

FROM INSURGENCY TO CYBERCRIME: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE EVOLUTION OF DIGITAL THREATS IN NIGERIA'S SECURITY LANDSCAPE

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Abstract

Nigeria's security landscape has shifted markedly since the return to democratic governance in 1999, moving from insurgency-driven violence to increasingly sophisticated cyber-enabled threats. Early security challenges centred on communal conflict, militancy and the rise of Boko Haram, but contemporary threats are dominated by technologically mediated crimes such as phishing, identity theft, ransomware attacks and digital financial fraud. This study employed a systematic review methodology involving the analysis of peer-reviewed literature, institutional reports, and policy documents published between 1999 and 2026 to examine this transition and identify the operational characteristics of modern cyber threats alongside Nigeria's evolving governance response. The findings show that insurgent violence peaked between 2013 and 2014 before declining, while cyber-enabled offences increased rapidly from 2017 onwards, fuelled by expanded internet penetration, widespread mobile technology use and weak regulatory enforcement. Despite recent legislative reforms, including the 2024 amendment of the Cybercrime Act, the review identifies persistent gaps in institutional coordination, technical capacity and digital forensics capability. The study concludes that Nigeria has entered a hybrid security environment in which physical and digital threats intersect, and emphasises the need for integrated national security strategies that strengthen cyber governance, enhance institutional capacity and address emerging risks within the evolving digital landscape.

Keywords: cybercrime, security threats, systematic review, digital security, insurgency, cybercrime