the greater cost of responding to mass population displacement, regional instability, and undermined international institutions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts liberal humanitarianism as a theory that underpins the analysis. Liberal humanitarianism is a normative approach within International Relations (IR) that synthesises classical liberal thought with contemporary humanitarian governance. Its philosophical lineage is typically traced to classical liberal thinkers such as John Stuart Mill, Michael Walzer, Nicholas Wheeler, John Locke and Immanuel Kant, whose respective emphases on individual rights, moral autonomy, and universal human dignity established the foundational ethical premises for modern human rights theory (Fred, & Ibrahim, 2025). Within this intellectual tradition, the individual, rather than the state, is conceived as the primary moral unit of concern, thereby displacing statist conceptions of security with a human-centric ethical orientation.

The core assumptions of liberal humanitarianism rest on three key principles. First, it posits that sovereignty is not merely a shield for states but also a responsibility, implying that states must protect their citizens and uphold human rights. When governments fail in this duty, the international community has a moral and legal obligation to intervene, ideally through multilateral institutions like the United Nations. Second, liberal humanitarianism presumes that international norms, laws, and institutions such as the Genocide Convention and the Responsibility to Protect doctrine can effectively regulate state conduct and facilitate collective action against mass atrocities. Third, it assumes that interventions motivated by humanitarian concerns can be justified ethically and legally, provided they are conducted within a framework of multilateral consensus and respect for international law.

Mills particularly emphasised the importance of individual rights, liberty, and the moral duty of states to promote human well-being. He believed that moral progress and social reform should be pursued through rational dialogue and limited intervention, primarily to prevent harm and promote individual freedoms. Walzer advocates for a nuanced approach to intervention, emphasising the importance of justice, legitimacy, and the moral responsibilities of states and the international community. He argues that intervention is justified primarily to restore justice and protect vulnerable populations, provided it is conducted with legitimacy and respect for sovereignty (Ola, Ossama, and Almazaidah, 2025). Wheeler reinforces the above and advocates for a cautious but proactive approach to mass atrocities, arguing that the international community has a moral duty to intervene but must do so responsibly, with careful consideration of the potential consequences and legitimacy. He emphasises further that intervention

should prioritise diplomacy and multilateral efforts but recognises that in cases where mass atrocities occur, timely action is crucial.

Within the context of this study, liberal humanitarianism provides a critical analytical lens for interpreting the United States engagement in Nigeria, especially in relation to the Boko Haram insurgency. The scale of violence, forced displacement, and humanitarian deprivation associated with the conflict reflects significant deficits in state capacity to ensure human security. From a liberal humanitarian perspective, external engagement, whether through diplomatic pressure, security cooperation, or humanitarian intervention, may be interpreted as normatively justified insofar as it seeks to alleviate suffering and uphold universal human rights (Bellamy, 2015). Operationally, institutions such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) embody this framework through interventions in humanitarian relief, governance strengthening, and socio-economic stabilisation.

The relevance of liberal humanitarianism to R2P is both theoretical and practical. R2P operationalises the key liberal principles by asserting that sovereignty entails responsibilities, and that the international community has a duty to act when populations face genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity. It shifts the focus from state sovereignty as absolute to sovereignty as conditional, contingent on the state's ability or willingness to protect its citizens (Bellamy, 2015). This normative shift is grounded in the belief that moral responsibilities and international laws should guide state and international actions, especially in cases where national governments are unwilling or unable to prevent mass atrocities. Moreover, liberal humanitarianism emphasises the importance of multilateralism and legitimacy in intervention, advocating for coordinated international responses rather than unilateral actions. This alignment makes R2P a normative extension of liberal humanitarian ideals, providing both a moral and legal framework to justify timely and authorised interventions for humanitarian purposes.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts qualitative research design. The justification for the use of this design is because it provides in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, allowing for a detailed exploration of the complexities and multiple layers of the issue under consideration. It is also useful when analysing secondary data sources, where the data may be context dependent. Data was sourced through secondary sources such as books, journal articles, UN reports, policy documents, government reports pertaining to R2P. Thematic analysis was employed due to its usefulness in understanding the content by capturing the context and enabling placing of themes for analysis. It is equally advantageous when analysing complex or rich qualitative data from secondary sources, especially reports, or policy documents, where understanding underlying themes and meanings is crucial.

R2P and the Geopolitical Dynamics of United States Intervention in Nigeria

R2P is grounded in both etymological and normative foundations that underscore the moral and legal obligation to prevent and respond to mass atrocity crimes. The term “responsibility,” derived from the Latin *responsum* (an answer, duty, or obligation), conveys accountability on the part of states and the international community in safeguarding vulnerable populations. Over time, this notion has expanded from individual moral duty to encompass collective international responsibility. Likewise, “protect,” originating from the Latin *protegere* (to shield or cover), emphasises the active obligation to defend populations from harm. Together, R2P represents a collective responsibility to prevent and respond to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, as articulated by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS, 2001). This conceptualisation redefines sovereignty as responsibility rather than absolute authority, positioning state legitimacy in terms of the protection of human life.

The evolution of R2P has been profoundly shaped by major historical atrocities, notably the Holocaust (1941–1945), the Rwandan genocide (1994), and the Balkan conflicts (1991–2001). Collectively, these episodes of large-scale violence exposed the inadequacies of an absolutist interpretation of sovereignty and the limitations of traditional non-intervention norms in preventing or effectively responding to mass atrocity crimes. In response to these systemic failures, a significant normative shift emerged, culminating in the institutional consolidation of R2P in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document of the United Nations, which affirmed that sovereignty entails the responsibility to

protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity (United Nations, 2005).

The practical application of this principle is often illustrated by the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, which was justified within the R2P framework as a measure to prevent imminent mass atrocities. However, its implementation has remained highly contested in literature, with ongoing scholarly debates focusing on issues of selectivity, legality, and the broader humanitarian consequences of the intervention.

In contrast, United States intervention in Nigeria reflects a more complex interplay of humanitarian discourse and geopolitical interests. The term “intervention,” derived from the Latin *intervenire* (“to come between”), inherently implies external involvement in sovereign affairs, raising persistent debates over legitimacy and motive. US interventions in Nigeria, spanning the civil war era (1967–1970) and the contemporary counterterrorism period, have been characterised by overlapping humanitarian, strategic, and ideological justifications (Ezenwa & Utobo, 2020).

US engagements in Nigeria extend far beyond the provision of military assistance; they encompass a wide array of initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable development and stability within the country. In addition to military aid, the United States offers substantial economic support designed to bolster Nigeria’s economic growth, reduce poverty, and promote diversification away from oil dependency. This includes investments in key sectors such as agriculture, technology, infrastructure, and education, as well as development programmes that seek to improve living standards and create employment opportunities. Furthermore, the US actively promotes democratic values in Nigeria by supporting efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, uphold human rights, and enhance the rule of law. This involves providing technical assistance to electoral commissions, encouraging transparency and accountability, and advocating for civil society participation in governance processes.

During the Nigerian Civil War, US engagement was marked by cautious diplomacy and limited military support, publicly framed in humanitarian terms but significantly influenced by Cold War strategic calculations, regional influence, and energy security interests (Michael, & Usman, 2025). While the US emphasised concerns over humanitarian suffering, it simultaneously supported Nigeria’s territorial integrity and maintained a non-recognition stance toward Biafra, reflecting a prioritisation of geopolitical stability over humanitarian intervention.

In the post-2000 period, US engagement has intensified through counterterrorism cooperation against Boko Haram, involving military training, intelligence sharing, and logistical support aimed at strengthening Nigeria’s security capacity (Vanguard, 2025). Although officially justified on humanitarian and stabilisation grounds, scholars argue that these interventions are also shaped by strategic interests, including regional influence, energy security, and counterbalancing rival global powers. Furthermore, concerns persist that such assistance may unintentionally contribute to human rights violations or deepen local grievances if not carefully managed.

Beyond security cooperation, US involvement extends to economic and developmental assistance, diplomatic engagement, and intelligence collaboration. Through agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), governance reform, poverty reduction, and institutional strengthening are implemented to address structural drivers of instability (Chukwu & Bassey, 2025). However, critics argue that these initiatives may also create dependency relations or influence domestic policy trajectories, thereby raising questions about sovereignty and external influence.

Diplomatically, the United States has actively engaged in Nigeria’s electoral and political processes by consistently promoting the principles of democratic governance, transparency, and the rule of law. Through various diplomatic channels, development programmes, and international partnerships, the US has supported Nigeria in strengthening its electoral institutions, encouraging fair and free elections, and fostering political stability. For instance, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has been instrumental in providing technical assistance and electoral support aimed at improving the integrity and transparency of Nigeria’s electoral processes (USAID, 2021).

Moreover, the US has worked closely with Nigerian electoral commissions, civil society organisations, and political stakeholders to promote voter education, electoral reform, and peaceful dispute resolution. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to empower Nigerian citizens to participate effectively in their democratic system and to enhance the legitimacy of electoral outcomes (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Furthermore, the US government has consistently called for the conduct of peaceful elections and has issued statements urging all parties to respect the electoral process and uphold

democratic norms (U.S. Department of State, 2023). This engagement aims not only to support Nigeria's democratic development but also to contribute to long-term political stability and peace within the country. The US's involvement reflects a commitment to fostering sustainable democratic institutions that can withstand internal and external pressures, thereby promoting mutual cooperation and stability in the region (Cousins & Udomor, 2020).

While these interventions are often presented as efforts to strengthen institutions, they are sometimes perceived as attempts to shape internal political outcomes (Akinrinade, 2007). Similarly, intelligence and security collaborations targeting transnational crime, drug trafficking, and arms proliferation serve both regional security objectives and broader strategic interests. Empirically, the outcomes of US interventions remain mixed. While some studies report improvements in counterterrorism capacity and reduced insurgent activity, others highlight persistent insecurity, civilian casualties, and continued vulnerability of affected populations (Adebayo, 2022). Reports of ongoing violence against Christians and other groups underscore the limitations of militarised approaches, while human rights concerns raise questions about operational effectiveness and unintended consequences (Adebayo, 2022). Critics such as Eze (2020) further argue that such interventions often neglect underlying socio-political drivers of conflict, including marginalisation, poverty, and political exclusion.

R2P Normative Framework and Global Application

As a developing normative principle, R2P is based on the notion that sovereignty is not merely a right of states but also a responsibility to protect populations from grave harm. The doctrine emphasises the prevention and cessation of mass atrocities, such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, as identified by the United Nations. According to the ICISS, R2P is founded on three core pillars:

- i. A State has a responsibility to protect its population from mass atrocities
- ii. The international community has a responsibility to assist the State in fulfilling its primary responsibility.
- iii. If the State fails to protect its citizens from mass atrocities and peaceful measures have failed, the international community has the responsibility to intervene through coercive measures, such as economic sanctions; military intervention is considered to be the last resort.

The R2P doctrine is an emerging norm in international relations. It offers a framework that leverages existing conflict-resolution mechanisms, such as mediation, early-warning systems, economic sanctions, and the powers granted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to prevent mass atrocities. Various actors, including civil society organisations, states, regional bodies, and international institutions, all have roles to play within the R2P framework. Importantly, R2P functions as a normative principle rather than a binding legal obligation under international law. The authority to undertake military intervention as a last resort is exclusively reserved for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and, in certain cases, the General Assembly.

The Canadian government established the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in September 2000. However, it was during the third Round Table Meeting in February 2001 that the term R2P was introduced. This phrase was designed to circumvent the notions of a "right to intervene" or an "obligation to intervene," while still emphasising a duty to act to address humanitarian crises (Haines & Georges, 2010, pp. 207-235). In 2002, the African Union's Charter endorsed the concept of R2P, declaring that the "protection of human and peoples' rights" would be its primary goal. The Union also asserted its right to intervene in member states based on decisions made by the Assembly, particularly in grave situations such as war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. In its December 2001 report on R2P, the ICISS emphasised that state sovereignty should be viewed as a responsibility, and that UN member states must recognise their obligation to prevent mass atrocities. To achieve this, a range of measures, including political, economic, social, and diplomatic strategies, were to be employed. R2P also advocates for efforts to rebuild affected communities by restoring security and justice for victims and addressing the root causes of mass atrocities (Gareth & Sahnoun, 2001).

The position by ICISS was corroborated by the African Union (AU), emphasising the need for the UN to understand their principal responsibility to protect the civilian population in crises and in cases where the State concerned failed to do so. The AU Charter further sees it as one of its main goals within member States, to intervene in a crisis, following the authorisation by the General Assembly, to stop war

crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The United Nations World Summit of 2005 also unanimously accepted the R2P doctrine. In April 2006, the UNSC formalised its support for the R2P in Resolution 1974. By January 2009, the UN Secretary General, Banki-Moon released a report, *Implement the Responsibility to Protect*, to the UN General Assembly that led to Resolution A/RES/63/308 that supported the R2P precept. With all these, R2P has come up as a solution to the arguments on the rights of States to intervene on humanitarian grounds and the rights of victims to survive.

Scholars such as Alexandra and Garrett (2020); Chukwu and Bassey (2025) argue against the absolute sovereignty of states, contending that the traditional notion of sovereignty as an inviolable and exclusive right of a state to govern itself without external interference is limited by moral and legal considerations, particularly in cases involving severe human rights violations. According to this perspective, the only circumstance in which other states are justified to intervene without the consent of the sovereign state is when the state in question is either actively allowing or directly perpetrating mass atrocities, such as genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity, against its own citizens. This view is grounded in the belief that sovereignty is not an absolute right but a responsibility that includes the obligation to protect the fundamental human rights of a state's population. When a state fails in this duty either by neglect or complicity in mass atrocities, it effectively forfeits its sovereignty, thus justifying intervention by external actors to prevent or halt further atrocities. The doctrine of the R2P, endorsed by the United Nations in 2005, encapsulates this argument by emphasising that sovereignty entails responsibilities and that the international community has a moral and legal obligation to act when a state cannot or will not protect its citizens from mass harm.

The R2P principle has played a significant role in guiding international responses to situations where civilian populations face imminent harm due to mass atrocities. One of the most prominent instances of R2P being invoked was in 2011 during the Libyan crisis, where the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1973. This resolution authorised NATO-led military intervention to protect civilians from imminent violence and mass killings by the Gaddafi regime, which was using force to suppress protests and rebellion (Fred, & Ibrahim, 2025; Chukwu, & Bassey 2025). The international community's decision to intervene was driven by the recognition that the Libyan government was either unwilling or unable to prevent widespread harm to its citizens, thereby activating the normative framework of R2P to justify military action in pursuit of humanitarian objectives. This intervention marked a significant moment in the evolution of R2P, illustrating how the principle can be authorisation to prevent mass atrocities and uphold the protection of vulnerable populations.

Another notable case where R2P was invoked occurred during the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011. Following disputed elections and escalating violence, the United Nations and regional organisations such as ECOWAS intervened to prevent a descent into widespread violence and mass atrocities. The UN authorised the deployment of peacekeeping forces with a clear mandate to protect civilians from potential ethnic cleansing and violence carried out by armed factions (Thakur & Weiss, 2017). This intervention underscored the importance of the international community's role in preventing mass atrocities when national authorities are either unable or unwilling to do so, reaffirming the normative basis of R2P as a guiding principle in conflict and post-conflict settings.

The Syrian civil war presents another complex example of R2P in action. While there has been limited scope for large-scale military intervention due to geopolitical and regional considerations, various efforts have been undertaken under the R2P framework to mitigate mass atrocities (Bonnafont, 2025). These include humanitarian corridors, diplomatic pressures, targeted sanctions, and efforts to protect civilians from chemical attacks and other forms of violence (Gordon, 2014). Although the international community has faced criticism for its limited intervention in Syria, these measures reflect the application of R2P principles to prevent further mass atrocities and to protect vulnerable populations amid a protracted conflict where the government has repeatedly failed to safeguard its citizens.

These instances demonstrate how R2P has increasingly served as a normative and operational framework for international action aimed at preventing mass atrocities. They highlight the evolving nature of the principle, from being a purely normative idea to a practical tool that guides multilateral efforts to protect civilians when national governments prove incapable or unwilling to do so. The cases of Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, and Syria exemplify the diverse ways in which R2P can be invoked to justify both military and non-military measures, emphasising the importance of international cooperation and adherence to humanitarian principles in safeguarding human rights during crises.

Mass Atrocities and Human Security Crises in Nigeria

Mass atrocities and the human security crisis in Nigeria constitute a multifaceted challenge that threatens the stability, development, and social cohesion of the nation. Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has been plagued by a series of violent conflicts, ethnic tensions, religious extremism, insurgency, and terrorism, all of which have resulted in widespread human suffering, loss of life, and displacement of millions of people (Okoli & Onyishi, 2020). These issues are interconnected and exacerbate each other, creating a complex security environment that hampers national progress. One of the most prominent examples of mass atrocities in Nigeria is the Boko Haram insurgency, which emerged in the northeastern region in 2009. Boko Haram, a radical Islamist group, has perpetrated numerous atrocities, including mass killings, abductions, and destruction of communities and infrastructure. The group's activities have led to the deaths of tens of thousands of people and the displacement of over two million individuals who are unable to return to their homes due to ongoing violence and insecurity (United Nations, 2022). The insurgency has also targeted schools, religious sites, and government institutions, thereby authorisation the region and undermining efforts to promote peace and development.

This mass atrocities and the human security crisis in Nigeria underscore the critical importance of the international community's Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. R2P, adopted by the United Nations in 2005, emphasises that sovereignty is not a privilege but a responsibility, and when a state is unable or unwilling to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, the international community has a moral and legal obligation to intervene (United Nations, 2005). Nigeria's ongoing conflicts and atrocities exemplify situations where R2P principles are highly relevant, demanding urgent collective action to prevent and halt mass suffering. The Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria vividly illustrates the failure of the Nigerian state to protect its citizens from mass atrocities. Since 2009, Boko Haram has committed numerous atrocities, including mass killings, abductions, and destruction of communities, with devastating effects on civilians (United Nations, 2022). The scale and brutality of these acts have prompted calls for the international community to consider intervention under R2P, especially as the Nigerian government struggles with security challenges and capacity limitations. The displacement of over two million people and the death toll that has reached tens of thousands highlight the grave humanitarian crisis that demands a collective response aligned with R2P principles.

Beyond Boko Haram, Nigeria faces a broader spectrum of violence rooted in ethnic and religious tensions. Inter-communal conflicts and clashes between farmers and herders have escalated over the years, driven by competition for land, water resources, and pasture, exacerbated by environmental degradation and climate change. These conflicts often turn violent, resulting in casualties, destruction of property, and displacement, further authorisation communities (Onyedikachi & Nwachukwu, 2021). The crisis is particularly severe in regions like Middle Belt and parts of the North-West, where ethnic and religious identities intersect with economic and environmental issues. These conflicts often result in atrocities, including massacres and targeted violence against civilians. The Nigerian government's inability to effectively protect vulnerable populations raises questions about sovereignty and the international community's responsibility to prevent further atrocities, especially when state actors are either complicit or overwhelmed (Akinyemi & Adebayo, 2021).

The human security crisis in Nigeria also encompasses issues such as poverty, unemployment, lack of access to quality education and healthcare, and weak governance structures. These factors contribute to a cycle of violence and marginalisation, which insurgent groups exploit to recruit vulnerable populations. The breakdown of law and order in certain regions creates safe havens for insurgents and criminal networks, complicating efforts to restore peace (Akinyemi & Adebayo, 2021). Furthermore, the crisis undermines Nigeria's development prospects. Economic activities are hampered by insecurity, leading to reduced investment, disrupted trade, and increased poverty. The displacement of populations strains social services and infrastructure in host communities and hampers efforts to rebuild affected areas. In addition, the ongoing violence fosters a climate of fear, mistrust, and division among Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious groups, threatening national unity. These factors hinder the protection of human rights and undermine stability. The international community, guided by R2P, has a moral obligation to support Nigeria in strengthening its institutions, promoting social cohesion, and addressing the root causes of violence (Okoli & Onyishi, 2020).

United States Engagement in Nigeria under the R2P Doctrine

The United States' engagement in Nigeria under the R2P doctrine exemplifies the complexities and dilemmas that often accompany international efforts to prevent mass atrocities within a framework of strategic interests and ethical responsibilities. R2P, as outlined by the United Nations, emphasises that sovereignty is not an absolute shield but a responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity (United Nations, 2005). While the U.S. publicly endorses R2P principles, its engagement in Nigeria has largely been driven by counterterrorism imperatives, regional stability objectives, and economic interests, which complicate the moral and operational application of R2P in practice.

Since the emergence of Boko Haram in 2009, the U.S. government has played an active role in supporting Nigeria's efforts to combat insurgency, primarily through military aid, intelligence sharing, training programmes, and logistical support aimed at empowering Nigerian security forces. The rationale behind this support is rooted in the desire to prevent Boko Haram's atrocities mass killings, abductions, and the destruction of communities that threaten civilian populations and regional stability (U.S. Department of State, 2020). The U.S. has viewed Nigeria as a key strategic partner in the fight against terrorism in West Africa, which has justified increased military assistance. However, this approach raises critical questions about whether counterterrorism efforts align with the protective aims of R2P, especially when the focus is on authorisation insurgent groups without sufficient regard for the human rights practices of Nigerian security forces.

Critics argue that U.S. military aid has, at times, inadvertently enabled or failed to prevent human rights abuses committed by Nigerian security agencies. Reports from organisations such as Human Rights Watch highlight allegations of excessive use of force, arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings by Nigerian security personnel operating in conflict zones (Human Rights Watch, 2019). These abuses undermine the core principles of R2P, which emphasise the importance of protecting civilians and ensuring accountability. When the primary tools of intervention military force are associated with abuses, the legitimacy of the intervention in safeguarding populations comes into question, and the moral authority of the international community erodes.

Furthermore, the U.S. engagement often emphasises military solutions over comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of violence. Nigeria's conflicts are deeply intertwined with socio-economic factors such as poverty, marginalisation of minority groups, weak governance, and environmental degradation, which contribute to the proliferation of violence and extremism (Ojo, 2021). By relying predominantly on military aid and counterterrorism operations, U.S. policy risks neglecting the importance of development, political reconciliation, and strengthening Nigeria's institutions elements crucial for sustainable peace and long-term protection of human rights. This narrow focus can lead to a cycle of violence where insurgent groups adapt and persist, exploiting gaps in governance and social services.

In terms of diplomatic engagement, the U.S. has generally favoured a cautious approach, emphasising capacity-building, intelligence cooperation, and regional partnerships rather than direct military intervention or peacekeeping missions. This stance aligns with R2P's emphasis on prevention and sovereignty but raises concerns about whether such measures are sufficient to halt ongoing atrocities or prevent future ones. Critics assert that limited action, or an overreliance on military support without adequate political and social strategies, risks allowing atrocities to continue with impunity. When the Nigerian government appears unwilling or unable to fully protect its populations, the international community faces an ethical dilemma: intervene directly to uphold R2P or risk abdicating responsibility, thereby undermining the doctrine's credibility (Adebajo & Ishola, 2020).

The regional dimension adds further complexity. Nigeria's conflicts are not isolated but interconnected with broader instability in West Africa, involving neighbouring countries and regional organisations like ECOWAS. While regional organisations have attempted diplomatic and peacekeeping initiatives, the U.S. has often prioritise bilateral security arrangements driven by strategic interests, which can fragment efforts and dilute the collective responsibility central to R2P. Effective implementation of R2P in Nigeria thus requires a multilateral, holistic approach that combines military, diplomatic, development, and human rights strategies an approach that remains challenging given competing interests and resource constraints.

U.S. engagement in Nigeria under the R2P framework demonstrates a pragmatic but often imperfect attempt to balance strategic interests with moral obligations. While military assistance has played a role

in countering insurgencies and protecting some civilians, concerns regarding human rights abuses, neglect of root causes, and limited diplomatic efforts highlight the gaps between rhetoric and reality (Michael, & Usman, 2025).

Moreso, United States engagement in Nigeria has also been fundamentally driven by economic considerations, which serve as both a strategic motivation and a basis for its diplomatic, developmental, and security initiatives within the country. Nigeria's prominence as Africa's largest economy and its pivotal role as a major oil producer make it an essential partner for the US, particularly in the context of securing vital energy resources and expanding influence across the African continent (Okechukwu, 2021). These economic interests are rooted in the global competition for energy security and market access, positioning Nigeria as a critical node in US economic and geopolitical strategies in the region.

In particular, US economic engagement with Nigeria is exemplified through trade policies, investment programmes, and development aid aimed at fostering economic stability, diversification, and sustainable growth. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), enacted in 2000, exemplifies this approach by providing Nigerian exporters with preferential access to the US market, thereby incentivising economic reforms, boosting exports, and encouraging private sector development (USTR, 2022). This trade framework has not only stimulated economic activity but also served as a leverage point for encouraging Nigeria to implement reforms conducive to a more open and competitive economy. Beyond trade, the US has prioritised investments in key sectors such as agriculture, technology, infrastructure, and human capital development to support Nigeria's efforts to diversify its economy away from oil dependence, a critical step towards long-term economic resilience (Folarin & Adesina, 2020).

Furthermore, US economic engagement in Nigeria is closely intertwined with regional security considerations. Economic instability, high unemployment, and pervasive poverty are recognised as underlying drivers of political unrest and insurgency, notably by extremist groups like Boko Haram. The US has consequently linked its economic assistance and development programmes to broader security objectives, emphasising the importance of economic stability as a means of preventing violence and extremism (Akinyemi, 2020). For example, initiatives aimed at improving Nigeria's infrastructure and creating employment opportunities are designed to address socio-economic grievances that militants exploit for recruitment and support. This reflects a pragmatic recognition of Nigeria's strategic importance within the wider African and global context. As Nigeria continues to grow economically and politically, it serves as a potential regional leader whose stability and development are vital for the stability of West Africa and beyond. US policies, therefore, often align economic interests with diplomatic and security strategies, reinforcing a comprehensive approach to engagement that seeks to foster mutual benefit and long-term partnership (Okechukwu, 2021). This multifaceted engagement underscores how economic considerations underpin US policies in Nigeria, shaping humanitarian aid, promoting democratic values, trade and investment as well as diplomatic strategies aimed at securing economic interests while promoting stability and development.

Given the multifaceted nature of US interest in Nigeria, it is evident that the country's engagement with the West African nation encompasses a broad range of activities. These include providing military assistance to enhance Nigeria's security capabilities, extending economic support to bolster its development and stability, promoting democratic values to foster good governance and accountability, offering humanitarian aid to alleviate suffering and address pressing needs of the people, and providing governance support to strengthen institutions and the rule of law. This comprehensive approach underscores the significance of Nigeria as a critical partner in the region and the importance of maintaining a robust and inclusive relationship. By investing in various aspects of Nigeria's development, the US aims to promote stability, prosperity, and democratic governance, ultimately aligning with its own strategic objectives in the region. Even though concerns have been raised regarding US intervention in Nigeria, only through this multidimensional approach that the international community can uphold its moral and legal responsibilities under R2P in Nigeria and similar contexts.

Challenges of U.S. Engagement in Nigeria within the R2P Framework

U.S. intervention in Nigeria is confronted by a range of deeply embedded structural and operational challenges that significantly constrain its capacity to foster sustainable peace and stability. Foremost among these is the highly complex and adaptive security environment shaped by insurgent groups such as Boko Haram and its splinter factions. These groups exhibit remarkable resilience, operating through decentralised and fluid networks that undermine the effectiveness of conventional military strategies.

Their tactical adaptability, manifested in shifting operational bases, asymmetric warfare, and the ability to embed within civilian populations, complicates counterterrorism efforts and necessitates more sophisticated, intelligence-driven approaches (Smith, 2020).

Equally significant is the limited depth of contextual understanding of Nigeria's intricate socio-political landscape by external actors. Interventions by the United States often suffer from insufficient engagement with local ethnic, religious, and political dynamics. This gap can produce policy responses that are misaligned with on-the-ground realities, inadvertently exacerbating grievances, reinforcing sectarian cleavages, and eroding community trust, conditions that insurgent groups readily exploit (Okafor, 2021).

Another critical impediment lies in the human rights record of Nigerian security forces benefiting from U.S. assistance. Empirical accounts have documented patterns of abuse, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and arbitrary detention, during counterinsurgency operations (Eze, 2020). Such violations not only contravene international human rights norms but also undermine the legitimacy of external support, weaken local cooperation, and ultimately diminish the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives.

Institutional and logistical deficiencies within Nigeria further compound these challenges. Endemic corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and limited organisational capacity within security institutions constrain the translation of U.S.-provided training and equipment into durable operational gains. Without addressing these systemic constraints, external assistance risks producing only marginal or short-lived improvements.

Geopolitical considerations also shape the contours of U.S. engagement. Strategic interests, including energy security and the maintenance of regional influence in West Africa, often inform policy priorities. In some instances, these imperatives may overshadow commitments to human rights and long-term development, resulting in a bias toward short-term security outcomes at the expense of comprehensive, peace-oriented strategies (Adebayo, 2022). Finally, domestic political dynamics within Nigeria, particularly corruption, elite competition, and governance deficits, pose persistent obstacles to the sustainability of externally supported interventions. These internal constraints can dilute policy implementation and limit the long-term impact of international assistance once external oversight recedes.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicate that United States engagement has predominantly manifested through military assistance such as training, intelligence sharing, and the provision of security infrastructure, highlighting a strategic and multifaceted approach aimed at strengthening the capacity of partner states to maintain internal stability and security independently. This approach is rooted in the broader doctrine of security cooperation, which emphasises the importance of empowering host nations' security institutions to address internal threats effectively, thereby promoting long-term stability and sovereignty (Krause & Williams, 2017). Military training programmes are designed not only to improve the operational skills of security forces but also to instill professionalism, discipline, and adherence to human rights standards, which are critical for effective counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts (Cohen & Gooch, 2020). Training initiatives often encompass tactical skills, logistical support, and strategic planning, which collectively enhance the ability of local forces to respond to emerging threats autonomously. More so, intelligence sharing constitutes a vital component of this engagement, facilitating better situational awareness, strategic coordination, and pre-emptive action against threats such as terrorist networks, insurgent groups, or organised crime syndicates (Gustafson, 2019). Effective intelligence exchange allows partner states to identify vulnerabilities and respond swiftly to crises, thereby reducing the scope for violence and enhancing overall security. The provision of security infrastructure ranging from technological systems like surveillance equipment and communication networks to logistical support for military operations further reinforces the capacity of host nations to sustain security efforts over time (Narten & Sampson, 2021). These infrastructural investments are critical for establishing resilient security sectors capable of managing internal threats without external assistance.

Other areas of US intervention in Nigeria include economic support initiatives for sustainable development and stability. The US provides significant economic aid to bolster Nigeria's growth, diversify its economy, and reduce poverty, focusing on sectors like agriculture, technology, infrastructure, and education (Folarin & Adesina, 2020). Promotion of democratic values by strengthening democratic institutions, upholding human rights, and enhancing the rule of law, including technical assistance for

electoral processes and governance support to combat corruption. Humanitarian aid to the vulnerable population who had suffered humanitarian crisis due to displacement.

This comprehensive strategy aligns with the broader counterinsurgency and nation-building paradigms that prioritise partnership and capacity development over direct military intervention. By focusing on building local institutions and capabilities, the United States aims to foster sustainable security solutions that are rooted within the sovereignty of partner states. This capacity-building approach seeks to transition security responsibilities from external actors to local authorities, ultimately reducing dependency on foreign assistance and fostering a sense of ownership and legitimacy among local populations (Krause & Williams, 2017).

This suggests that the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine in Nigeria has operated along a dual and at times contradictory axis simultaneously reflecting a securitised approach and a human-centered approach, with each framework shaping the nature, priorities, and outcomes of protection efforts in distinct ways. On one hand, the securitised dimension of R2P implementation in Nigeria is evident in the way protection crises such as the Boko Haram insurgency, farmer-herder conflicts, and separatist tensions in the Southeast have been framed primarily through the lens of national security, territorial integrity, and state survival. In this context, the Nigerian state and its international partners have tended to respond with military deployments, counterterrorism operations, and emergency security measures, often prioritising the containment of violence and the neutralisation of armed actors over the protection of civilian lives *per se*. This securitisation has, in some instances, led to the subordination of humanitarian imperatives to strategic and political interests, raising concerns about accountability, the use of excessive force, and the sidelining of civilian protection norms.

On the other hand, the human-centered dimension is reflected in efforts both domestic and internationally supported to place the welfare, dignity, and rights of vulnerable populations at the heart of protection responses. This has included humanitarian interventions in displacement camps, civil society engagement in conflict-affected communities, the involvement of the United Nations and regional bodies such as the African Union and ECOWAS in monitoring and mediation, and policy frameworks that acknowledge the structural drivers of violence such as poverty, ethnic marginalisation, and governance failures. These efforts signal a recognition that genuine implementation of R2P requires not only halting atrocities but also addressing the conditions that give rise to them.

Taken together, the coexistence of these two approaches in Nigeria illustrates a broader tension within R2P as a global norm between its invocation as a tool of state-centric security management and its foundational aspiration to protect individuals from mass atrocity crimes. The Nigerian case thus offers a complex and instructive example of how R2P is translated, negotiated, and sometimes distorted as it moves from international principle to local practice.

CONCLUSION

The United States' intervention in Nigeria encapsulates a multifaceted and layered engagement that defies simple categorisation, embodying simultaneously the imperatives of security-driven strategic interests and the normative commitments of a human-centered approach to protection and development. This dual orientation reflects not only the complexity of Nigeria's internal crises but also the broader architecture of American foreign policy, which has historically sought to reconcile geopolitical objectives with humanitarian obligations, particularly in regions of strategic significance. From a security standpoint, the United States has consistently framed its intervention in Nigeria within the broader context of counterterrorism, regional stability, and the containment of transnational threats. The rise of Boko Haram and its affiliate, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), presented Washington with a compelling strategic rationale for deepening its security partnership with Abuja. Through military assistance, intelligence sharing, the training of Nigerian armed forces, and the deployment of advisors under frameworks such as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), the United States has pursued a securitised agenda that prioritises the neutralisation of non-state armed actors and the preservation of a stable, pro-Western Nigerian state. This security posture has been further reinforced by American concerns over Nigeria's role as a regional hegemon in West Africa, its vast oil reserves, and its potential as either a bulwark against or a conduit for instability across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin.

Yet the United States' intervention has never been reducible to security interests alone. Running parallel to its military and strategic engagement is a sustained human-centered dimension that underscores Washington's commitment however imperfect and contested to the protection of civilians, the promotion

of democratic governance, and the advancement of human rights. Through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, and a wide array of civil society partnerships, the United States has channelled significant humanitarian assistance to communities devastated by insurgency, intercommunal violence, and forced displacement. This has included food aid, healthcare provision, support for internally displaced persons (IDPs), and investments in conflict-sensitive development programming aimed at addressing the structural vulnerabilities including poverty, inequality, and ethnic marginalisation that fuel cycles of violence in Nigeria's Northeast and Middle Belt regions.

Moreover, the United States has engaged Nigeria diplomatically on issues of governance, accountability, and rule of law, periodically conditioning or reviewing military assistance in response to credible allegations of human rights abuses by Nigerian security forces. This conditionality, while inconsistently applied, signals an attempt to align security cooperation with broader protection norms and reflects the influence of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) framework on American engagement one that holds that durable security cannot be achieved in the absence of accountable governance and respect for civilian life. Ultimately, revealing both the potential and the limitations of an approach that seeks to integrate security and human-centered objectives within a single foreign policy framework. While the convergence of these two approaches has at times generated complementary outcomes stabilising conflict zones while simultaneously delivering humanitarian relief and strengthening civilian institutions it has also produced tensions and contradictions. The prioritisation of counterterrorism partnerships has occasionally led Washington to overlook or downplay the culpability of Nigerian state actors in perpetrating or enabling atrocities, thereby undermining the very protection norms that the human-centered dimension of its intervention seeks to uphold.

Therefore, American intervention in Nigeria stands as a representative case study of how great powers navigate the complex interplay between strategic interest and humanitarian responsibility in fragile state contexts. It demonstrates that security and human-centered approaches are not mutually exclusive but are, in practice, deeply entangled each shaping, enabling, and at times constraining the other. For R2P implementation to achieve its full normative potential in Nigeria and beyond, interventions of this kind must move toward a more coherent and accountable integration of both dimensions, ensuring that the protection of human life is not merely a rhetorical complement to security objectives but a genuine and non-negotiable foundation of external engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the identified structural and operational challenges, the United States and the broader international community should adopt a multi-dimensional, context-sensitive, and strategically coordinated approach to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of their interventions in Nigeria.

First, there is a compelling need for the development and implementation of a comprehensive, adaptive, and intelligence-led security strategy that reflects the fluid and decentralised nature of insurgent formations such as Boko Haram and its splinter factions. The operational resilience of these groups, manifested in tactical flexibility, territorial mobility, and embeddedness within civilian populations, undermines the efficacy of conventional, force-heavy military responses. Consequently, external support should prioritise a calibrated blend of precision-based military engagement and intelligence-driven operations, including targeted disruption of command structures and logistical networks. Equally critical is the sustained strengthening of Nigeria's security architecture through capacity-building initiatives focused on modern counter-insurgency doctrines, real-time intelligence sharing, and strategic coordination. Investments in advanced surveillance, reconnaissance, and secure communication technologies are indispensable for enhancing rapid response capabilities and situational awareness.

Second, durable conflict mitigation necessitates a shift from a predominantly kinetic approach to a structurally informed political economy strategy that addresses the root causes of insurgency. The persistence of poverty, youth unemployment, and socio-economic marginalisation in affected regions continues to provide fertile ground for recruitment and radicalisation. Therefore, strengthening the sustainability of intervention frameworks base targeted development programming, including livelihood support, educational expansion, and community-driven resilience initiatives. Strengthening local governance institutions and enhancing civic participation are equally vital, as they foster state legitimacy and reduce societal susceptibility to extremist narratives. Furthermore, strategic engagement with

religious and traditional leaders can facilitate the diffusion of counter-extremism messaging and reinforce norms of social cohesion and tolerance.

Third, the effectiveness of counterinsurgency efforts is contingent upon robust regional and multilateral cooperation. The United States should deepen collaboration with organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) to institutionalise intelligence sharing, coordinate joint military exercises, and strengthen regional security architectures. Such cooperation is essential for disrupting transnational insurgent dynamics, including cross-border mobility, arms trafficking, and illicit financial flows. Enhanced support for joint border management initiatives and multinational task forces will further consolidate regional stabilisation efforts.

Fourth, all intervention mechanisms must be anchored in transparency, accountability, and evidence-based evaluation frameworks. Establishing clear performance benchmarks and measurable indicators is crucial for assessing policy effectiveness and ensuring optimal resource allocation. Continuous monitoring and evaluation will enable adaptive learning and policy recalibration, while transparency in implementation will strengthen trust among domestic stakeholders. Aligning external interventions with Nigeria's national priorities and human rights commitments is imperative for fostering local ownership and long-term legitimacy.

Finally, a holistic and integrative strategy that synergises security and human-centered approach with socio-economic development, institutional reform, and community engagement must be sustained for maximum result. Sustainable peace building requires not only the containment of violence but also the transformation of underlying governance deficits, including corruption, weak institutions, and limited-service delivery.

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