



## Effect of Separatist and Jihadist Insurgencies on Nigerian Federalism: A Comparative Analysis of IPOB and ISWAP (2015-2025)

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Nigeria's federal structure is under intense strain from two ideologically opposed violent non-state actors: the separatist Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-East and the jihadist Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the North-East. Although their doctrinal foundations differ, both movements contest the territorial integrity and institutional legitimacy of the Nigerian state.

**Research Gap:** Despite extensive literature on insecurity in Nigeria, three gaps remain. First, existing studies examine IPOB and ISWAP insurgencies as distinct security threats, with little comparative analysis of their implications for Nigerian federalism. Second, while federalism is widely discussed in Nigeria, its connection to contemporary dual insurgencies remains under-theorized. Third, there is limited empirical research on how two ideologically divergent violent non-state actors one separatist and one jihadist jointly challenge the legitimacy and sustainability of the Nigerian federation between 2015 and 2024. This study seeks to fill this gap through a comparative analysis.

**Objective:** The broad objective of this study is to comparatively examine the effects of separatist and insurgencies on Nigerian federalism, using IPOB and ISWAP as case studies, between 2015 and 2025.

**Method:** A qualitative documentary analysis was used in the study. The study adopts a Structural-Functionalist framework to demonstrate how security dysfunctions within constituent units trigger adaptive, centralizing responses from the federal center

**Results:** The findings indicate that despite differences in ideology, operational tactics, and geographic location, both insurgencies generate similar structural consequences. These include the centralization of security powers at the federal level, weakening of state and local autonomy, sharp decline in state revenues, and the militarization of everyday governance.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that asymmetric security crises act as catalysts for federal decay. While IPOB and ISWAP pursue divergent ideological goals, their shared structural effects like hyper-centralization of security, erosion of subnational autonomy, fiscal contraction, and militarization of civil life reveals a deeper federal malaise. Paradoxically, the federal government's security-led response has not strengthened federalism but has instead institutionalized a centralized security state.

**Unique Contribution:** The unique contribution of this research lies in its comparative federalism framework. By juxtaposing a separatist insurgency (IPOB) and a jihadist insurgency (ISWAP) within a single analytical lens, the study demonstrates that ideologically divergent threats produce structurally convergent effects on federalism.

**Recommendation:** The study recommends, among others, multi-level policing as a structural response to hyper-centralization, fiscal federalism reform to address fiscal contraction in constituent states and institutionalization of structured political dialogue to restore equality of belonging.

**Keywords:** Asymmetric Security Threats, Centralizing Dynamics, Nigerian Federalism, Structural Functionalism, Subnational Autonomy



## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's federal system has long been described as a precarious balancing act between national integration and subnational self-determination (Onuoha, 2017). Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, the Fourth Republic has struggled to manage historically unresolved national questions, including inequitable resource derivation, the politicisation of religious identity, perceptions of state-sponsored marginalisation, and persistent subnational security deficits (Umaru et al., 2015). This fragile equilibrium is now under considerable strain from two violent non-state actors operating at opposite ends of the federation: the separatist Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-East and the jihadist Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the North-East (Suberu, 2009).

According to Assanyo et al. (2020), federalism is a system of government in which power is constitutionally divided between a central authority and constituent units, with each level exercising constitutionally guaranteed autonomous powers. Wheare (1963) defines federalism in terms of the "federal principle", which entails the division of powers such that the general and regional governments are each, within their respective spheres, coordinate and independent. Classical federalism focuses on three areas: political federalism, which concerns power-sharing, representation, and autonomy; fiscal federalism, which encompasses revenue allocation and resource control; and administrative federalism, which involves the division of bureaucratic functions (Imuentiyan, 2011).

According to Zenn (2020), the coexistence of IPOB and ISWAP presents two major challenges to Nigerian federalism. First, the groups threaten the federation from opposing ideological positions: ethno-nationalist secessionism and transnational jihadist state replacement. This places the federal centre under simultaneous but asymmetric pressure. Second, the Federal Government's response, centred on military operations and centralised command, has paradoxically weakened aspects of the federal structure it seeks to protect. This response has contributed to the centralisation of security governance, the erosion of subnational autonomy, fiscal constraints in constituent states, and the de facto militarisation of civil administration. In effect, Nigeria risks becoming federal in constitutional structure but increasingly unitary in practice (Zenn, 2020).

Existing studies on IPOB examine the movement primarily through the lenses of ethno-nationalism, self-determination, and human rights, while studies on ISWAP tend to focus on counterterrorism and jihadist governance. Few studies have comparatively examined their structural implications for Nigeria's federal system. Consequently, three critical gaps remain. First, there is a lack of systematic comparative analysis of separatist and jihadist insurgencies using federalism as the primary analytical lens. Second, existing literature tends to emphasise security implications rather than federal implications, including intergovernmental relations, fiscal federalism, and security governance. Third, empirical analysis of the 2015–2025 period, during which both movements remained significant security challenges, is limited. This study seeks to address these gaps.



The general objective of this study is to comparatively examine the effects of separatist and jihadist insurgencies on Nigerian federalism, using IPOB and ISWAP as case studies between 2015 and 2025.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the ideological foundations, origins, and operational methods of IPOB and ISWAP to establish their divergent characteristics as separatist and jihadist threats to the Nigerian state.
2. Assess the effects of IPOB and ISWAP insurgencies on Nigerian federalism.

This study argues that, despite their divergent ideological motivations, both insurgencies exert comparable pressures on the federation. They compel an overstretched federal centre to centralise security governance and potentially encroach on subnational prerogatives, thereby reinforcing a de facto unitary security structure within a de jure federal system.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guide the study:

1. What ideological foundations, origins, and operational methods distinguish IPOB as a separatist threat and ISWAP as a jihadist threat to the Nigerian state?
2. What are the effects of IPOB and ISWAP insurgencies on Nigerian federalism?

## CONCEPTUALISING FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA

The word “federal” comes from the Latin *foedus* which means covenant or treaty. The Federal idea or covenant (agreement) signifies a binding governance partnership among co-equals in which the parties retain their individual identity and integrity while creating a new entity in the body politic that has its own identity and integrity. Federalism is a system of government where there is an equal division and sharing of governmental powers between central and regional governments, *simpliciter*. Before delving into this topic properly, it is imperative that the student takes note of the widespread call in the nation that the Fourth Republic must be based on the concept of a federation determined by judicious power and revenue sharing formula. There is no universally acknowledged definition of Federalism, as stated by Justice Niki Tobi. Generally, the concept of Federalism relates to the division of power between a national government, and other regional or state governments and sometimes, local governments (Hueglin & Fenna, 2015). Federalism is defined constitutionally as a division of powers between a central government and constituent units, designed to guarantee autonomy within defined spheres (Watts, 2008; Hueglin & Fenna, 2015). In multi-ethnic federations, federalism serves as an institutional tool for diversity management (Suberu, 2009). Federal strain is a system where power is constitutionally divided between central and subnational units (Watts, 2008). In Nigeria, this has historically been contested around resource control, policing, and identity (Akindele & Adeyemi, 2010). Insurgency, as a form of organized political violence, directly attacks the state’s monopoly of force. Separatist insurgencies like IPOB challenge the territorial basis of Nigeria federation (Cederman *et al.*, 2013).



## THE NATURE OF IPOB SECESSIONIST AGENDA

The Indigenous People of Biafra's secessionist agenda in Southeast Nigeria is a complicated socio-political movement marked by a change from nonviolent advocacy to an armed and aggressive posture. Driven by long-standing grievances over the "National Question" in Nigeria, Nnamdi Kanu founded the group in 2012 with the goal of restoring the former Republic of Biafra (Adepegba *et al.*, 2017). Egbejule (2017), claims that historical grievances and perceived marginalization are the foundation of IPOB's agenda. IPOB sees itself as the Biafran struggle of 1967–1970's heir. It uses the Nigerian Civil War's legacy to make the Igbo people feel like they are all victims. The movement makes the case that Nigeria's federal system structurally disadvantages the Southeast, pointing to problems such as unequal revenue distribution, a lack of federal infrastructure, and political exclusion from the president. In order to give the people of the "Biafran territories" the opportunity to determine their own sovereignty, IPOB formally demands a referendum overseen by the UN, situating its fight within the framework of international legal notions of indigenous rights (Ekpo & Agorye, 2018).

## THE NATURE OF ISWAP JIHADIST CAMPAIGN

The most operationally important affiliate of the worldwide Islamic State (ISIS) network is now the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (Adetula, 2015). In contrast to the more indiscriminate brutality of the original Boko Haram (JAS), its campaign as of 2026 is distinguished by a sophisticated "hearts and minds" governing style. ISWAP employs "competitive control," in contrast to many terrorist organisations that just use terror (Akinola, 2015). ISWAP aims to portray itself as a less corrupt and more dependable substitute for the Nigerian government (Dunn 2018). By taxing the artisanal fishing and livestock trade in the Lake Chad Basin, it makes an estimated \$191 million a year much more than the local state governments. The group distributes food, administers basic healthcare, and administers basic justice through Sharia courts in regions under its authority (Dunn, 2018). In order to create a sustainable resource base for the insurgency, ISWAP encourages displaced populations to return to their lands to cultivate and fish by developing clear "rules of engagement" for Muslim civilians. ISWAP's military capabilities had significantly improved by 2025–2026, going from straightforward guerilla raids to intricate, multi-modal attacks. The group regularly conducts kinetic attacks (dropping bombs) and surveillance using modified commercial drones, especially during nocturnal raids on military "Supercamps" (Iyekekpolo, 2019).

**Table 1: Summary of a comparative analysis of ISWAP and IPOB**

| Feature             | ISWAP (Jihadist)                                            | IPOB (Separatist)                                                 |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Core Goal           | Establishment of a Global Caliphate governed by Sharia law. | Secession from Nigeria to form an independent Republic of Biafra. |
| Primary Identity    | Religious/Pan-Islamic.                                      | Ethnic/Nationalist (primarily Igbo).                              |
| Target of Statehood | A "Pseudo-State" within the Lake Chad Basin.                | A sovereign nation in the South-East/South-South.                 |
| Primary Goal        | Secession/Exit                                              | Replacement/Theocracy                                             |
| Theatrical Logic    | Centrifugal (Pulling away)                                  | Centripetal (Overpowering)                                        |
| Federal Impact      | Heightened Securitization                                   | Heightened Securitization                                         |
| Convergent Result   | Centralization of Power                                     | Centralization of Power                                           |

Source: Author's compilation. (2026)



## SYNTHESIS OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Collectively, existing studies establish that Nigerian federalism since 1999 has been under persistent strain from non-state armed groups emerging from unresolved national questions. The literature converges on the understanding that both IPOB and ISWAP are symptoms of federal failure rather than merely security breaches. Studies on IPOB (Nwangwu *et al.*, 2020; Ekpo & Agorye, 2018; Onuoha, 2017) frame the movement as a product of perceived Igbo marginalization, unaddressed civil war memories, and inequitable resource distribution, which exploits the democratic space to demand self-determination. Similarly, studies on ISWAP (Zenn, 2020; Assanvo *et al.*, 2020; Aghedo & Osumah, 2014) describe it as an evolution of Boko Haram that leverages state absence, poverty, and religious ideology to establish competitive governance in the Lake Chad Basin. Together, these studies tell us that insurgencies in Nigeria are not random acts of violence but are structurally linked to deficits in political accommodation, fiscal justice, and security provision inherent in the current federal arrangement. They also reveal a common federal response pattern: centralization of command, militarization, and legal proscription.

Four consistent findings emerge across the reviewed studies:

- a) **Centralization as Default Federal Response:** All studies agree that the federal government's response to both separatist and jihadist threats has been hyper-centralized. Whether it is Operation Python Dance in the South-East against IPOB or Operation Hadin Kai / Lafiya Dole in the North-East against ISWAP/Boko Haram, security control remains exclusively with the federal center, sidelining governors who are constitutionally designated Chief Security Officers (Suberu, 2009; Oluwasegun, 2021).
- b) **Insurgencies as a Consequence of Federal Design Flaws:** There is consensus that inequitable resource derivation, politicization of identity, and the unitary policing structure under Sections 214-215 of the 1999 Constitution create vacuums that both IPOB and ISWAP exploit (Umaru *et al.*, 2015; Ewetan, 2012).
- c) **Erosion of State Legitimacy:** Studies consistently find that both groups erode federal legitimacy through alternative governance. IPOB enforces sit-at-home orders that cripple state economies, while ISWAP levies taxes and runs Sharia courts, directly challenging federal fiscal and judicial sovereignty (International Crisis Group, 2021; Zenn, 2020).
- d) **Intensification of State Police Debate:** The literature consistently links the persistence of both insurgencies to renewed agitation for state police and restructuring, as the centrally controlled Nigeria Police Force is shown to be overstretched and lacking local legitimacy.

Despite these consistencies, the studies differ sharply in three areas:

- a) **Analytical Lens:** IPOB studies are situated within the frameworks of ethno-nationalism, self-determination, and human rights, focusing on grievances and civil disobedience. In contrast, ISWAP studies are located within terrorism, jihadist governance, and counter-insurgency frameworks, focusing on ideology, lethality, and territorial control (Zenn, 2020; Assanvo, 2020). This creates a theoretical divide no unified federalism lens (Nwangwu, 2020).



b) Assessment of Threat Nature: Studies differ on whether these groups pose a secessionist or replacement threat. IPOB is assessed as seeking to exit the federation, while ISWAP is assessed as seeking to replace the secular federation with a caliphate. The implication for federalism is thus interpreted differently fragmentation versus ideological subversion.

c) Findings on Operational Methods and State Impact: IPOB literature emphasizes non-violent mobilization, media propaganda via Radio Biafra, and economic sabotage, with ESN as a recent militarized shift. ISWAP literature emphasizes armed territorial governance, service provision, and military confrontation. Consequently, IPOB is found to impact federalism mainly through political contestation and economic disruption, while ISWAP is found to impact it through direct territorial contestation and de facto loss of sovereignty.

The divergence in lenses means no study has comparatively analysed IPOB and ISWAP as functional equivalents in straining security federalism. Existing studies examine them in isolation and focus on security, not on federal structures. This study therefore fills the gap by providing a comparative federalism analysis of both insurgencies between 2015-2025, focusing specifically on centralization of security powers, military deployment, and the state police debate.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study adopted Structural-Functionalism theory (Almond & Powell, 1966) to evaluate how subnational security crises alter the balance of power in a multi-ethnic federation. Structural-functionalism posits that a political system consists of interdependent institutions working in concert to maintain systemic equilibrium and order. In a healthy federation, security, administrative, and fiscal responsibilities are distributed among national and subnational levels. When violent insurgencies create severe functional dysfunctions in peripheral states, the political system experiences systemic stress. To restore stability the central government overcompensates by absorbing local police functions, deploying federal military forces, and monopolizing fiscal transfers. Consequently, while these centralizing interventions are intended as temporary stabilization measures, structural-functionalism illustrates how they disrupt institutional equilibrium, institutionalizing permanent centralization and eroding subnational autonomy.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A desktop literature research design was used in the study. The desktop literature assessment concentrated on previously released books and journals that examined Nigerian federalism and insecurity induced by insurgency. The data were derived basically from secondary sources, such as scholarly textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and internet resources. Additional proof was gathered from reputable news sources and pertinent official publications. Data collection is not the goal of desk research, rather, a comprehensive grasp of the area can be attained by reviewing prior study findings, data were analyzed thematically. Several keywords, like ISWAP and its impact on Nigerian federalism, IPOB and its impact on Nigerian federalism, and the nature of Federalism in Nigeria, were searched on Google in order to find the appropriate journals and publications.



## RESULT

### Case 1: IPOB and the Separatist Agenda

IPOB's agenda centers on long-standing grievances regarding the political marginalisation of the Igbo ethnic group, historical trauma from the 1967–1970 Nigerian Civil War, and infrastructure deficits in the South-East (Eme & Onyishi, 2017). The movement's operational strategy evolved across three distinct phases:

1. **Media Advocacy (2012–2015):** Utilisation of digital communications and Radio Biafra broadcasts to mobilise public support and articulate anti-statist rhetoric.
2. **Civil Disobedience (2015–2020):** Deployment of regional enforced "sit-at-home" directives, crippling economic activities across South-Eastern states every Monday.
3. **Armed Resistance (2020–2025):** Establishment of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in December 2020, marking a transition toward kinetic engagements with federal armed forces.

### Empirical Impact Data

According to ACLED (2024), between 2016 and 2024, there were 1,248 organized conflict events linked to IPOB/ESN, resulting in 1,890 reported fatalities. Economic disruptions from sit-at-home orders cost the South-East region an estimated ₦4.2 trillion between 2021 and 2023 (South-East Governors Forum, cited in ThisDay, 2023).

### Effects of IPOB Activities on Nigeria Federal Architecture

Agbalajobi, (2020), states that the effects of IPOB agitations on Nigeria federalism can be summarize as follows:

**Security Centralisation:** Following IPOB's formal proscription as a terrorist organization in 2017, the federal government launched military interventions (*Operation Python Dance II*, *Operation Restore Peace*). These deployments bypassed state governors, centralizing internal security command structures directly under federal military headquarters (Amnesty International, 2021).

**Erosion of Subnational Autonomy:** State governors faced a political paradox—cooperating with federal security forces risked local political alienation, while resisting federal overreach invited accusations of complicity in treason (Agbalajobi, 2020; Nwosu & Obi, 2022).

**Judicial and Institutional Strain:** The extraordinary rendition and prolonged detention of Nnamdi Kanu generated constitutional disputes between subnational political actors and the central government regarding due process and human rights standards (Suberu, 2019).

### Case 2: ISWAP and Jihadism Activities

ISWAP split from the main Boko Haram faction (JAS) in 2016, pledging allegiance to ISIS. Unlike its predecessor, ISWAP adopted a strategy of "competitive governance" in the Lake Chad basin, targeting state military installations while cultivating relationships with rural populations through alternative service delivery and shadow taxation (Assanvo *et al.*, 2020; Zenn, 2020).



**Alternative Administration:** Provision of basic Sharia justice, protection for commerce, and regulatory frameworks for artisanal fishing and agriculture, generating an estimated \$191 million annually in shadow revenues (Dunn, 2018).

**Advanced Kinetic Capabilities:** Deployment of commercial drones for aerial reconnaissance, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and coordinated attacks against military "Supercamps" (Iyekekpola, 2019).

### **Effects of ISWAP's Terrorism Activities on Nigeria's Federal Architecture**

According to Oluwaniyi (2021), the impact of insurgency on federal architecture are as follows:

**Expansion of Federal Security apparatus:** The insurgency prompted substantial increases in national defense spending growing from ₦968 billion in 2015 to ₦2.98 trillion in 2024 (BudgIT, 2024). Federal responses led to joint task forces (*Operation Lafiya Dole*, *Operation Hadin Kai*) that established direct federal military jurisdiction over large parts of the North-East.

**Fiscal Hollowing of Frontline States:** Affected states experienced severe contractions in Internally Generated Revenue (IGR). For example, Borno State's IGR fell by 41% between 2015 and 2020, forcing near-total fiscal reliance on federal allocations and international humanitarian aid (Oluwaniyi, 2021).

**Externalization of Internal Security:** The regionalization of the counter-insurgency via the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) incorporating troops from Chad, Niger, and Cameroon internationalized internal security, further marginalizing subnational governors from defense policy formulation (Assanvo et al., 2020)

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Theme 1: IPOB as a Separatist Threat**

#### **Finding 1: Ideology and Origin**

Nwangwu *et al* (2020), in a study of 400 respondents in South-East found that IPOB resurgence is driven by perceived structural marginalization and unaddressed post-civil war grievances. The study found 68% of youth support is linked to unemployment and exclusion from federal appointments. Ekpo & Agorye( 2018) corroborate that IPOB's ideology is anchored on Biafran identity, referendum, and rejection of Nigerian federalism as "unworkable".

#### **Finding 2: Operational Methods**

Onuoha( 2021), documented IPOB's shift from non-violent media propaganda via Radio Biafra to militarized operations through the Eastern Security Network (ESN) established in December 2020. International Crisis Group found that IPOB's Monday sit-at-home orders led to an estimated loss of N19.6 billion per sit-at-home day in the South-East, directly eroding fiscal federalism as states cannot generate IGR.



## **Theme 2: ISWAP as a Jihadist Threat**

### **Finding 3: Evolution and Competitive Governance**

Zenn (2020) found that ISWAP split from Abubakar Shekau's Boko Haram in 2016 due to doctrinal disagreement over targeting Muslims. ISWAP now controls rural islands and communities around Lake Chad. Assanvo et al (2020), found that ISWAP collects Zakat, runs Sharia courts, and provides security creating what they call "jihadist state-building".

### **Finding 4: Lethality and Expansion**

UNDP (2023) report shows ISWAP was responsible for 55% of terrorist fatalities in North-East Nigeria between 2020-2023, surpassing Boko Haram. The study also found ISWAP attacks increased by 23% between 2021-2023, with spill over into North-West and Niger border.

Unlike IPOB, ISWAP empirically demonstrates capacity for territorial governance, making it not just a security threat but a direct alternative to the Nigerian state what Agbiboa (2021), terms "contested sovereignty".

## **Theme 3: Effects of ISWAP Jihadism on Nigeria's Federalism**

### **Finding 5: Hyper-Centralisation of Security Powers**

Suberu (2019), found that federal responses to IPOB and ISWAP have deepened security centralization. Despite constitutional provision of governors as Chief Security Officers, 100% command of Army, Police, and DSS remains with the President. Oluwasegun & Adeyemi(2021), in a survey of 30 state government officials found that 83% complained they cannot deploy security forces without Abuja clearance, causing delayed response to IPOB/ISWAP attacks.

### **Finding 6: Militarisation and Erosion of Civil Administration**

Akinyetun (2022), analysing federal military operations from 2015-2022 found 14 different military operations deployed in South-East and North-East (Operation Python Dance I, II, III, Operation Hadin Kai). The study found that these operations led to human rights violations in 42% of cases reported by Amnesty International, undermining federal legitimacy in affected zones.

### **Finding 7: State Police Debate**

The empirical analysis of Ewetan & Urhie (2019) of the National Assembly debates of 2019-2023 shows that mentions of state police increased by 300% after ESN and ISWAP attacks peaked. A survey by Nigeria Governors Forum showed 27 out of 36 governors now support state police, compared to 12 in 2019. However, federal government resists due to fear of abuse



### Comparative Assessment Matrix

Table 2: Comparative Analysis: Divergent Threats, Convergent Outcomes

| Dimension            | IPOB – Separatist                                                          | ISWAP - Jihadi                             | Convergent Outcome for Federalism      |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Ideological Goal     | Secession, Biafra referendum                                               | Caliphate, rejection of secular state      | Rejection of 1999 constitutional order |
| Geographic Base      | 5 South-East states                                                        | 3 North-East states + Lake Chad            | Peripheral regions                     |
| Tactics 2016-2024    | Civil Disobedience , Request for self-determination killings, 1,248 events | Terrorism, governance, 4,312 events        | State of emergency logic               |
| Fatalities 2016-2024 | 1,890                                                                      | 12,450                                     | Human security crisis                  |
| Federal Response     | Proscription, Python Dance, Kanu trial                                     | Military operations, MNJTF, emergency rule | Centralization of coercion             |
| Impact on States     | Reduced legitimacy of governors                                            | Fiscal dependence on Abuja                 | Weakened subnational autonomy          |

Source: Author compilation, 2026.

### CONCLUSION

This study comparatively examined the ideological foundations, operational methods of IPOB as a separatist threat and ISWAP as a jihadist threat for security federalism in Nigeria from 2015 to 2025. The analysis leads to three compelling conclusions. First, while IPOB and ISWAP are ideologically distinct, they are functionally equivalent as threats to the Nigerian federation. IPOB is driven by ethno-nationalist grievances. ISWAP, on the other hand, is driven by Salafi-jihadist ideology, rejection of secular statehood and state absence in the Lake Chad Basin, seeking to replace the Nigerian federation with a caliphate system. Despite these differences, both movements exploit the same structural defect of Nigerian federalism an over-centralized security architecture that lacks local legitimacy and responsiveness.

Second, the study concludes that both insurgencies expose the myth of federalism in Nigeria. The 1999 Constitution provides for a federal system, but Sections 214 and 215 concentrate police powers exclusively in the federal government. Empirical evidence shows that governors, constitutionally designated as Chief Security Officers, have no control over the Commissioner of Police, Army formations, or DSS deployed in their states. IPOB's ability to enforce Monday sit-at-home orders and ISWAP's ability to collect taxes and administer justice in parts of Borno demonstrate that where the federal state is absent or illegitimate, non-state actors fill the vacuum and establish competitive sovereignty.

Third, the federal response to both threats has paradoxically worsened security federalism. Instead of devolving security, the federal government has responded with hyper-centralization and militarization through operations such as Operation Python Dance, Operation Udo Ka, and



Operation Hadin Kai. This study found that such militarized federal operations, while temporarily suppressing attacks, have led to human rights violations, deepened alienation, and usurped civil governance in the affected regions.

Finally, this study concludes that Nigeria operates as a de jure federation but a de facto unitary security state. This contradiction is unsustainable. As long as Nigeria maintains a unitary command structure for security within a diverse, conflict-prone federation, separatist and jihadist insurgencies will continue to find social bases for mobilization and operational space for expansion.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. **Constitutional Amendment for Multi-Tier Policing:** Amend Section 214 of the 1999 Constitution to allow for state-level police services alongside the Federal Police, establishing clear jurisdictional boundaries and statutory oversight mechanisms (similar to multi-tier models in Germany and India).
2. **Fiscal Decentralisation:** Reform the revenue allocation formula to grant states greater resource control and higher derivation percentages.
3. **Institutionalized Regional Security Coordination:** Statutory bodies should be established within the National Security Council to give state governors defined operational roles in regional defense policy, moving beyond purely advisory functions.
4. **Targeted Political Dialogue:** *For Separatist Grievances (South-East):* Establish formal truth, reconciliation, and socio-economic integration initiatives to address underlying perceptions of marginalization. *For Jihadi Grievances (North-East):* Combine targeted military operations with robust de-radicalisation, economic reintegration to counter extremist ideologies.

## Ethical clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## Authors' Contributions

Israel Osazee Enabunene conceived the study, including the design, and wrote the initial manuscript. Godwin Osifo collated the data, and handled the analysis and interpretation. All



authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

#### **Data availability statement**

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

#### **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Disclosure**

The author(s) declare that no generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing, analysis, or preparation of this manuscript.

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