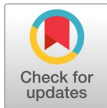


Governance and Society Review (GSR)

Volume 5 Issue 1, Spring 2026

ISSN(P): 2959-1619, ISSN(E): 2959-1627

Homepage: <https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/gsr>



Title: Nigeria–Pakistan Relations: Defense Diplomacy, Military Training, and Eradicating Terrorism

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/gsr.51.03>

History: Received: November 09, 2025, Revised: January 10, 2026, Accepted: March 29, 2026, Published: June 20, 2026

Citation: Omotayo, A. F. (2026). Nigeria–Pakistan relations: Defense diplomacy, military training, and eradicating terrorism. *Governance and Society Review*, 5(1), 48–69. <https://doi.org/10.32350/gsr.51.03>

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Conflict of Interest: Author(s) declared no conflict of interest



A publication of The School of Governance and Society
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Nigeria–Pakistan Relations: Defense Diplomacy, Military Training, and Eradicating Terrorism

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Abstract

The paper explores the relations between Nigeria and Pakistan especially in the fields of defense diplomacy, military training, and counterterrorism. The study uses qualitative research design premised on the use of secondary sources of data such as scholarly literature, policy documents, official releases, and the press. The nature, range, and implication of the Nigeria-Pakistan defense and counterterrorism activities were assessed through content analysis. The paper is grounded on the theory of realism, focusing on state survival, power, and security on an anarchic international system. Realism is the reason why Nigeria wants to have the military experience and defense technology of Pakistan to fight insurgency, and Pakistan wants to benefit from the arms industry in Africa through the partnership. The analysis demonstrates that the strength of the Nigeria-Pakistan defense diplomacy was in the field of military training, armaments acquisition, and counterterrorism collaboration. Nigeria has had major number of officers trained in Pakistani institutions, which has boosted the capacity of the country to counter insurgency by the Boko Haram and ISWAP rebels. Nevertheless, trade in non-military areas has not been robust yet, and some of the difficulties that the partnership is facing include excessive dependence on foreign armament supplies and inadequate technology transfer. The South-South cooperation in the common security issues is portrayed in Nigeria-Pakistan relations. Although defense diplomacy is still the key to the partnership, this has had little influence on the overall economic and diplomatic relationships. The paper suggests that to increase checks and balances in the defence acquisition process, improving the transfer of technology by joint venture, and increasing the partnership from the military to other areas, including education, trade and science, would be imperative. The deliberations should be structured as strategic dialogues in both countries to provide mutually fruitful security cooperation.

Keywords: defence diplomacy, eradicating terrorism, Nigeria, Pakistan,

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south-south cooperation

Introduction

Nigeria and Pakistan have an unparalleled experience of diplomatic relations based on postcolonial unity, the presence of a common platform in the Commonwealth, and collaboration in multilateral organizations. Both countries are two of the largest Muslim-majority states in their own regions, the two countries have consistently laid stress on South-South cooperation, and attempted to enhance their political, defence, and economic connections. Although the best example is Nigeria, which is the most populous country and the largest economy in Africa, Pakistan has a central role in South Asia as a nuclear-armed country that has great influence in the Islamic world. Their relations portray extended interests in security, trade, and international relations, although threats of low volume trade and unreliable diplomatic encounters prevail.

Nigeria and Pakistan became acquainted with each other when Nigeria got its independence in 1960. Being members of the Commonwealth and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the two countries shared a similarity in the efforts to advance the interests of the developing states within the international arenas (Saliu, [2023](#)). In the cold war period, Pakistan was able to establish itself as an ally as a Trainor of military personnel by providing technical skills to most African countries including Nigeria. Nigeria, for its part, defended Pakistan in many international forums (Khan, [2023](#)).

Defence cooperation is one of the most powerful supports of Nigeria-Pakistan relations. Nigeria has, over the years, acquired small arms, aircraft, and military hardware from Pakistan, and the Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) has been one of several suppliers (Wezeman, [2022](#)). Nigerian officers have been trained in considerable numbers, which is a result of capacity building in the Nigerian Armed Forces, through training at Pakistani military academies. This collaboration intensified when Nigeria was confronting increasing insurgency by the Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Under the training and intelligence support, Pakistan with its practice in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism offered the training and support to Nigeria (Okhogbe [2025](#)). In addition, the two states have also been collaborating in maintaining peace. Nigeria, a key troop donor to United Nations missions,

has been enjoying long-established peacekeeping skills of Pakistan, particularly in Africa. It is through such engagements that show the common interest in global security.

Economic relations are not well developed even though the defence ties are high. Historically, bilateral trade in Nigeria and Pakistan has been relatively small, and has remained modest despite active D8 participation (Saleh, [2022](#)). Nigeria is a supplier of crude oil to Pakistan, and Pakistan is a supplier of textiles, pharmaceuticals and machinery to Nigeria. The need to improve bilateral trade has been brought out to the discussion table in recent years, and particularly in the Developing-8 (D-8) of which the two countries are members. Nevertheless, the growth has been hindered by infrastructural difficulties, a low flow of investments, and bureaucracy.

On a diplomatic front, both Nigeria and Pakistan cooperate in the fora of United Nations, OIC, Non-Aligned Movement, and D-8. There is a common issue of concerns in terrorism, Islamophobia, and fair development in the two countries. Nigeria has long been a proponent of the Fair Play proposal of the Kashmir dispute by Pakistan, and Pakistan has also given its backing to the anti-terrorist efforts of Nigeria in West Africa (Saliu, [2023](#)). This international solidarity is demonstrated by their mutual diplomatic support as members of the Global South.

The Nigeria-Pakistan relations have multiple challenges, even though cooperation between the two countries has existed historically. This is because the potential of a partnership between them is non-existent with lack of strong economic integration and low volumes of trade. The security issues in the two states also curtail expansion since Pakistan has put much emphasis to its South Asian neighbouring countries whereas Nigeria is still struggling with domestic instability. Moreover, the two nations have not fully exploited technological transfer, joint ventures, and exchange of education (Khan, [2023](#)).

Nevertheless, there are still big opportunities. The need of the Nigerian market in defence technology is consistent with the development of the Pakistani arms industry. Also, the increased cooperation in education may involve more Nigerian students studying in Pakistani universities, particularly in medicine and engineering. In the quest to diversify their partnerships by not focusing much on the overdependence on the western powers, the bilateral relationship between the two states can be repositioned

to the strategic advantage of both.

Altogether, despite not being so evident as the relations of Nigeria with Western states, or even the Middle Eastern ones, the relations between Nigeria and Pakistan are still significant in the framework of South-South cooperation. The first pillar has been defence and military cooperation and the last is trade and economic relations, which have not been sufficiently exploited. As the institutional structures are improved, diplomatic interactions become more intensive, and economic integration is used, Nigeria and Pakistan may change their relations into a more multifaceted partnership, which would consider the security and developmental needs of both countries. Since both countries are in the Southern part of the world, relying on this would increase the diplomatic relation between them. The geopolitical relationships between these countries are not extreme when put side by side with the world global alliances, but it has a significant weight, which is worthy of studying.

Literature Review

Nigeria and Pakistan have a history of diplomatic relations due to postcolonial solidarity, South-South collaboration, and mutual inclusion to the Commonwealth and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This relationship has, over the decades, been reinforced by the use of defence diplomacy, military training, and counterterrorism cooperation. Researchers and policy briefs are unanimous that despite the gross benefits such as the military capacity development and diversification of the defence partners to date, the partnership has faced some issues of accountability, dependency, and inadequate economic integration beyond the security domain (Khan, [2023](#)).

Nigeria-Pakistan relations were formed on a historical basis at the independence of Nigeria in 1960. The two nations formed relationships at an early stage, as they had mutual interests in the Islamic background of being Muslims, along with having South-South solidarity. Nigeria has long been allied with Pakistan over the Kashmir matter, and Pakistan with Nigeria over issues of African insecurity (Saliu, [2023](#)). This epoch of paying back has offered fertile grounds on which the defence and security relationship has been enhanced in the following decades.

Defence diplomacy and arms procurement has been one of the most apparent spheres of Nigeria-Pakistan collaboration. The defence-industrial

complex in Pakistan, which consists of the Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) and the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex has also been supplying basic aircraft to Nigeria (Wezeman, [2022](#)). Nigeria has been evolving its arms imports outside of the traditional Western vendors, largely because of the rise of Pakistan as an alternative, albeit secondary, and consistent supplier of arms (Wezeman, [2022](#)). The defence diplomacy is strengthened with the help of bilateral visits, joint committees and agreements which are concerned not only with procurement but also with the possibilities of technology transfer and co-production.

Military training and professional education is the longest lasting type of Nigeria-Pakistan cooperation. It has been reported that thousands, of Nigerian military officials have been trained in Pakistani schools, where counterinsurgency, logistics, and technical maintenance are areas of concentration (Khan, [2023](#)). This training is deemed as critical for the Nigerian undertakings to establish the capability of its armed forces to operate effectively on the issue of tackling Boko Haram and ISWAP. The number of Nigerian personnel who have been hosted in Pakistan during the years has already reached more than 2,000, as it was reported by Khan ([2025](#)). Nevertheless, even though the literature review confirms the significance of this type of training, the long-term consequences on the performance of the operations of the Nigerians are not taken into account empirically, which is a gap in the previously available research on the topic.

Another pillar in the relations between Nigeria and Pakistan is counterterrorism diplomacy. The fight between Nigeria and Boko Haram, as well as ISWAP, has required the cooperation of international forces, and Pakistan, which had a long tradition of successful counterinsurgency activities, has provided technical and doctrinal assistance (Okhogbe, [2025](#)). The two nations work together in multilateral spheres including the UN, OIC, and the Developing-8 (D-8) to promote counterterrorism systems. The intelligence-sharing efforts, which are not actively promoted due to the sensitivity, are mentioned in the policy reports as the cooperation agenda (NUST Institute of Policy Studies & Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, [2022](#)). However, the lack of transparency reduces the possibility of academic examination of the operation performance of such exchanges.

The literature defines a number of advantages of Nigeria-Pakistan cooperation. First, Nigeria has managed to expand the channels of its arms purchases, not relying on Western providers and eliminating political

conditions (Wezeman, [2022](#)). Second, the training of the Nigerian military has also enhanced the professionalism and technical skills of the military in Nigeria. Third, an increase in industrial cooperation in the form of joint ventures in the production of arms can expand the local defence capabilities of Nigeria (Ministry of Defence Nigeria, [2024](#)).

Although these are the advantages, a number of challenges have been observed. Unless the cooperation is accompanied by a strong transfer of technology, Nigeria will be on the path to being even more dependent on Pakistan (Wezeman, [2022](#)). The Nigerian procurement procedures are also frequently criticized as being not transparent and accountable, which is why corruption and fund misuse issues are of concern (Ene & Wilson, [2024](#)). Moreover, the reputational risks of regulating the procurement practices poorly are noted because the illegal arms networks are occasionally reported to involve foreign actors (Are, [2025](#)). In a broader sense, Nigeria-Pakistan collaboration is still very biased in the security sphere with only slight expansion to the trade, education, or science and technology sector (Khan, [2023](#)).

As it is shown in the literature, the cooperation in defence diplomacy, military training, and counterterrorism is still the main pillar of relations between Nigeria and Pakistan. Such interactions have been win-win situations as Nigeria has been able to develop capacity and Pakistan has increased the presence of its defence diplomacy in Africa. Nevertheless, there are also scientific sources pointing at the constraints in the organization, such as risk of dependency, absence of control, and the insufficient scope of security cooperation over more economical and educational relationships. The gaps in the literature can be filled with works that would encourage the two countries to cooperate with one another in other areas apart from defence, counterinsurgency, and education. The areas in which future research should focus include the empirical evaluation of the effects of the training programs, the assessment of the procurement transparency, and the prospects of further expansion of cooperation into other spheres. Against the above discussion, this paper aims to fill the mentioned gaps in this research field to enhance discourse regarding Nigeria-Pakistan relationships.

Theoretical Framework

The discussion of the relations between Nigeria and Pakistan, in

particular, in the framework of the defense diplomacy, military training and counterterrorism cooperation should be provided with the well-elaborated theoretical background, which would reflect the dynamics of the interstate behaviour. The international relations theories offer analytical capabilities to explain why and how states enter into military alliances, strive to form strategic training deals, and collaborate with the aim of countering transnational dangers. Realism, liberal institutionalism, and constructivism are three theories that have been particularly helpful in this study.

Realism is the most applicable theory that can be used to explain defense relations between Nigeria and Pakistan. Based on the belief that the international system is anarchic, realism suggests that states pursue survival, security, and power in a competition system (Morgenthau, [1948](#); Waltz, [1979](#)). The efforts made by Nigeria to get military training, purchase weapons, and establish counterterrorism relations with Pakistan are the manifestation of a realist policy focused on enhancing the national security of the country in the context of threats like Boko Haram and ISWAP. Likewise, the activity of Pakistan in Nigeria can be characterized as a realist desire to gain influence in Africa and at the same time secure the development of its defense sector into the international arena. Realism, therefore, applies since it emphasizes that the two states perceive cooperation as a device for increasing their relative security and strategic position within political relations in the region, and on the global stage (Dunne & Schmidt, [2020](#)). Realism is the most suitable theory for this article since it believes every country's interaction with one another is to achieve their national interest. Second, realism provides explanation with no doubts on how military cooperation can exist among countries. Furthermore, realism can be used to explain security issues that existed in both countries. Out of the other theories in research, realism has proved itself as a theory that explains the significance of power and influence.

Liberal institutionalism has stressed on the importance of international institutions, interdependence, and cooperation in alleviating the state of anarchy (Keohane & Nye, [1977](#)). The counterterrorism diplomacy of Nigeria and Pakistan within the framework of multilateral organizations, including the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and bilateral defense accords, is consistent with this point of view. Through organized military educational curricula and joint security structures, the two states will show that institutions and formal structures

would lessen the uncertainty and lead to mutually advantageous results. Liberal institutionalism can thus offer useful information for institutional structures by Nigeria and Pakistan to institutionalize security cooperation and justify their defence relationships.

A new perspective of constructivism emphasizes on the importance of identities, norms and collective values in the state behaviour (Wendt, [1992](#)). As OIC members, sharing a similar colonial and post-colonial security dilemma, Nigeria and Pakistan tend to structure their defense diplomacy in terms of a discourse of South-South unity and Islamic identity. In addition to being a strategic requirement, counterterrorism cooperation is a byproduct of collective narratives regarding the fight against extremism and the enhancement of global peace. Constructivism can be applied in examining how collective identities and normative structures shape their security relationship other than the material calculations.

Although liberal institutionalism and constructivism offer useful information, realism is chosen to be the main theoretical framework of the research. The topicality of realism is based on its ability to clarify the motives behind the Nigeria-Pakistan defence relations: the need to gain security, survive and have strategic advantage in the uncertain international arena. The dependency of Nigeria on the Pakistani military personnel and arms manufacturing capabilities can help it overcome the security weaknesses, and the involvement of Pakistan widens its geopolitical scope and makes its defense sector more competitive on the world scene. Therefore, realism gives the closest answer to how defense diplomacy, military training and anti-terrorism cooperation between the two states have existed and flourished.

Methodology

The study used a qualitative research method to comprehensively delve into the underlying changing process in the relationship between Nigeria and Pakistan. It concentrated on defence diplomacy, training of the military, and counterterrorism cooperation. The qualitative research method was used since it allowed a comprehensive analysis of policies, engagement between the institutions, and the strategic motivation that cannot be easily quantified.

The research explored primarily the secondary source of data, which included scholarly journal studies, policy documents, government publications, reports from defence agencies and credible media outlets. The

materials gave an in-depth knowledge about the historical evolution, operational mechanisms and the strategic implication of the bilateral relation.

Data was extracted via document analysis, relevant literatures were targeted to explain the defence cooperation, procurement of arms, counterterrorism, and military education between both countries. Source selection was guided by relevance, reputability, and timeliness to guarantee the authenticity of the analysis. To analyse the data, the study used content analysis to explain articles selected from secondary sources. With content analysis, the researcher was able to analyse recurring themes, developmental patterns, concepts, and strategic issues related to Nigeria-Pakistan relations.

Nigeria–Pakistan Relations and Defense Diplomacy

The two major developing states of Nigeria and Pakistan, with common post-colonial paths, have developed relations that have been greatly influenced by the defense diplomacy. Defense diplomacy that is marked by military cooperation, military training, arms sales, and strategic dialogue aimed at establishing bilateral relationship and mitigating common security issues has come to be one of the pillars of their interactions (Cottey & Forster, [2004](#)). Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgency in Nigeria, and terrorism in Pakistan against its borders are areas of strategic convergence for defense cooperation.

Nigeria and Pakistan started their diplomatic relations soon upon the attainment of independence by the former country in 1960. Being two states of the Commonwealth and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), both states attained common ground through South-South collaboration and unity in multilateral arenas (Onyetube, [2025](#)). Although they have had an economic and cultural relationship, defense diplomacy has been the most stable and tactical part of the relationship.

Military training is one of the most apparent sides of Nigeria-Pakistan diplomacy in the field of defense. Military officers have also been trained in Pakistani defense establishments by the Nigerian military since the 1988s, such as the Pakistan Military Academy (Kakul) and the National Defence University in Islamabad (Okhogbe, [2025](#)). This trade fosters professional connections among military forces, increases the force of defence in Nigeria and enables Pakistan to exert influence in countries other

than South Asia. Such training programs can also be taken as a path to build confidence, whereby the two states are assured of long lasting defense connections.

The defense industry in Pakistan is also emerging especially with the Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) and Pakistani Aeronautical Complex (PAC), which manufacture small arms, ammunition, armored vehicles, and aircraft. Nigeria has acquired arms and military equipment in Pakistan to address the counterinsurgency requirements (Sulaiman, [2022](#)). As an example, in the 2010s at the height of the Nigerian war against Boko Haram, Pakistani arms were said to have been used in operations. This collaboration expands Nigeria's supplier base beyond Western options, while giving Pakistan access to African defense markets (Siddique, [2024](#)).

The Niger-Pakistan relations have been reinforced with the counterterrorism diplomacy. The two nations are experiencing ideology-based terrorism and their collaboration has even gone to intelligence sharing and joint consultations through the United Nations and OIC systems. Pakistan's extensive counterinsurgency experience is often cited as a potential resource for Nigeria's fight against Boko Haram (Khan, [2023](#)). Bilateral visits and defense discussions have allowed the two states to offer each other some lessons in counterterrorism policy, border control, and deradicalization initiatives.

Nigeria and Pakistan's defense diplomacy has strategic implications on both states. In case of Nigeria, the partnership gives it more defense suppliers who are not restricted to Western and Russian powers and this decreases the ability to be affected by political conditionalities mostly surrounding the purchasing of arms. To Pakistan, the relationship provides a platform to gain influence in Africa and enhance their argument as a trusted security ally in the Global South (Siddiq, [2017](#)). The alliance is also indicative of South-South defense solidarity, demonstrating that the developing nations have an ability to work together in solving the transnational security issues.

Nigeria-Pakistan defense diplomacy, though it is beneficial, has a challenge. The problem of accountability and transparency in the procurement of arms is still an issue in Nigeria, as the habits of corruption in military contracts have sometimes undermined trust (Ene & Wilson, [2024](#)). On top of that, foreign training and arm dependence also create the

issue of whether Nigeria can come up with its own defense production sector. On part of Pakistan, the necessity to balance the relationships with the African states, and its geopolitical interests in South Asia and Middle East might restrict the extent of further interaction. Moreover, the issue of human rights in relation to military actions in both nations has attracted the wrath of the international community in some occasions.

The relations between Nigeria and Pakistan are based on defense diplomacy and they have transformed into a strategic partnership based on the similarity of security interests and the military cooperation. Training swap, arms trade, and counterterrorism diplomacy indicate how the two countries are using defense relations to solve local and regional issues. Although there are structural issues that the partnership has to deal with, like dependency and accountability, it cannot overvalue the strategic value of the partnership. In the future, Nigeria and Pakistan might enhance the relationship through strengthening multilateral defense research, multilateralization of the counterterrorism ventures, and incorporating transparency in the defense relationships.

Nigeria–Pakistan Relations and Military Training

The bilateral relationship between Nigeria and Pakistan is based on two major developing states that share the same history of colonialism, post-independence security issues, as well as the membership of the Commonwealth and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Military training has become one of the essential aspects of defense diplomacy. Military training programs not only enhance professional capacity but also build long term institutional relationships among armed forces, thus allowing strategic coordination when it comes to issues dealing with security (Cottey & Forster, [2004](#)).

The history of Nigeria-Pakistan military training relationship relates to the early post-independence period. Following the independence of Nigeria in 1960, there were a lot of problems regarding the development of a professional and independent army. As a relatively young nation with well-established military structures based on the British traditions, Pakistan became a natural choice of a partner for Nigeria (Okhogbe, [2025](#)). Nigerian military officers have been frequent visitors to Pakistani military academies, especially the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) in Kakul and the National Defence University (NDU) in Islamabad. This exchange tradition has been

going on for decades giving birth to generations of Nigerian officers who were educated under the Pakistani tutelage.

Military drilling has been used as an instrument towards developing the defense potential of Nigeria. In Pakistan, the training is divided into different spheres, such as counterinsurgency, air force operations, naval warfare, and strategic planning of defense. In the case of Nigeria where the country struggles with the insurgencies like Boko Haram and ISWAP, the programs are insightful in areas of asymmetric warfare and counterterrorism strategies as Pakistan has garnered a vast experience over the years, in its efforts to fight the extremist groups in South Asia (Khan, [2023](#)). The latter training also presupposes that Nigerian officers can be exposed to contemporary doctrines, simulation exercises, as well as development of their leadership, and thus, elevating the professional standards of the Nigerian Armed Forces (Okhogbe, [2025](#)). This, in its turn, serves as a part of the larger national security structure of Nigeria, providing the staff with the required skills of command, operations planning, and the coordination of the services.

The military training relationship between Nigeria and Pakistan is not limited to technical capacity, but is a type of soft power and strategic diplomacy. Training also develops interpersonal relationships among the officers that will emerge at senior levels both in the two militaries and this will create long term trust in institutions (Cottey & Forster, [2004](#)). In the case of Nigeria, the relationship will allow diversity in training opportunities outside of the Western institutions, which will decrease the overdependence on the traditional partners like the United States or the United Kingdom. In the case of Pakistan, training Nigerian officers would further expand its role in Africa and create a perception that it is an effective security partner in the Global South (Siddique, [2024](#)).

Due to the emergence of violent extremism in Nigeria, especially since the beginning of the 2010s, counterterrorism training has been at the core of the Nigeria-Pakistan cooperation. The war experience of Pakistan in combating the Taliban and Al-Qaeda members and other militant groups can be used as a practical lesson for the war of Nigeria against Boko Haram (Sulaiman, [2022](#)). The intelligence collection, their use in the field of special forces, and deradicalization strategies have become part of the joint training that has enhanced the ability of Nigerians to fight the insurgency. Besides, such cooperation is consistent with the multilateral

counterterrorism system in the OIC and UN where both nations promote the combination of efforts to address the issue of violent extremism (Khan, [2023](#)). Therefore, these training exchanges reinforce the wider diplomatic cooperation between the two countries in addressing violent extremism.

Military training cooperation between Pakistan and Nigeria however, is challenged, despite its advantages. One such challenge is the uncertainty of knowledge transfer sustainability where trained officers are frequently permitted to leave command posts and leave institutional gaps in their execution. The other issue is that Nigeria's reliance on foreign training programs may also delay the development of indigenous defense training capacity. Moreover, the ethical aspects of the practices in counterterrorism activities lead to the question of human rights being abused (Siddiqi, [2017](#)).

The joint military training is one of the key components of the Nigerian-Pakistan defense diplomacy, which gives both states both strategic and operational advantages. In the case of Nigeria, it increases the professionalism in the military and provides the military with the counterinsurgency skills that are essential in dealing with internal security threats. In the case of Pakistan, it opens up new avenues into Africa, and enhances its reputation as an efficient defense partner. Sustainability and dependency issues notwithstanding, military training has still enhanced the two states, strengthened their ties and providing the two countries a long-lasting platform to expand their security relations. In the future, collaborative exercises, introducing technological elements into training, and creating training institutions in Nigeria with the help of the Pakistani military may help make sure that this cooperation can become a win-win situation.

Nigeria–Pakistan Relations and Counterterrorism Cooperation

One of the most prominent spheres of cooperation between Pakistan and Nigeria in recent decades is counterterrorism cooperation. The two nations continue to experience a perpetual security threat posed by extremists, in Nigeria by the Boko Haram and its splinter group, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), and in Pakistan by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Al-Qaeda affiliates, and other insurgencies. Nigeria and Pakistan are states in the Global South, members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United Nations (UN), and have been witnessing bilateral and multilateral approaches to fighting terrorism. Counterterrorism

cooperation is, therefore, a core of their defense diplomacy which is anchored on mutual experience of insurgency and the necessity of international cooperation (Khan, [2023](#)).

The counterterrorism issue in Nigeria and Pakistan is very similar. The states have insurgencies that exploit social-economic marginalization, lack of control of the border, and transnational extremist networks. The Boko Haram insurgency that arose in Nigeria in 2009 has brought destabilization in the Lake Chad Basin and brought enormous humanitarian disasters. Pakistan has also had decades of violent extremism especially along the border with Afghanistan where terrorist groups have undermined the state and caused major civilian and military losses (Rashid, [2012](#)). These similarities provide a high level of groundwork on the issue of cooperative security between the two nations.

The cooperation between Nigeria and Pakistan with regards to counterterrorism has adopted several shapes such as training exchange, acquisition of arms, and strategy discussions. Nigeria has used the experience of Pakistan in the fields of asymmetric warfare and counterinsurgency operations to enhance its struggle against Boko Haram and ISWAP. Moreover, Pakistan has sold Nigeria weapons and armored vehicles employed in counterterrorism operations, such as small arms (Sulaiman, [2022](#)). These interactions depict the fact that bilateral defense diplomacy has a direct connection with counterterrorism imperatives.

In addition to bilateral agreements, Nigeria and Pakistan are also working together in the multilateral forums to solve the problem of terrorism. At the UN, the two states have been in favor of resolutions demanding tougher international structures against violent extremism. Their role as OIC members implies promoting the Muslim-world reaction to terrorism, which focuses on deradicalization as well as socio-economic strategies, in addition to military action (Khan, [2023](#)). At the African Union (AU) level, Pakistan has shown interest in contributing to African peace and security efforts, which will be in line with the leadership of Nigeria at the African continent. This multilateral diplomacy puts the Nigeria-Pakistan counterterrorism partnership in broader global and regional security frameworks.

Another less evident yet important aspect of cooperation is intelligence sharing and transfer of knowledge. Nigeria and Pakistan have discussed

cooperation on counter-radicalization approaches in broader defense dialogues (Siddique, [2024](#)). Research and development have been enabled by joint seminars and defense dialogues, and has been able to share best practices in the form of community-based deradicalization approaches and border control measures. This version of knowledge diplomacy points more to the fact that counterterrorism cooperation does not only concern with weapons and training, but also extends to the sphere of strategic thinking.

Nigeria can utilize Pakistan's resources with its vast experience of combat, its military training which is cost-effective, and its cheap defense technology. In the case of Pakistan, an alliance with Nigeria increases the diplomatic presence of the country in Africa and improves the image of a partner in combating terrorism. It offers both states a chance to legitimize themselves in a global arena, as they display themselves as active agents in enhancing global security, and at the same time pursue national interests (Siddiqi, [2017](#)).

Challenges still exist in spite of these advantages. Nigeria is grappling with systemic corruption, and lack of accountability in the defence sector, which offsets the efficient deployment of external aid (Ene & Wilson, [2024](#)). The ethical issues concerning the doctrines shared are human rights issues, especially on military activities against civilian populations in both Nigeria and Pakistan (Human Rights Watch, [2021](#)). In addition, there is the risk of dependence on external expertise leading to Nigeria not developing indigenous counterterrorism capacity. In the case of Pakistan, the scope of cooperation may be limited due to the necessity to balance its promises in Africa with its concerns in South Asia at the moment.

Nigeria-Pakistan counterterrorism cooperation can be seen as an example of two Global South countries, dealing with a similar threat of extremists using defense diplomacy as a way to enhance their security. Intelligence sharing, arms trade, multilateral diplomacy, coupled with training, collectively have enabled the two countries to develop a partnership that helps in addressing domestic weaknesses and project their influence in the global arena. The strategic significance of South-South cooperation in counterterrorism is achieved by the alliance even though there are still problems of accountability, dependency, and human rights. In order to remain cooperative, more transparency, investment in collaboration in counterterrorism, and integration of community-based methodologies to bilateral collaboration may be useful to make this partnership more

sustainable.

Conclusion

Nigeria-Pakistan relations have transformed into a practical collaboration that is mainly influenced by the similarities on security issues especially in combating terrorism and violent extremism. Both nations have issues of insurgencies that pose threat to internal stability, and this has provided the grounds for their cooperation in counterterrorism. The military training, the acquisition of arms, the exchange of intelligence, and the participation in multilateral forums like the UN, the OIC, among others, have enabled the two states to employ defense diplomacy as a tool of enhancing national and collective security. The relationship has already delivered concrete fruits: Nigeria has received access to affordable training, counterinsurgency skills and affordable defense technology and Pakistan has increased its geopolitical presence within Africa and strengthened its position as a reliable security partner within the Global South. Things, however, have not been without challenges, in terms of Nigeria being over-dependent on foreign training, lack of accountability in its defense sector, and human rights issues on how counterterrorism activities are conducted. In the case of Pakistan, rivalry over South Asia can restrain the degree of its involvement in Africa. Lastly, counterterrorism cooperation between Nigeria and Pakistan is the demonstration of the potential of South-South relationships in solving global security issues. In order to make this partnership more sustainable, both states need to focus on more transparency, genuine transfer of technology, and incorporation of a community-focused approach to counterterrorism. This would not only enhance the bilateral relationship between the two but would also add value to the peace and stability in the region, as well as around the globally.

Recommendations

The creation of permanent joint defense commissions would help in the periodical high-level dialogue of mutual security issues such as counterterrorism policies and regional security. These commissions could formalize discussions similar to the one held during the April 2025 visit of Pakistan's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, to Nigeria. During the visit, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to defense cooperation and agreed to deepen collaboration on counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, and military training. A standing

commission would ensure such high-level exchanges translate into sustained, structured cooperation rather than one-off diplomatic gestures. Institutionalization might also involve yearly summits, on similar models of cooperation with other countries, where the ongoing development and flexibility to new emerging threats such as the Boko Haram and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) are guaranteed.

Nigeria and Pakistan ought to increase the bilateral military training programmes to create professional capacity and interoperability of its militaries. Continuing the traditional history of training interchanges, Nigeria and Pakistan ought to intensify the course to cover advanced courses in asymmetric warfare, drone missions, and exercises. By 2025 more than 2,000 members of the Nigerian military have already been taught in Pakistani schools, including the Pakistan Military Academy and National Defence University, assisting in Nigeria's counterinsurgency against Boko Haram and ISWAP. Recent partnerships, such as the recent (September 2025) efforts between the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) and Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on procurement and training, offer a base to grow. As an interoperability measure, joint counterterrorism exercises, like the 2025 bilateral exercises between Pakistan, Morocco, and Kazakhstan, might be added to Special Forces operations, and an increase in the number of Nigerian trainees up to 500 annually could help fill the capacity gaps in urban warfare and intelligence gathering.

To fight terrorism, insurgency and trans-national security threats, Nigeria and Pakistan need to strengthen the mechanisms of intelligence sharing. Intelligence cooperation on an enhanced level is vital considering the similarities in experience with ideologically led insurgencies. In 2025, the bilateral discussions focused on intelligence sharing when it comes to border security and counterterrorism where Pakistan commended Nigeria's actions in fighting terrorism, and reinforced the pursuit of greater relations between the two countries. It may include the creation of safe digital spaces through which real-time information can be exchanged on the extremist networks based on the 2025 National Policy on Violent Extremism (NPVE) in Pakistan, which aims at deradicalization based on intelligence and threat levels. To alleviate threats such as transnational arms, traffic, the protocols must encompass the joint monitoring of porous borders in Lake Chad Basin and Afghanistan border of Pakistan that would help reduce the cases of insurgency by the joint cooperation of the two countries that have a long

history of collaboration in counterterrorism pursuits.

Nigeria and Pakistan need to enhance technology transfer agreements in defence industries to facilitate self-reliance and innovations. In order to make Nigeria less reliant on foreign-made weapons, the agreements must focus on transfers of technologies in the form of joint ventures, including development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), munitions, and missiles. The Global Industrial and Defence Solutions (GIDS) delegation of Pakistan paid a visit to the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria in September 2025 to discuss such partnerships, following a memorandum in May 2024 between Proforce Intelligence Systems and Pakistan on technology swaps. This is in line with the reforms of the Defence Industries Corporation Act of 2023 in Nigeria and might involve licensing of local assembling of Pakistani systems such as the JF-17 aircraft, with which Nigeria purchased three units in a 184 million sale. In the year 2027, localized investments may focus on 30 percent made-in-Pakistan-based defense equipment, enabling innovation and creating employment as well as increasing the level of exports that Pakistan makes to Africa.

Nigeria and Pakistan ought to seek multilateral security alliances through institutions such as UN and OIC to integrate the global counterterrorism diplomacy. Through their affiliations in the United Nations (UN) and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the two nations ought to champion the joint resolutions towards counterterrorism financing, and deradicalization. Multilateral initiatives like the OIC discussions on the problem of extremism are the complement of bilateral initiatives and may be extended to the Africa Union (AU) initiatives with Nigeria in the lead and Pakistan offering expertise in peacekeeping. This would increase their solidarity as Global South, which may result in finding international funding of their cooperative projects and making Islamophobia and development inequities their common priority.

Author Contribution

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Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

Data supporting the findings of this study will be made available by the corresponding author upon request.

Funding Details

No funding has been received for this research.

Generative AI Disclosure Statement

The authors did not use any type of generative artificial intelligence software for this research.

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