



## Terrorism and civil war nexus: How terrorist tactics help or hinder insurgencies in Nigeria

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**Recommended Citation:** Yange, E. (2026). *Terrorism and civil war nexus: How terrorist tactics help or hinder insurgencies in Nigeria*. African Quarterly Social Science Review, 3(3), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.51867/AQSSR.3.3.31>

### ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, terrorism and insurgency reflect integrated security issues. During internal conflicts, insurgents use tactics aimed at the attainment of political, religious or ideological ends. This study investigates the terrorism–civil war relationship in terms of the immediate operational gains and the enduring strategic costs for Nigeria. Strategic Logic of Terrorism Theory was used to guide the study. Quantitative method was adopted in the study for data collection and analyses. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select information-rich and relevant materials that directly addressed the objectives of the study. Data collection was based on documentary review, where relevant secondary materials were systematically gathered from academic databases, libraries, and credible online sources. This study discovered that various tactics were deployed to create terror and despondency among civilians and the government, including the use of suicide bombing and armed raiding of villages, as well as Improvised Explosive Devices [IEDs], attacks on key infrastructures, kidnappings for ransom, and psychological warfare and propaganda. It was established in the study that the use of terrorism in insurgency provides actors of the latter with immediate strategic gains; however, in the context of civil wars, the tactic of terrorism undermines the sustainability of the insurgency. The study, hence, suggests the need for the Nigerian government to build a unified national security database to provide a platform that consolidates intelligence across the military, police, Immigration Service, DSS, and local authorities. This unified approach should improve the country's readiness to respond to the challenges posed by insurgents.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Civil War, Insurgency, Nigeria, Terrorist Tactics, Terrorism

### I. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism and civil war have a multifaceted relationship. During insurgency, groups may employ terrorism to fulfill their civil, religious, or ideology-based wars. Nigeria is a fitting example of this relationship, as evidenced by the growth of Islamist insurgencies, like Boko Haram. Here, the definitions of terrorism and civil war are flexible. Boko Haram is an Islamist organization which uses tactics of mass murder, suicide bombings, and a range of violent activity to turn the focus of Boko Haram's war and activities of civil unrest on attacks of infrastructure. Other tactics may be considered a strategy; an understanding of the strategy may ultimately nullify the tactics (Ugwuoke et al., 2022).

Terrorist tactics can benefit insurgent groups by publicizing insurgents, terrorizing citizens and military personnel, and undermining state functions. Boko Haram implements asymmetrical warfare in the form of sudden attacks on civilians, and manipulates the defensive position of the state to further inhibit the state's ability to carry out developmental and governance functions (Chidozie et al. 2024). The resultant perception of chaos from terrorist acts generates fear in a population and undermines the public's confidence in a state's capacity to provide security. This contributes to recruitment and support for the insurgent group; insurgents can also further expand their territorial control and governance functions (Bawa, 2017).

Despite the variety of strategies, most of them have an adverse impact on insurgency. First, the indiscriminate use of violence often causes alienation of most civilian populations, on whose support many of the insurgent groups rely. Should most civilians become the victims of bombings, kidnappings, or mass killings, they are more likely to join efforts to resist the insurgents, support the government forces, or favor the negotiated Solutions. Second, the manifestation of terrorism is likely to trigger an adverse tightening of the state and international social responses. These will result in harsher counter-insurgency operations, an increase in external support for security, and a possible diminishing of the legitimacy of the insurgents, even among most sympathizers (Ugwuoke et al, 2022). In many cases, these dynamics may work against many of the insurgents' expectations.

In Nigeria, the intersection of terrorism and insurgency creates opportunities, as well as challenges for Boko Haram, various bandit groups, and many splinter factions. In the Borno region, the so-called insurgency economy allows the mixing of terrorist tactics with economic deprivation, a limited and weak state, porous borders, and organized crime networks that intersect with the community. (Okoli, 2021; Unachukwu et al., 2023). Terrorist acts can disrupt farming and local economies, and terrorist acts can disrupt schooling and trade; however, the resources gained from extortion,



kidnapping for ransom and looting can provide resources for the continuing insurgency. Although the same tactic can be used to gain resources, it can also undermine a community through the humanitarian cost, loss of external support, and increase the militarization of the state.

Whether the use of terrorist tactics in an insurgency is helpful or harmful is debatable. Careful and timely use of selective and targeted tactics may strengthen the insurgency, whereas indiscriminate and large scale tactics may foster a negative response. When insurgents combine other strategies and terrorist tactics, such as social service provision and governance in the areas of political control, the resultant effects are likely to endure. In Nigeria, the groups that promote relatively community-based strategies, such as reducing harm to civilians, or winning the hearts and minds of the social populace, may encourage more sustainable support in comparison to the groups that depend on terror (Ugwuoke et al., 2022).

In the remaining sections, this paper examines the Nigerian context to analyze how the application of different terrorist methods by insurgents has resulted in varying outcomes. The paper seeks to answer the following: in what circumstances do terrorist methods employed by groups augment the strength of the group, and in what circumstances do those methods employed by groups detract from the strength of the group? The aim of the paper is to contribute to the scholarly arguments on insurgencies and terrorism while providing practical recommendations on how to deal with the insurgency crisis in Nigeria. To achieve this, the following research questions were directed to assist the study:

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's security issues can be attributed to violent extremist groups and insurgents like Boko Haram and ISWAP and the activities they engaged in. These groups have utilized violence in all of its forms such as terrorism and abductions, as well as targeted attacks on infrastructure to achieve their ideological, political, and religious goals. There are scholars that believe the use of violence has the potential to backfire on the group and can create a lack of public support and legitimacy. On the other hand, there are others that believe it may have a positive effect and increase the visibility of the group, widen public support, and stretch the capabilities of the state. The combination of terrorism and civil unrest has caused a great deal of discussion among scholars in the Nigerian context to determine the impact and whether these tactics would actually help consolidate the insurgency or enhance its operational reach and flexibility and sustain the conflict in the long run.

The negative impacts of terrorism are widespread both at the level of the community, and on a national and international level. Displacement of communities, disrupted trade, and the loss of lives are all the results of protracted terrorism. Terrorism creates conflict and demands that the Nigerian government respond with greater military force. Despite the counter-terrorism efforts of the Nigerian government, fear and concern about the worsening the insecurity situation in Nigeria have spread beyond the borders of the country, and greater concern continues to spread about the potential long-term effects of terrorism on national security and the strategic movements of insurgent groups. Even though the means employed by terrorism may achieve short-term effects of fear and disruption, and even control of a territory, it may have long-term effects of a political and social nature. In the end, this may destabilize and limit the reach of the insurgent groups.

In Nigeria, terrorist activities and related insurgencies have received the most attention from researchers. This is because they focus on the nature, causes, and response to such phenomena. However, there has been little effort to assess the relationship between the violence perpetrated and the conscious (or subconscious) aims of the actors (Onuoha, 2014; Ewi & Salifu, 2017). Some researchers assess the impact of terrorism on the public's support for government and how terrorism affects the duration of a conflict. However, little has been done to examine how such violence affects the persistence and resilience of the terrorist group within a broader context of civil unrest/insurgency (Zenn, 2020). Therefore, this research aims to determine, within the Nigerian context, how the deliberate use of violence and terrorism can be viewed as a successful strategy. The research also aims to provide a glimpse of the likely impact and strategy of such violence on the dynamics of conflict in Nigeria, considering the possible short-term and long-term effects.

A good portion of studies in Nigeria has focused on causes of terrorism and counter-terrorism strategies (Onuoha, 2014; Ewi & Salifu, 2017). However, these studies do not treat terrorism tactics and their success as a subject of study. Several authors have analyzed support for terrorism and tactics in some of the studies, the emphasis has been on the strength and sustainability of terrorist groups in civil conflicts (Zenn, 2020). Following the above, this study, aims at examining whether terrorism tactics are helpful to insurgencies in Nigeria, in the context of positive support for terrorism and long term consequences of terrorism.

### 1.2 Research Questions

- i. What institutional, technical, and political barriers hinder the successful implementation of predictive analytics for combating terrorism and insurgent violence in Nigeria?
- ii. How can predictive analytics be effectively applied to terrorism-related data in Nigeria to flag potential risks such as impending attacks, insurgent funding flows, and patterns of civilian targeting?



## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

#### 2.1.1 Strategic Logic of Terrorism Theory

Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter introduced The Strategic Logic of Terrorism Theory to the world in 2006. Rationality is the base assumption. With this theory, Kydd and Walter believe terrorist groups or insurgencies are rational political actors. Terror groups do not need to act out for strategic ends because of illogical hatred for the world or religious belief extremism. This theory assumes that these groups can price the political world and choose their actions among bomb, kidnapping, or assassination. This theory believes that terrorism is a costly signal where terrorism sent the message of strength, resolve, or capability to many. These messages are sent to a variety of groups including the state, a competing group, and a potential ally in the world. The theory assumes these groups are rational in that the insurgencies will continue to exist and thrive to the extent that the state does not adjust to the threats or if the people do not (to some degree) withdraw their support from the insurgency. It is believed that terrorist acts signal strength to aid the insurgency but also provoke the state to overreact which in turn helps to support the terrorist insurgency and movement because it draws in sympathizers (Pape, 2003; Crenshaw, 2011).

A major criticism of the Strategic Logic of Terrorism Theory is that the framework is believed to overvalue the rationality and consistency of strategies of terrorist and insurgent groups. The situation is different for Nigeria and many real-world conflicts, where the violent actors are characteristically fragmented and may be driven by a mixture of religious motives, ideologies, criminal incentives, and personal interests, and many of these do not converge to a rational strategy. The theory also tends to downplay emotions including trauma and desperation that influence violent groups' decisions to engage in attacks that may even counter their long-term goals for the society.

Furthermore, some of the critics say that the theory over assumes that the audience, whether it be the government or the civilians, interprets violent signals the same. The central problem with this theory is that the reaction mostly depends on culture, media interpretation, or some history of some conflicts.

This theory is relevant with the nexus of Terrorism and Civil Wars in Nigeria in relation to the understanding of how the use of terrorist methods by insurgents can alter the course of Civil Wars. This theory therefore, allows to see the dual nature of terrorism within a community, which simultaneously represents a potential force-multiplier that may further undermine the state's authority and a liability which may alienate the community and may trigger increased military interventions and therefore offers an explanation why some of the insurgencies are successful in Nigeria's complex situation, while other are not.

#### 2.1.2 Terrorism

Terrorism refers to politicized violence aimed at creating a culture of fear in order to coerce a government or society to acquiesce to demands stemming from an ideology, a politicized or religious worldview or from a strategic imperative. Terrorism willingly thrives in places with grievances stemming from marginalization, poverty, unresponsiveness of the government, the poor state of human rights, or a combination of all. Boko Haram, for instance, does not just conduct terrorist warfare in Nigeria. Boko Haram conducts terrorist warfare to symbolically demonstrate to the world that it has the capacity to challenge state authority and demonstrates to the Nigerian state its vision of order that it seeks to impose (Hoffman, 2017). The multiple bombings that were conducted in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2011, which included the bombing of the World United Nations Headquarters, bombing of other parks, and places of worship, were demonstrations of Boko Haram attempting to show its global capability as well as local defiance (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012).

The conventional view is that terrorism stems from non-state armed groups trying to counterbalance the conventional military advantage that state actors have. Without relying on conventional military capacity, non-state armed groups can execute a variety of operations and maintain their influence. This is done through suicide bombings, IEDs, and kidnappings, etc. Boko Haram and ISWAP, through asymmetric methods, aim to instill a sense of fear and a challenge to state authority and disrupt the public order, and have targeted both state security and civilians in Nigeria. A well-known example of this was the 2014 attack on the Giwa Barracks in Maiduguri, where the breaching of the detention facilities increased the insecurity of the area (Zenn, 2020).

The use of terrorism creates psychological trauma and disrupts the daily lives of millions of civilians by exploiting the fact that the majority of terrorist acts are aimed at civilians. For instance, collective abductions, such as the case of the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls in Nigeria in 2014, are used as a means of coercion and bargaining (Audu et al., 2023). Although this tactic may be effective in attaining a temporary media spotlight, the ensuing long-term adverse effects may ultimately alienate terrorist groups from the populations they are trying to reach.



### 2.1.3 Civil War

Civil wars are conflicts occurring within defined political boundaries and amongst organized groups. Identity, political exclusion, and resource competition are often the basis for civil wars. Boko Haram's legitimacy crisis against the Nigerian state and Boko Haram's ambitions to establish an Islamic caliphate threatens state order not only in the North East but in other regions of Nigeria's civil war is challenged (Campbell, 2018).

Civil wars usually have an ethnic or religious dimension to them. Boko Haram, as an example, justifies its violent methods within a religious framework by saying it is resisting the imposition of Western values on the Nigerian state (Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012). There are similarities with the Syrian civil war where the sectarian Shi'a and Sunni division of Islam further complicated the conflict. Civil wars are unique in that they attract foreign involvement, be it peacekeeping or proxy war. Examples of this are Nigeria's war against Boko Haram which has received the backing of regional coalitions such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) composed of Chad, Cameroon and Niger and similar examples of civil wars such as the al-Shabaab war in Somalia which involved the African Union forces (Williams, 2018).

### 2.1.4 Tactics

In the literature, irregular warfare is a technique used by armed groups to employ mobility in order to execute unconventional warfare against armed forces with superior manpower. Boko Haram is known to have executed attacks against military personnel and security operations in parts of Borno State, which disrupts state security operations and affects the wider conflict. Studies documenting the military engagements of the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War describe the same type of irregular warfare.

Stanton (2019) observed that insurgent movements can attack a myriad of structures, be they governance, social, or community structures, which can all have a negative effect on social order. Previous research has demonstrated that Boko Haram has attacked community and religious leaders who oppose its aims. Studies of the Colombian civil conflict have analyzed that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) engage in a similar phenomenon to disrupt the community.

Violence and its many forms continue to be a vital component of analysis in modern warfare. The literature on contemporary conflicts asserts that the use of communication and the formation of information strategies can shape, and are vital to, public discourse and perceptions of legitimacy. The Islamic State West Africa Province has been known to use media to cite and justify its operations and to announce its dominion on the conflict-affected region (Eneanya, 2015). This and other forms of communication have been analyzed in studies which assert that the Taliban have controlled perceptions in the realm of both domestic and international viewpoints during various phases of armed conflict.

**Table 1**

*Comparative Table of Key Terrorist Tactics in Nigeria, Showing How They Tend to Help or Hinder Insurgencies in the Short Term and Long Term*

Terrorist Tactic	Short-Term Effect on Insurgency	Long-Term Effect on Insurgency
Suicide Bombings	Creates fear, attracts media attention, disrupts urban life, signals capability despite military pressure.	Alienates civilian population, reduces community support.
Kidnapping for Ransom	Generates substantial funds, pressures government, spreads fear in education and business sectors.	Overuse erodes legitimacy, angers communities, leads to tighter security and ransom-disruption policies.
Armed Raids on Villages	Secures resources (food, livestock), asserts territorial dominance, punishes communities resisting insurgents.	Causes mass displacement, undermines popular support, triggers increases global and national counter-terror response, humanitarian interventions and military offensives.
Targeted Assassinations	Eliminates key state collaborators, deters cooperation with authorities, weakens local governance.	May erode state structures temporarily, but risks backlash when community leaders or respected figures are killed.
Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)	Hinders military mobility, inflicts casualties at low cost, boosts insurgent morale.	Counter-IED training and technology reduce effectiveness; can alienate locals when civilians are harmed.
Attacks on Critical Infrastructure	Weakens state service delivery, isolates communities, creates reliance on insurgents for governance.	Long-term disruption fosters resentment, especially when schools, hospitals, and markets are destroyed, undermining insurgent legitimacy.
Propaganda & Psychological Warfare	Boosts recruitment, spreads fear beyond immediate battlefield, magnifies impact of attacks.	Counter-narratives and community resilience reduce effectiveness; reliance on propaganda without tangible governance can expose weakness.

Source: (Zenn, 2020).



The table depicts how the employment of terrorist tactics vis-à-vis the Nigerian Conflict may produce different, consequential effects with respect to the insurgent epitome over different spans of time. Within the short span of time, the employment of suicide attacks, abduction – for either financial or strategic reasons – attacks on communities, armed with IEDs, attacks on critical/integral infrastructure, along with some form of communication or information, have all been linked with the generation of insecurity. They also appear to affect the public and the responses of the state. Based on what the literature has documented, these tactics will disrupt the social order and governance of society while impinging on the larger war.

These activities enable insurgents to undermine the social order and the authority of the state, and help insurgents to obtain the resources needed to sustain their activities. For example, when a terrorist conducts a suicide bombing, fear is generated, which is a short-term effect, and a long-term effect is the increase in counter-terrorism efforts at the national and global levels.

The short term effects of kidnapping include the generation of income and the long term effects result in ransom-disruption policies and more stringent security measures. Armed raids on villages result in the acquisition of resources (food, livestock) in the short term, and the long term effects result in heightened national and international responses to counter-terrorism.

During targeted assassinations, they inflict casualties at low cost, boosts insurgent morale which serves as the short term effects, while the long time effect leads to risks backlash when community leaders or respected figures are killed.

Research indicates that, in the short-term, the use of IEDs may lead to some operational effect for the insurgents. This is primarily due to their capability to cause disruption and an appearance of continuous activity by the insurgents that consumes relatively fewer resources. However, in the long-term, this kind of violence is likely to result in an increased security response, a loss of popular support, and other social and political effects which are likely to restrict the long-term viability and goals of the insurgent movements.

When there are attacks on critical infrastructure, it has an isolative effect on communities and creates a reliance on insurgents for governance, which contributes to the short-term impact. In the long-term, the disruption creates resentment in the community and undermines the legitimacy of insurgents, especially when schools, hospitals, and other community markets are destroyed.

In the case of propaganda and psychological warfare, there is an integration of fear beyond the immediate battlefield that strengthens the short-term effects of an attack, while the long-term effects weaken its effectiveness. Ultimately, a reliance on propaganda and an absence of real governance creates exposure of a state's vulnerability.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

### 2.2.1 Institutional, Technical, and Political Barriers to Predictive Analytics in Counterterrorism

Some studies have pointed out the problems associated with the use of predictive analytics in counter-terrorism operations within the Nigeria context. Lack of well-defined institutional structures has remained a serious problem. This includes the issues of collaboration between competitor agencies, the absence of a well-defined institutional structure for the sharing of data, and an inadequate institutional framework for intelligence operations (Agbibo, 2022, Onuoha, 2014). These challenges often lead to a lack of coordinated security and data-driven responses to security challenges.

There are still many challenges that limit security operations in Nigeria. Some of the existing studies identify limitations in the management systems and the processing capacities of security agencies, as well as issues in the development of response capacities to security threats that are based on intelligence (Awotayo et al, 2023). Lack of technological systems for the processing of data in real-time and systems based on machine learning create additional barriers for the use of analytics in the prediction of terrorism.

Buba (2021) study barriers to the use of predictive analytics in counterterrorism and specified lack of political will, lack of trust between security agencies and the misuse of data and intelligence, as well as fears of political interference in security functions, as barriers to objective analysis of data and the functioning of early warning systems. They concluded that the combination of these institutional, technical and political barriers, considerably limits the use of predictive analytics in counter terrorism and counter insurgency in Nigeria.

### 2.2.2 Application of Predictive Analytics in Terrorism Risk Detection and Prevention

Some empirical evidence indicates that, when properly implemented, predictive analytics can improve counter-terrorism strategies. Throughout the world, analytical research has demonstrated the utility of predictive analytics in recognizing patterns in extremist behavior, forecasting where attacks may occur, and following the money that supports terrorist organizations (Chen et al., 2004).

In the Nigerian context, research has indicated that predictive analytics can identify the onset of insurgency through the use of terrorism-related data, communication grooves, event reports, and financial transactions (Odumesi, 2014). One example is that through data mining and machine learning techniques, operational and funding patterns of insurgent groups can be recognized and the evolution of insurgent funding and operational techniques predicted.



Through the analysis of historical attack data and the data trends of particular geographies, predictive models can be beneficial in identifying target locations. Evidence further shows that the success of these systems will be impacted positively by quality data, improved multi-agency collaboration, and increased capability of the technology (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021). In the cases of these factors, the suitability of predictive analytics in counterterrorism will be restricted.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study utilized a mixed method in order to better understand the ways that terrorism impacts the phenomenon of insurgency in Nigeria by making a comparison between the immediate benefits of terrorism and the eventual costs associated with such tactics. The researchers were of the opinion that the phenomenon of terrorism and insurgency contains many complex social and political issues, as well as some economic and security-related issues, that cannot be fully explored using a single methodological framework. For this reason, a mixed methodological approach was utilized.

The quantitative framework of the study enabled the researcher to analyze and measure the use of terrorism and its resultant impact on the insurgency phenomenon in Nigeria, while the qualitative framework of the study enabled the researcher to analyze the driving forces of terrorism and insurgency, the modus operandi of terrorism, and its possible repercussions on the phenomenon of insurgency. For this purpose, qualitative data were collected from a number of secondary sources (e.g. journal articles, government reports, newspaper articles, security-related publications, and other relevant scholarly literature on the phenomenon of terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria). The use of qualitative and quantitative approaches enabled the researcher to cross-check the results, thus enhancing the validity and reliability of the study.

#### 3.2 Study Area

This study was conducted in Nigeria's North-East geopolitical zone, which remains the most violence-prone zone in Nigeria resulting from terrorism. The persistent violence in this zone is caused by militant insurgents, most notably, Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). The North-East comprises the states of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Gombe, Bauchi, and Taraba. The states of the North-East zone of Nigeria have all witnessed varying degrees of terrorist attacks leading to the displacement of persons, destruction of infrastructure, and the resultant humanitarian crises of the terrorist group.

#### 3.3 Target Population

The target population of the study covers the individuals and institutions that have the knowledge concerning the terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria. This consists of the personnel of the security forces, some government officials, and other members of the communities that have been affected by the incidents of terrorism and insurgency, as well as the humanitarian workers, some policy analysts, and academic researchers. They have all been covered as a result of the wide-ranging impact of the insecurity in Nigeria. The study opted for purposive sampling technique in selecting the secondary sources of data. The purposive sampling technique was considered applicable, because it allow the researcher to deliberately select the appropriate documents relevant to the study.

#### 3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The qualitative section of the study adopted purposive sampling as a technique. This sampling method was used to select relevant documents, as well as reports and expert materials that are specific to terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria. The quality and the depth of the terrorism and insurgency-related documents and reports were the major guiding factors. The sampling procedure was different for the quantitative section, where credible and relevant security incident reports and conflict datasets available in institutional databases were accessed.

#### 3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

For the study, the primary instrument for data collection was the review of available documents. This included a detailed investigation of secondary sources including but not limited to peer reviewed articles, government documents, security bulletins, and conflict databases.

This method involved extracting information on terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria from relevant documents, and assessing their credibility and pertinence. The entire group of individuals or materials relevant to the study from which the sample was drawn.



### 3.6 Data Analysis

The data was subjected to both qualitative and quantitative analysis. For quantitative data, the analysis was based on descriptive statistics and included the use of tables and graphs to present incidents of terrorism.

The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic content analysis by identifying and interpreting the themes of security issues, humanitarian effects, and disruptions in both the political and economic spheres. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis provided a holistic interpretation of the ways in which terrorism methods have hampered insurgency in Nigeria.

### 3.7 Ethical Consideration

The study sought to maintain the highest ethical standards in the analysis of the secondary data. In order to maintain the reliability and accuracy of the data, all the information sources were cited to avoid plagiarism.

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

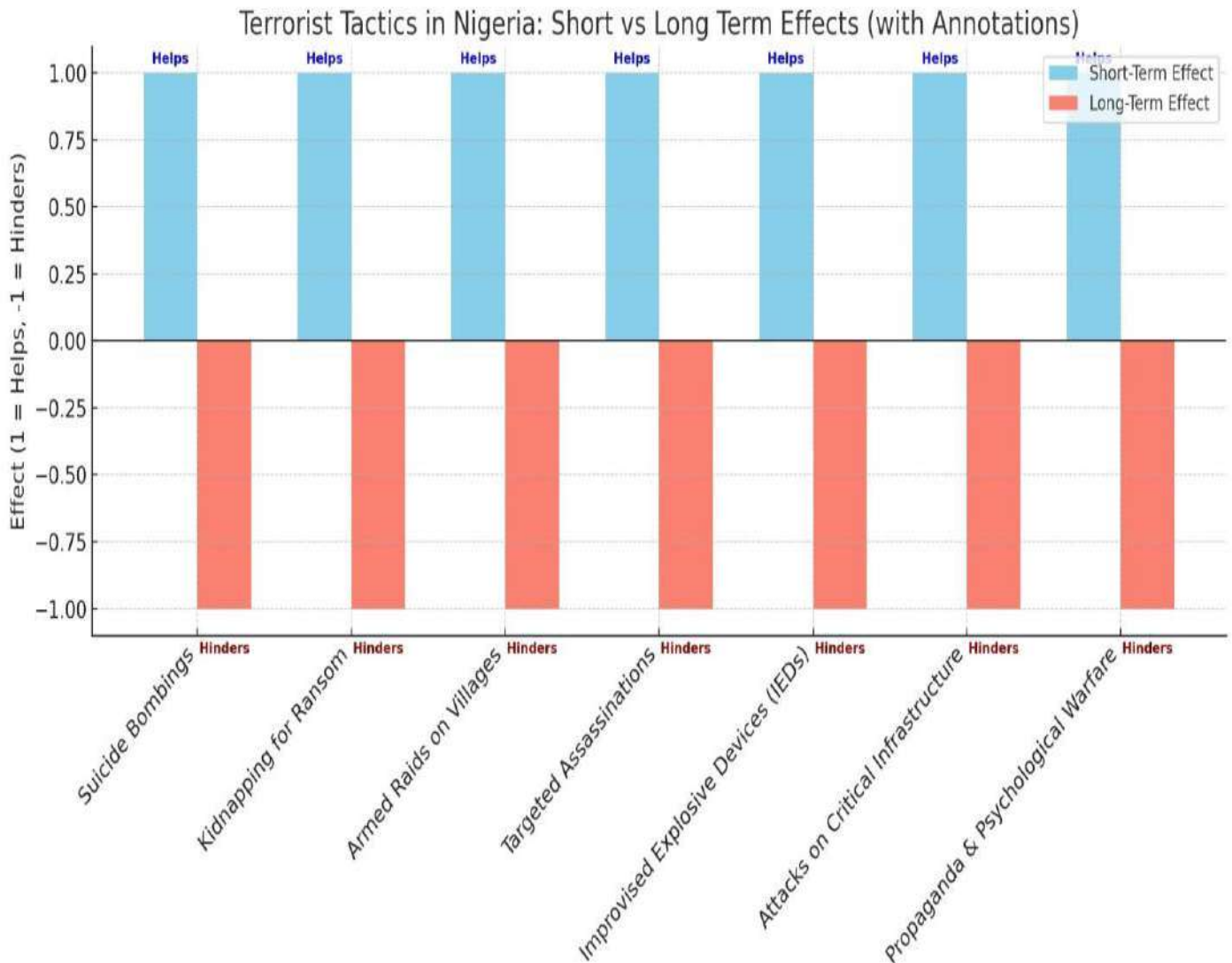
### 4.1 Findings

**Table 2**

*Terrorist Tactics in Nigeria*

Terrorist Tactic	Short-Term Effect	Axis Value	Keywords (Short-Term)	Long-Term Effect	Axis Value	Keywords (Long-Term)
Suicide Bombings	Helps	+1	Fear, Media	Hinders	-1	Alienation, Crackdown
Kidnapping for Ransom	Helps	+1	Funds, Pressure	Hinders	-1	Loss of Legitimacy
Armed Raids on Villages	Helps	+1	Resources, Control	Hinders	-1	Displacement, Backlash
Targeted Assassinations	Helps	+1	Eliminate Leaders	Hinders	-1	Community Resentment
Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)	Helps	+1	Block Military	Hinders	-1	Civilian Harm
Attacks on Critical Infrastructure	Helps	+1	Weaken State	Hinders	-1	Resentment, Isolation
Propaganda & Psychological Warfare	Helps	+1	Recruit, Fear	Hinders	-1	Counter-Narratives

**Source:** (Audu et al, 2023)



**Figure 1**  
 Showing Terrorist Tactics in Nigeria (Short vs. Long-Term Effects)

**Y-Axis:** Effect (Helps = ↑, Hinders = ↓)

**X-Axis:** Tactics (7 listed: Suicide Bombings, Kidnapping for Ransom, Armed Raids, Targeted Assassinations, IEDs, Infrastructure Attacks, Propaganda).

**Bars:**

Light Blue = Short-Term Effect (all pointing up)

Red = Long-Term Effect (all pointing down)

**Keywords (annotations on bars):**

Suicide Bombings → *Fear, Media* (short term) vs. *Alienation, Crackdown* (long term)

Kidnapping → *Funds, Pressure* vs. *Loss of Legitimacy*

Armed Raids → *Resources, Control* vs. *Displacement, Backlash*

Assassinations → *Eliminate Leaders* vs. *Community Resentment*

IEDs → *Block Military* vs. *Civilian Harm*

Infrastructure Attacks → *Weaken State* vs. *Resentment, Isolation*

Propaganda → *Recruit, Fear* vs. *Counter-Narratives*

The chart representing the figure 1 illustrates the dual impact of insurgent and terrorist tactics by comparing their short-term advantages with their long-term consequences. Which indicate Y-Axis: Effect (Helps = ↑, Hinders = ↓) X-Axis: Tactics (7 listed: Suicide Bombings, Kidnapping for Ransom, Armed Raids, Targeted Assassinations, IEDs, Infrastructure Attacks, Propaganda such as suicide bombings, kidnappings for ransom, and armed raids on villages,



Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), attack on critical infrastructure, propaganda psychological welfare) From the chart, this suggests the tactics may appear successful in the immediate short term, but they ultimately undermine insurgent sustainability by eroding legitimacy and encouraging stronger counter-insurgency actions from the state and affected populations in the long term .

#### 4.2 Discussion

The results suggest that, in Nigeria, the tactics employed by terrorists and insurgents produce contradictory strategic outcomes. In the short term, tactical moves such as suicide bombings, armed raids, and kidnappings for ransom, lead to operational successes. However, there are strategic losses to the community and society in the long term. Initially, armed raids and the rest (of the tactics), help to generate fear, support and resources to the group, and erode the authority of the state.

These findings are in line with existing literature. For example, Hoffman (2017) who argues that terrorist tactics often produce immediate operational result, but in the long-term strategic disadvantages for both insurgency and the immediate society. Similarly, Zenn (2020) also of the opinion that insurgent strategies that rely heavily on high-impact violence may temporarily disrupt counter-narratives and community resistance but definitely weaken group legitimacy and invite stronger state and international responses. Although the use of terrorism as a tactic may create an immediate opportunity, it usually becomes a self-defeated strategy in the long run. In the short term, the use of high violence may create an order disruption, fear amongst the local communities, and draw focus to the cause of the insurgents. In the long run, the use of this type of violence erodes the overall stability and effectiveness of the group. The sustained use of this type of high violence erodes the support of the community and challenges the insurgents, which in turn, prompts the local and foreign governments to become engaged. The argument that the sustainability of insurgents is dependent on the sustained nature of the conflicts, rather than the sustained nature of the conflicts, is a political legitimacy and governance primarily concern.

### V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusion

Terrorist tactics can provide insurgent groups with short-term strategic advantages but tend to undermine their long-term viability in civil war contexts. In the early stages of insurgency, tactics such as suicide bombings, kidnappings, and targeted assassinations can create fear, disrupt state authority, generate funding, and draw attention to the group's cause, thereby enhancing operational momentum and visibility. Despite proving effective in many insurgencies, these tactics ultimately bring misery to civilians which in turn diminishes what is perhaps the most important resource for sustaining insurgent operations: local support. Indiscriminate violence campaigns, of the sort that many contemporary insurgents employ as a central tactic, bring about an increasingly intensive counter-insurgency response from the affected state, create regional and global counter-insurgency initiatives, and result in a fracturing of the insurgency as divisions develop to dispute the moral and strategic justification of a terrorism campaign. While it is acknowledged that insurgents have the potential for a terrorism operational capability that is beyond the limits of what they are able to achieve with their conventional means, in the long run, the combination of violence and terrorism undermines an insurgency's capability to attain a measure of popularity, control territory, and evolve into a legitimate political organism.

#### 5.2 Recommendations

The government must establish a unified national security database and create a platform that contains military, police, immigration, DSS intelligence, and local authority intelligence. This will help improve immediate response and develop national situational awareness against insurgent actions. The government must, therefore, increase his funding to develop the capacity of national security agencies by training and keeping professionals in data management such as cybersecurity and intelligence analysis. This will lessen the drain of private sector skilled analysts.

The government should do all it can to implement the latest machine learning-based early-warning systems in security command centers. One of the functions of these systems will be to analyze attack patterns, the trend of communications that are cut off, suspicious movements of financial resources, and GIS-based movement patterns to notify security command centers of possible operational insurgents. The government should formalize and increase its funding for community-based intelligence networks through the establishment of secure mobile reporting; support for civilian early-warning committees; and the establishment of whistleblower protection policies. The integration of locality-based knowledge into national-level predictive models will greatly improve the precision of threat models and their ability to identify threats in isolated areas in a timely manner. It also enhances the trust of security agencies.



## Declaration of Interest

The author declares that she does not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper

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