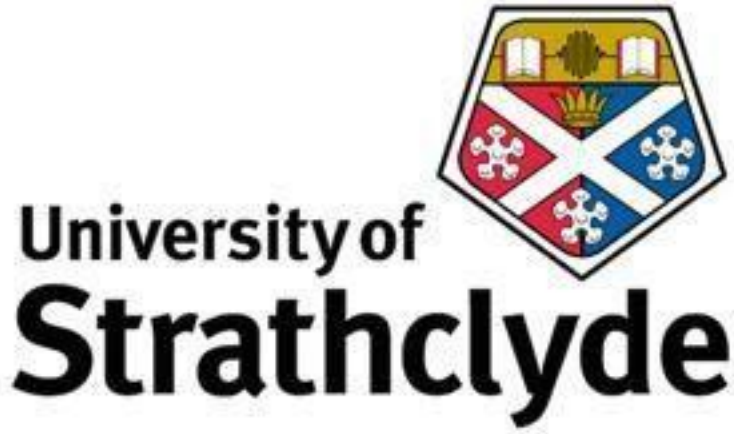


BOKO HARAM MESSAGING, GOVERNMENT'S COUNTER-MESSAGING AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

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Declaration

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination, which has led to the award of a degree. The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author under the terms of the United Kingdom Copyright Acts as qualified by the University of Strathclyde Regulation 3.50. Due acknowledgement must always be made of the use of any material contained in, or derived from, this thesis.

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Date: October 2026

Declaration of Interest

The author worked as a paid Graduate Teaching Assistant and Tutor while writing this thesis.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the victims of Boko Haram's violence, especially all abducted schoolgirls across Nigeria, hoping that the findings of this research will contribute to preventing such tragedies in the future.

ABSTRACT

Since 2002, Boko Haram, a jihadist group led by the fervent Islamic leader Mohammed Yusuf, has relentlessly waged a war of attrition against the Nigerian state. The alarming reports surrounding the death of the sect's leader, highlighted by Mike Hanna of Al Jazeera, may have further emboldened BH, fuelling a full-scale insurgency characterised by the strategic exploitation of media as a weapon of mass destruction against the West African nation for over two decades. Recognising critical gaps in empirical, conceptual, and primary research on StratCom, this research undertakes an in-depth investigation into the messaging tactics employed by the terrorists, as well as the government's counter-messaging efforts. What sets this research apart is its innovative approach, which looks at Direct Messaging and Indirect Messaging Techniques within theoretical frameworks. Through Multimodal Analysis's Visual-Verbal Video, and Critical Discourse Analysis, this study examines sixty YouTube videos published by local and international media from 2010 to 2025. The findings indicate that insurgents utilize an effective communication strategy that encompasses four key approaches: covert, symbolic, human, and social media channels. In addition to advocating for "whole-of-government" and "whole-of-society" strategies, this research calls for the implementation of an Afro-multidimensional StratCom approach. This framework aims not only to challenge the government's kinetic tactics but also to address the pressing needs of IDPs and refugees in the Lake Chad Basin region. Moreover, it seeks to benefit the Nigerian democratic government, its citizens, the leaders of the African Union, and the international community in their collective efforts to combat this ongoing crisis. In conclusion, the study emphasises that a strategic combination of both soft and hard power is crucial for mitigating the escalating conflicts in Nigeria and beyond. Shifting approach and investing in understanding effective local communication strategies can pave the way for lasting peace and stability in the region.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations/Meaning

AQIM- Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb AU-

African Union

BAY- Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe BH-

Boko Haram

BKNKA- Blend of Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Approaches

CDA- Critical Content Analysis

CJTF- Civilian Joint Task Force

CMCT- Comprehensive Model of Counter-Terrorism

COAS- Chief of Army Staff

COIN- Counterinsurgency

CSOs- Civil Society Organisations

CT- Counter-Terrorism

CW- Cyber Warfare

DDR- Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration

DHQ- Defence Headquarters

DMT- Direct Messaging Technique

DSS- Department of State Services

DVMJ- Divine Vision/Mission of Jihad

EFCC- Economic and Financial Crimes Commission

EU- European Union

EW- Electronic Warfare

FCT- Federal Capital Territory

FOSSRA- Forum of Spokespersons of Security and Response Agencies

FPFKA- Domestic Framework, Policing and Funding, Kinetic Approaches

ICG- International Crisis Group

ICT- Information and Communications Technologies

IDPs- Internally Displaced Persons

IEDs- Improvised Explosive Devices

IMT- Indirect Messaging Technique

IPOB- Indigenous People of Biafra

ISIL - Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

ISIS- Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, Islamic State

ISWAP- Islamic State West Africa Province

LCB- Lake Chad Basin

LGA- Local Government Area

MNJTF- Multi-National Joint Task Force

NA- Nigerian Army

NGO- Non-Governmental Organisations

NOA- National Orientation Agency

NPF- Nigeria Police Force

ONSA- Office of the National Security Adviser

OSC- Operation Safe Corridor

P/CVE- Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

PSYOP- Psychological Operations

SJTF- Special Joint Task Force

SSS- State Security Service

Stratcom- Strategic Communications

UN- United Nations

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter combines the researcher's personal experience with scholarly insights to justify the study of Boko Haram (BH) messaging from 2010 to 2025 in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states. It addresses key issues, including the scarcity of scholarly resources on counter-messaging, the asymmetric conflict, and the need for effective StratCom. The chapter outlines three research questions (RQs) focused on the insurgents' media use, government media engagement, and the deployment of StratCom to counter the insurgency. It presents the study's objectives and theoretical framework, which includes the Relational Model of Human Communication and the Comprehensive Model of Counter-Terrorism (CMCT). Using a qualitative research method, the study analyses data to answer the RQs and emphasises the importance of StratCom, particularly through the concept of "winning hearts and minds." It concludes with the introduction of Phenomenological Constructionism as the guiding research philosophy.

1.1 Background

On 4 December 2011, it was widely reported that six people were killed, including a soldier, a policeman, and a civilian, by suspected BH Islamists during an attack on the Police Area Command headquarters and two banks- Guarantee Trust Bank and Intercontinental Bank in the Azare, Katagum Local Government Area (LGA) of Bauchi State. The attackers threw explosives and left five people injured (Edeh, 2011; UN, 2020). From the turbulent events of the Middle East and North Africa through developments on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO's) eastern borders (Bolt, 2021) to the BH insurgency in Northeastern Nigeria, which started in 2002, a new phase of insurgency emerged (Idris & Ibrahim, 2011; Ngare, 2012). This insurrection is characterised by the exploitation of advancements in digital technologies and identity-ideology communities. To this end, various governments are now turning to StratCom, which "applies to all existing information and communication capabilities" (Reding, Weed, & Ghez, 2010, p. 8) as a counter-messaging strategy. In the wake of various insurgencies, intelligence gathering has become a vital StratCom tool, serving as a crucial means for combating insurgencies. The security of any country is threatened or enhanced by various communication channels - interpersonal relations, traditional media, and social media (Dairo, 2017). Therefore, flagging campaigns on counter-narratives are viewed as key to enlightening both militants and the public on desisting from embracing extremism (Marama, 2017). Reporting insurgencies is a strategic

endeavour that gives way to expressive possibilities (Smith & Higgins, 2012). Although StratCom plays an indispensable role in conflict and post-conflict scenarios (Ogbuleke & Erameh, 2020), it has its complexities. Smith and Higgins (2012) maintained that developments in the media space come with complexities and nuances that characterise war reporting. This is also true of insurgencies, given their fluid nature.

Islamic activism and political violence disrupt public safety. Actors tackling the global war on terror are now employing various strategies to combat the menace. Despite all efforts to stop the destruction of lives and property, BH insurgents seem determined to bring Nigeria to its knees. "Most terrorist attacks take place in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Russia, and various parts of Africa. Many parts of Asia, the southern part of Africa, the Americas, Australia, and Europe are less frequently troubled by terrorism. Nonetheless, even in countries with relatively few terrorist attacks, it is often perceived as a serious threat to security" (Bakker & De Roy Van Zuijdewijn, 2022, p.24). In 2019, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) indicated that Nigeria came second with 1,718 deaths because of terrorism after Afghanistan with 8,249, and Yemen in third place with 1,223 (Bakker & De Roy Van Zuijdewijn, 2022). BH gained international recognition because of the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls, which attracted media traction across the globe (Bakker & De Roy Van Zuijdewijn, 2022). Across Southern Kaduna, Taraba, Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Kogi, and parts of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), the insurgents have carried out deadly attacks (Benjamin, 2022; Ballason, 2022). Despite the government's counter-messaging efforts, the conflict remains a deadly affront to the Nigerian state. This means that the insurgency is far from being over.

1.2 Ethical Considerations/Positionality Statement

In qualitative research, reflexivity, ethics, and the acknowledgment of positionality are now standard practices for ensuring quality (Sibbald, Phelan, Beagan & Pride, 2025). They play key roles by fostering critical self-awareness and boosting a study's credibility and rigor. Positionality examines whether a researcher is an insider or an outsider to the research (Moralli, 2024), and it is important to examine how this position can shape or influence results (Berger, 2015). Protecting the well-being and managing the emotions of vulnerable groups is key (Zembylas, 2025; Sibbald, Phelan, Beagan & Pride, 2025). In this study, although the analysis used non-human data and did not require formal ethics approval, the researcher still chose to thoughtfully

engage with ethical considerations. This included reflecting on how a researcher's beliefs, values, and social identities could impact the research process, data interpretation, and findings (Zembylas, 2025; Sibbald, Phelan, Beagan & Pride, 2025).

I narrowly escaped a midnight attack by chance. At the time, I was serving as a priest in the Bauchi Diocese at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Azare. Amid the chaos, three of us crawled through the fence, evading bullets that struck the compound from all directions. We eventually reached the Federal Low-Cost Housing Estate area, seeking shelter. However, as we approached, residents mistook us for BH attackers and fled further into the wilderness. The extremists shouted "Allahu Akbar" — "God is greater" — as they launched rockets at the nearby Police Command. The town descended into turmoil; the night sky was illuminated by smoke and flashes of light resembling fireworks.

Upon our return the next morning, the Police Command and two financial institutions, from which millions of naira were reportedly stolen, were reduced to ruins. The ground was strewn with bullet casings and unexploded grenades, while men, women, youths, and children gathered in small groups, whispering with folded arms and sombre expressions. The attack was executed with professional precision. Having lived and worked in northern Nigeria for over two decades, and as a survivor of Islamist violence, I find it essential to reflect on my personal experiences alongside scholarly insights. I contend that writing about conflict, whether in political communication or conflict reporting, provides an opportunity to analyse the sect's messaging from an informed perspective while sharing my own narrative. This motivation influenced my decision to focus my dissertation on BH messaging—a group responsible for extensive property destruction, displacement, and loss of life in the region. The insurgency's asymmetric, covert military actions against individuals or the state through hit-and-run attacks while evading detection or retaliation necessitate a robust ideological response that advances knowledge, research, and addresses social and political injustices. Equipped with bombs, bullets, AK-47s, armoured vehicles, drones, IEDs, and other military hardware, BH conducts a persistent asymmetric conflict, combining kinetic actions such as airstrikes with non-kinetic tactics like leaflet distribution to exert influence over both the battlefield and public perception (Livieratos, 2018; Campbell & Weitz, 2006).

Research significantly shapes the future of education, journalism, and broader society, particularly at the intersection of academia and community. With my Christian

background and role as a Catholic priest, I adopted a researcher's perspective to address potential bias in the research process. Recognizing my identity in relation to this work affirms my understanding of the context surrounding BH. My experiences provided valuable insights, particularly regarding resilience and survival strategies. I acknowledge ethics and positionality as follows:

> Surviving a Boko Haram attack has provided me with a deeply personal perspective that informs my understanding of the insurgency. This experience motivated my research into the group's messaging and the government's counter-messaging. I recognize that my trauma could introduce emotional bias, given my strong connection to the topic. Although my position may intersect with ethical challenges in analysing extremist content, it did not influence the selection, interpretation, or evaluation of material and data.

To mitigate bias, I began with reflective journaling to maintain what Blaikie and Priest (2019) describe as a "learner's stance," setting aside preconceived notions to better appreciate the uniqueness of the data. This approach ensured that my experiences contributed to, rather than overshadowed, the analysis. Instead of relying exclusively on personal experience, which can introduce bias, I used empirical data as a robust foundation for comprehensive, meaningful research.

While these experiences may appear reflexive, I employed a combination of methods—Visual Verbal Video Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis—to minimize potential bias and maintain analytical balance during data examination. Content was selected based on its relevance to the research variables, with additional methodological details provided in the methods section.

Third, I adopted reflective and trauma-informed approaches to balance my unique insider perspective with the imperative for research objectivity (Goundar, 2025; Cooper et al., 2024; Maduka, 2023). Although my viewpoint was shaped by the influence of trauma on data interpretation, I remained committed to maintaining neutrality. Drawing on my distinct social, economic, and academic background, I engaged with the data from a semi-insider position (Goundar, 2025; Cooper et al., 2024; Maduka, 2023). Rather than perceiving myself as a victim, I approached the thesis as a researcher, demonstrating agency, resilience, and effective survival strategies. Recognizing these attributes contributed to transparency and validity (Sibbald, Phelan, Beagan & Pride, 2025; Zembylas, 2025), thereby strengthening the

integrity of the research outcomes.

1.3 Basis of the Study

The study critically examines BH messaging and the Nigerian government's counter-messaging strategies against the insurgents. Its goal is to identify valuable, African-oriented StratCom solutions. By leveraging data-driven evidence, it introduces homegrown counter-messaging strategies to address existing gaps in the literature. Additionally, the research proposes a StratCom policy and a practical counter-messaging approach aimed at curbing the insurgency.

The study aims to provide local solutions to BH messaging by appropriately responding to the terrorists who have accused the Nigerian state of bribery, corruption, marginalisation, and abuse of power (Comolli, 2016). The study is significant because it borders on public safety - a sine qua non for the survival of society. Without safety, economic and social development remains a far cry. Peace engenders integral development.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Religion, politics, and insurgent messaging are deeply intertwined and complex (Fadel, 2013). In many developing and Islamic countries, there's a belief that "Western values" hinder understanding of other cultures, fuelling resistance (Baderin, 2005). This stems in part from the history of repressive colonial rule by Western powers (Cavico & Mujtaba, 2014). The rise of digital media has helped violent extremists fund and expand new communication channels, allowing for spontaneous and improvised connections that were once impossible (Bolt, 2021). While governments focus on delivering consistent messages, counter-messaging from other sources has shifted the tactics of militant groups like BH. Social networks and devices such as smartphones and laptops now merge virtual and real-world networks, enabling faster information sharing than both traditional media and state communication systems. As a result, governments are forced to manage information rather than control it (Bolt, 2021). StratCom and narratives are key to fighting extremism (Archetti, 2014). Counter-messaging depends on understanding both StratCom principles and militant tactics, which ties into why ordinary citizens may suddenly take up arms. Experts stress that governments need to use broad, multidimensional counter-messaging strategies that combine military, political, and socio-economic measures (Kitzen, 2012). Yet this approach remains largely unimplemented, with gaps in areas such as intelligence

gathering and community policing.

Islamists are engaging in asymmetric warfare against the Nigerian state, a view shared by experts (Münkler, 2005; Cummings, 2014). During his Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs screening as a non-career Ambassador, former COAS Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai (rtd) described the insurgency as an asymmetric war and predicted it could take Nigeria 20 years to defeat the insurgents (Elumoye, 2020). He noted that BH is recruiting through indoctrination and that the conflict thrives due to vast ungovernable areas (Elumoye, 2020). As terrorists adopt new tactics, countries are developing innovative ways to tackle the threat, though these can have serious consequences for civilians (Bakker & De Roy Van Zuijdewijn, 2022). In counter-messaging, military action alone cannot address the root and immediate causes of insurgency. Nigeria could have drawn on the experience of countries such as the US and the UK in counter-messaging to combat the insurrection (Umar, 2013). For now, Nigerian forces seem reliant on a bomb-and-bullet strategy. Modern approaches focusing on demobilizing, reintegrating, and rehabilitating insurgents, such as BH, are seen as key to lasting security (Marama, 2017). Journalists are expected to interrogate issues to uncover the truth (Smith & Higgins, 2012), yet when foreign media lead coverage, the Nigerian press appears overextended, often relying on foreign sources and leading to either overreporting or underreporting (Dyikuk, 2018a). Reports of Yusuf Mohammed's arbitrary killing by outlets like Al Jazeera may have fuelled the intensity of the post-Yusuf conflict.

1.5 Gaps in Knowledge this Research Aims to Fill

Academics have widely examined BH's activities in northeastern Nigeria, given the conflict's local, regional, and global significance. Local scholarship on BH is vibrant (Kayode-Adedeji, Oyero & Aririguzoh, 2019; Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018), while foreign researchers have also studied various aspects of the group (Oyedeji & Ogungbe, 2023; Muhammad & Usman, 2024; Bello, 2021; Olufunmilade, 2021). Across different platforms, elites, industry experts, commentators, policy analysts, communication specialists, CSOs, and everyday people have shared their views on the insurgency. Still, most studies focus on social, religious, political, and economic angles. The lack of research on local counter-messaging strategies is often linked to the government's weak handling of the crisis (Umar, 2013). While earlier works have offered comparative analyses and demographic insights, they have largely ignored examining BH's use of media and its role in messaging, strategic communication, and counter-narratives.

To address this, several studies have examined BH messaging. For instance, Oyedeji and Ogungbe (2023) purposively sampled five videos from Sahara Reporters TV, Premium Times, and Legit, highlighting the sect's preference for video over audio to persuade and recruit, intimidate viewers and the government, and seek support from other Jihadi groups like ISIS, Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban. A recent study by Muhammad and Usman (2024) analysed 20 ISIS Arabic Twitter campaigns and 20 BH video messages, noting that BH's alliance with ISIS enhanced its digital campaign quality and recommending measures to sever ties between such groups. Bello (2021) reviewed forty sect video clips, revealing propaganda tactics used to claim attacks, build suspense, and invoke Allah's power to instil fear. Similarly, Olufunmilade (2021) studied four horror videos, showing BH's use of strong propaganda to advance its goals, attract youth with messages of superiority, stress Allah's omnipresence, and promote the creation of an Islamic Caliphate.

Previous studies related to this thesis focus on analyses such as framing (Wesley, 2024), visual framing analysis (Gwadabe & Ihidero, 2024), visual representation and multimodal analysis (Osisanwo, 2020), and visual content analysis (Wesley, 2024). However, to the researcher's knowledge, none have combined Visual-Verbal Video Analysis (VVVA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) or applied the CMCT framework, which emphasizes both the Direct Messaging Technique (DMT) and the Indirect Messaging Technique (IMT), to examine BH messaging alongside the Nigerian government's counter-messaging efforts. This leaves notable empirical, conceptual, and practical gaps.

To fill these gaps, this thesis analysed YouTube videos— featuring BH messaging and showcasing government counter-messaging—to explore StratCom and offer policy-based recommendations for effective counter-messaging. The study seeks to provide a balanced view of the insurgency, identifying communication weaknesses that, if addressed, could inform a StratCom approach to curb BH's activities, which have caused massive property destruction, numerous deaths, and displacement. Given the guerrilla nature of this conflict, the research aims to develop an evidence-based communication strategy to counter Islamic activism and extremism in Northeastern Nigeria. The findings aim to enhance understanding of the insurgency's complexities and highlight the potential for change through homegrown solutions adopted by the Nigerian government, regional powers, and the international community.

1.6 Research Questions (RQs)

1. What defines the messaging used by BH in its insurgency?
2. How purposeful and strategic is BH in its messaging aimed at undermining the Nigerian state?
3. What effective counter-messaging strategies is the government employing against the BH sect?

1.7 Contributions to Knowledge

This study will contribute to knowledge in three ways:

1.7.1 Empirical Contribution

New evidence on BH messaging, StratCom, and counter-messaging will emerge from this study. Grounded in modern research, the thesis aims to introduce a pioneering communication framework that demonstrates how BH engages in political communication and StratCom efforts. The data contributes to the corpus of knowledge in political communication and StratCom by provoking research into the psychology behind the media content produced by insurgents. Furthermore, it potentially signposts patterns that provide evidence about BH messaging, StratCom, and what these encode.

7.1.2 Conceptual Contribution

The study illustrates the crucial place of a CMCT theory of counter-messaging, which prioritises both the DMT and the IMT against BH messaging. It underscores how the government can deploy these techniques for "counter-narratives" to directly undermine and refute the Jihadi group's messaging and denigrate those within their ranks (Metz, 2012). These counter-messaging measures deviate from the extant kinetic approach of countering insurgents. They introduce an indirect local counter-messaging approach that targets the enemy's vulnerable assets to deprive them of popular support. This study explores the potential of this homegrown StratCom as the government's counter-messaging measure against the insurgents

7.1.3 Practical Contribution

It makes recommendations to the Nigerian government, African heads of government, and the United Nations (UN) on policy-driven mechanisms to counter BH messaging. To effectively counter BH messaging, this thesis proposes an *Afro-multidimensional StratCom* that is relevant for implementation by various local, regional, and international stakeholders – leaders of Africa, especially presidents of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, as well as the Secretary-General of the UN, on

measures that could detect the insurgents' strategic media engagements towards mitigating them.

1.8 Theoretical Frameworks

This research employs two theoretical frameworks: the Rational Model of Human Communication and the CMCT theory. These frameworks will be systematically applied in the analysis that follows. Both the theoretical framework and the empirical data support the development of the proposed Afro-multidimensional StratCom approach.

1.8.1 Relational Model or Theory of Human Communication

The Rational Model of Human Communication emphasizes the value of creating and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their key stakeholders. German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas introduced the theory of communicative rationality and action in his influential work, The Theory of Communicative Action (Fultner, 2011). His framework centres on the idea that human communication seeks mutual understanding and consensus, rather than strategic or manipulative ends. He believed that genuine, coercion-free dialogue allows people to engage in rational discourse and reach agreement through "the force of the better argument" (Strecker, 2019; Schaefer, Heinze, Rotte & Denke, 2013). The theory identifies two main types of action: Communicative Action and Strategic/Instrumental Action. Communicative Action strives for understanding and agreement without relying on power or coercion, depending instead on the strength of arguments (Ecstein International, 2025).

It also proposes that in cooperative communication, every statement carries three claims open to rational evaluation: truth, meaning it accurately reflects the objective world; rightness, ensuring it aligns with social or moral norms; and truthfulness, confirming the speaker's sincerity (Cherem, 2026; Philosophy Institute, 2025; Kelly, 2023). While Communicative Action is about social interaction aimed at understanding and coordination, Strategic/Instrumental Action focuses on achieving specific objectives, influencing others, or exercising power (Schaefer, Heinze, Rotte & Denke, 2013). This theoretical distinction underpins the rational model of human communication. The study connects Habermas's framework with Thompson's COIN principles, outlined in his work Defeating Communist Insurgency (Kitzen, 2012). Thompson drew on relational and politically motivated ideas to show that the bond between a government and its people is key to addressing insurgent conflicts.

Other scholars have built on Thompson's five frames (Kitzen, 2012; Mumford, 2010) to articulate this framework. The government should establish a clear, stable, and united political vision that's more appealing to the people than the insurgents' narrative. This means setting a

political agenda that aligns institutions with the real needs of the population to build loyalty and weaken insurgents. To maintain legitimacy and moral authority in the fight against terror, it is crucial to follow the rule of law and avoid heavy-handed responses that could alienate civilians. A well-coordinated plan combining military, political, and socio-economic efforts, supported by strong intelligence and communication strategies, is key. Building trust with local communities and gathering actionable intelligence on insurgent networks should be a top priority. Instead of just chasing insurgents, the focus should be on dismantling their political structures and ideology, cutting off their influence at the root. Securing a safe operational base to create "safe zones" before expanding into contested areas gives the government an advantage, allowing it to launch counter-messaging and strengthen state control (Kitzen, 2012).

Robert Thompson's theory from the mid-1960s still offers valuable insights for effective governance in today's complex world. To meet current challenges, the government should commit to COIN strategies, which will be applied in the empirical chapter. In contrast, the Message Influence Model, developed in the 19th century (Kitzen, 2012) during colonial resistance, shows a dependence on outdated conventional warfare tactics still used by the Nigerian military, with limited success. By embracing key principles, the government can strengthen relationships, build community trust, and promote lasting peace and security. However, the Nigerian government's incomplete adoption of these strategies has fuelled ongoing insurgency.

Modernizing its approach and engaging meaningfully with communities is essential to tackling the roots of insecurity. Since traditional direct military operations are proving ineffective, this study proposes an innovative indirect counter-messaging strategy. This approach focuses on exploiting enemy weaknesses and eroding their popular support, shifting attention away from heavy combat. Early military trials of this method show promise. While the Message Influence Model follows a linear communication style, the Relational Model of Human Communication is becoming more relevant (Kitzen, 2012). This thesis critiques the Relational Model's limits and calls for a perspective shaped by African contexts to develop a stronger counter-messaging strategy.

Table 1. 1 Key Features of Relational Model/Theory of Human Communication

1. Leverages Habermas' The Theory of Communicative Action (Barbara, 2011), which underscores Communicative Action and Strategic/Instrumental Action perspectives
2. Highlights the relational and politically motivated principles of COIN espoused by Thompson's book Defeating Communist Insurgency
3. Fosters beneficial relationships between stakeholders - the government and the citizenry, as well as a participatory approach that empowers communities and promotes collaboration
4. Develops a clear, stable, free and united political aim
5. Upholds the government's legitimacy by keeping to its own laws to maintain moral
6. Develops a cohesive intelligence and communications strategy that combines military and socio-political initiatives
7. Plans how to strategically defeat subversion by dismantling the insurgents' political infrastructure and ideology.
8. Secures a safe base from where the government/military can enforce "white areas" before expanding to other highly contested regions (Kitzen, 2012; Phillips, 2012; Mumford, 2010; Pritchard & Smith, 2010; Dixon, 2009).

8.1.2 Comprehensive Model of Counter-Terrorism (CMCT) Theory

This study is based on the CMCT, which plays a key role in backing counter-messaging efforts, especially the Direct Messaging Technique (DMT). DMT uses "counter-narratives" to challenge extremist messages, discredit their sources, and disrupt violent extremist groups. In contrast, the Indirect Messaging Technique (IMT) focuses on spreading positive narratives that promote unity and shared values. Both are essential in tackling extremism. DMT mirrors how insurgent groups work to undermine state authority (Metz, 2012). During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and China backed insurgents to weaken Western influence, helping them connect with those they aimed to replace. Today, technology advances allow groups like BH to carry out large-scale, networked insurgencies (Metz, 2012).

Metz (2012) points out that insurgent groups often struggle to match the strength of states and conventional military forces, so they focus on boosting morale and using psychological tactics. BH is a clear example, shaping its messaging to cause psychological harm (Onuoha, 2013b). Insurgency revolves around survival, building the group's strength, and undermining existing power structures (Metz, 2012). The group tailors its communication to connect with followers, appealing to their beliefs and using indoctrination methods. Shekau highlights military

capabilities to project invincibility, spread fear, and serve psychological warfare goals (Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018). BH's public statements and strategies reveal deliberate outreach and messaging plans. Jihadists draw global media attention through large-scale violence and effective communication (Abubakar, 2017). The IMT pushes narratives promoting unity and shared values (Glowacki & Hengemuhle, 2014). While the government uses counter-narratives to challenge extremist rhetoric (Metz, 2012), it works with journalists and international media, using tools like cassette recordings, guerrilla media tactics, and social media videos for radicalization (Abubakar, 2020). Table 1.1 outlines the main principles of CMCT theory.

Table 1. 2 Key Features of the CMCT Theory

1. Prioritises both the Direct Messaging Technique (DMT) and the Indirect Messaging Technique (IMT)
2. Utilises DMT for "counter-narratives" to effectively challenge and undermine extremist messages, discredit their sources, and disrupt violent extremist groups
3. Promotes IMT for positive narratives that emphasise solidarity and shared values. Both strategies are vital in addressing extremism
4. Emphasises how insurgent groups use DMT to challenge state power versus how the government can deploy IMT to promote inter-agency cooperation
5. Underlines how DMT/IMT frameworks are vital in addressing extremism, hence their use in this research (Metz, 2012).

1.9 Research Philosophy – Phenomenological Constructivism

This research takes on Phenomenological Constructivism, a blend of lived experiences and knowledge that sees reality as something actively built. It highlights how the human mind shapes what we perceive as real. Constructivism suggests that knowledge grows out of human experiences, showing the close link between the knower and what's known. Drawing from cognitive psychology and linked to the Socratic method of questioning, this view has become popular in media studies (Dudovskiy, 2022). It holds that scientists actively construct knowledge through different methods. This study specifically focuses on phenomenological constructionism, which looks at how meaning is created (Andrew, Pedersen, & McEvoy, 2011). Keaton and Bodie (2011) note that our sense of "reality" is socially constructed, shaping how we behave and communicate. Through this, people define their own social realities, helping them navigate their worlds more effectively.

The researcher is using a phenomenological constructionist approach, which suits the qualitative nature of this thesis. This method draws on credible sources to gather videos, images, and text for exploring complex issues. It takes a close look at BH messaging and government counter-messaging to either support or challenge earlier studies and guide new research into effective counter-messaging strategies. The findings have the potential to inspire meaningful change and promote stability (Dudovskiy, 2022). This approach focuses on document analysis—shaping clear research questions, selecting relevant data, and offering thoughtful interpretations (Mertens, 2010). Through this process, the researcher aims to grow academic understanding and develop practical strategies to tackle pressing counter-messaging issues.

1.10 Thesis Structure

The First Chapter outlines the study's rationale, core problem, and objectives, highlighting the Relational Model of Human Communication and Comprehensive Model of Counterterrorism (CMCT) Theory.

The Second Chapter examines BH messaging and government responses, detailing the group's origins, founder Mohammed Yusuf, and views on Western education.

Chapter Three conducts a literature review to identify patterns in BH messaging and the media's role, and to point out gaps in existing research.

Chapter Four assesses Nigeria's counter-messaging efforts, focusing on the National Strategy for Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign.

Chapter Five described the research methodologies, using VVVA and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse BH and government response videos.

Chapter Six explored categories/themes in BH messaging based on local and international data.

Chapter Seven critically examines the Nigerian government’s counter-messaging against BH, drawing on speeches by its officials coded along 5 patterns.

Chapter Eight provides a synthesis and comparative analysis of key themes/categories across all videos, highlighting the relevance of theoretical frameworks, leading to the research findings.

Finally, Chapter Nine summarizes the study's implications and limitations, offers five actionable steps for Afro-Multidimensional Strategic Communication

(StratCom), and emphasizes community engagement in conflict resolution.

1.11 Conclusion

The Chapter was situated around the researcher's experience of living and working in Northern Nigeria for over two decades as a victim of violence. The research presented the rationale of the study, focusing on the impact of BH's messaging in the BAY States. It highlighted the statement of the problem, aims of the study, objectives, RQs, and potential contributions to knowledge. The methodology unveiled the Relational Model of Human Communication and CMCT frameworks, along with the research philosophy.

2. OVERVIEW OF BH INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA

This chapter breaks down the key elements in the research—BH's media offensive (the use of messaging by insurgents as a weapon), the government's counter-narratives, and the StratCom approach. It examines the BH insurgency in northeastern Nigeria. The chapter discusses the impacts of radical Islam, the group's issues with education, and democratic systems. It also delves into conspiracy theories about the group's origins, offering insight into the complex nature of the jihadi movement.

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

2.1.1 BH Messaging

BH messaging means the deployment of both traditional and social media resources by the militants against the Nigerian state. With international support, BH releases amateur videos and utilises social media platforms such as Twitter (X) and YouTube (Banyongen, 2020; Ogbondah & Agbese, 2017; Callimachi, 2015) for its communication. While using propaganda as a tool of destruction, the Jihadists had seized about 20 % of Nigerian territory, amounting to over 70,000 square miles- almost the size of Belgium and six times bigger than the land grabbed by IS in January 2015 (Schmitt, 2014). BH messaging encapsulates the insurgents' communication, messages, and media strategies as well as their battle for media control against the security agencies and the Nigerian state, with each institution jostling to dominate the media space.

Meanwhile, militants continue to deploy propaganda through the deliberate manipulation of representations, such as text, pictures, video, or speech, to produce an effect in their target audiences, leading to action or inaction, reinforcement, or transformation of feelings, ideas, attitudes, and behaviours (Briant, 2015). Considering the offensive nature of the sect's messaging, words like jihadists, terrorists, group, sect, jihadi, Islamists, insurgents, haramists, extremists, and militants are used interchangeably throughout the work for BH, which is also employed as an abbreviation of the group.

2.1.2 Government's Counter-Messaging

In this study, the government's counter-messaging narratives encapsulate all the activities that are coordinated to defeat the insurgents. It is the constant use of various techniques, including brute force, firepower, and armaments, by the armed forces, in collaboration with other West African troops, to contain the terrorists. The

government's counter-messaging techniques are conceived as the combination of modern instant messaging and military art employed to fight an irregular enemy – BH (Kitzen, 2012). Viewed as a kinetic approach that lacks aspects of "winning hearts and minds," the research conceives contingency narratives as concerted efforts to disarm insurgents by utilising the logistics of war. As part of its response to the insurgency, with support from the governments of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, the Nigerian government initiated military and political responses as counter-messaging techniques. The work would explore these counter-messaging approaches in detail.

2.1.3 Strategic Communications' (StratCom) Solution

Understanding StratCom offers deeper insight into communication and media engagement overall. It entails coordinating statecraft, public affairs, military diplomacy, information operations, and related activities, reinforced by political, economic, and military actions in a synchronized way (Ogbuleke & Erameh, 2020). StratCom includes counter-messaging that uses public diplomacy and other tools to support military efforts. Beyond propaganda, PSYOP, information operations, or spin, which involve misleading intent (Williams, 2017). It is an art of war, much like logistics or intelligence, requiring skilled staff, training, and practice (Castells, 2008). It blends tactical communication with military action—both message and deed—to effectively harness national power (Hammes, 2005). NATO similarly defines it as aligning words and actions across government actors to boost strategic impact, aiming to shape target audience behaviour to fit objectives and influence the operational environment through expertise in information and communication (Reding, Weed & Ghez, 2010).

Understanding StratCom presents a clearer picture of how communication and media engagement work together. It entails coordinating statecraft, public affairs, military diplomacy, information operations, and similar efforts, all reinforced by political, economic, and military actions in sync (Ogbuleke & Erameh, 2020). StratCom also involves counter-messaging through public diplomacy and other tools to back military goals, going beyond propaganda, PSYOP, or spin, which carry misleading intent (Williams, 2017). Like logistics or intelligence, it is an art of war that demands skilled people, training, and practice (Castells, 2008). It combines tactical communication with military action—both in message and deed—to harness national power effectively (Hammes, 2005). NATO describes it as aligning words and actions across government actors to boost strategic impact, aiming to shape audience behaviour and influence the operational environment through expertise in information and communication

(Reding, Weed & Ghez, 2010).

This thesis builds on that idea, defining StratCom as the deliberate coordination of words, actions, and messages—not only by governments, but also by insurgent groups before, during, or after violent events—and by officials managing crises to counter BH narratives. In urgent situations, governments often use digital platforms for updates, calls to action, raising public awareness, sharing safety information, and showing empathy while reassuring people that things are under control (Al-Kedm, Eckler, Higgins, 2025). The study seeks to evaluate current StratCom methods to help develop stronger strategies, involving the combined use of logistical, physical, mental, social, and PSYOP measures to end an insurgency.

2.2 BH: Context and the Mohammed Yusuf Era

North-eastern Nigeria, which comprises Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe, is blessed with fertile land and rich livestock production that significantly contributes to the nation's agricultural economy. The region is home to various ethnic groups, including the Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Jukun, Mumuye, Tangale, Waja, and Sayawa (Asenguah, 2022). While most residents are Muslims, there is a notable Christian minority in Taraba, Gombe, Adamawa, and southern Borno. Escalating terrorist activities have created a humanitarian crisis. Between 2002 and 2025, the insurgency has affected more than 43,000 individuals and displaced about 2.5 million people in the Northeast, with many Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living in makeshift camps in need of water, shelter, and medical care (Humanitarian Action, 2025). Since 2009, people in the BAY states have suffered from a brutal insurgency following the declaration of an Islamic Caliphate by jihadists. The Nigerian police and armed forces implemented an emergency response, and in 2013, a state of emergency was declared in Borno, yet the violence persists (Humanitarian Outcomes United Kingdom, 2009), leading to worsening violence in the LCB region (United Nations, 2022). The map of Nigeria in Figure 2.1 shows 36 states and Abuja, the FCT.

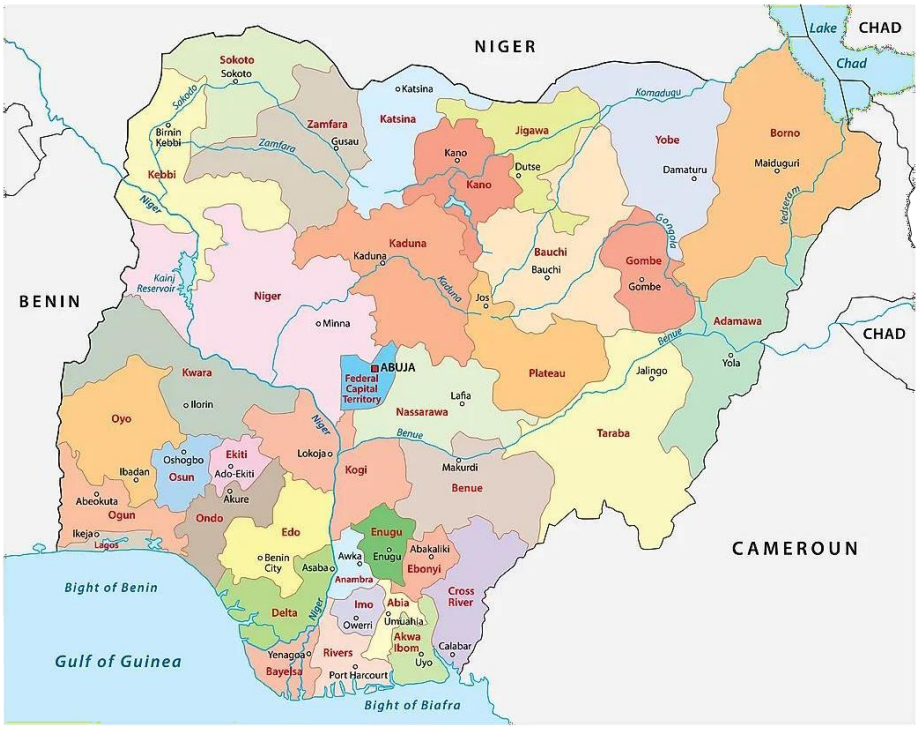


Figure 2. 1 Map of Nigeria showing 36 states and Abuja, the FCT (Lesniewski 2013: https://shorturl.at/XZkK1)

The rise of insurgencies in Nigeria is connected to the historical development of Islam in the country. Before the Indirect Rule System (IRS), African Traditional Religion (ATR) thrived (Chukwuemeka, 2020). Islam arrived in Hausa land between the 11th and 12th centuries, while Christianity emerged in the 19th century. In Northern Nigeria, religious identity has strongly influenced governance and politics. The IRS favoured the North, sidelining the South and the West. Eventually, power dynamics were manipulated by empowering newly appointed Emirs, Obas, and Chiefs/Obis. This created apathy among citizens and fostered impunity among leaders (Chukwuemeka, 2020).

The Northernisation Policy provided preferential access for northerners in public institutions, aiming to restore the Caliphate to its former glory before colonial rule (Tela, 2022). The introduction of Political Shariah (Gänsler, 2019) across twelve Northern states blurred the boundaries between religion, state, and law (Ogbu, 2014), further complicating governance and societal cohesion. The situation sparked profound ideological divisions and injustices (Barkindo & Dyikuk, 2022), leading to riots in Kaduna and Bauchi states in 2000 and 2001 (Fox, 2021). Sections 10, 38(1) and s. 42(1) of the 1999 Constitution designates Nigeria as a "secular state" (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). That is why the 2011 Islamic Banking initiative ignited fierce debates and pushback (Umar, 2013). This pushback intensified ethno-religious violence in the region and facilitated the alarming weaponisation of religion,

politics, and ethnicity, underscoring the urgent need for social harmony in northern Nigeria.

The rise of Islamist movements in the region can largely be traced back to the Jihad led by Usman Dan Fodio from 1804 to 1808 (Hodgkin, 2022; Barkindo & Dyikuk, 2022). This pivotal moment set the foundation for several Jihadi groups that contributed to the BH insurgency, including the Qadriyya and Tijaniyya sects, the Izala group, the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), and the Maitatsine sect. Additionally, groups like the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and others, such as armed bandits, killer-herdsmen, Lukarawa(s), and Mahmuda, have intensified the violence (Afolaranmi, 2024; Ojo & Olumba, 2024). Understanding this complex interplay of historical and contemporary actors is essential for addressing the ongoing security challenges in the region. Islamist groups are capitalising on the longstanding legacy of radical Islamic movements in Northern Nigeria (Çancı & Odukoya, 2016) to advance and entrench their ideologies effectively. Wadlow (2015) established close links between Dan Fodio's jihad and the vicious activities of the BH movement when he argued that:

> For the current leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, as well as for others in the movement, Usman dan Fodio (also written as Usuman) and his 1804-1808 jihad is the model to be followed. Although radically different in many ways, Boko Haram is part of the long shadow of Usman dan Fodio and the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate, the largest state in West Africa in the nineteenth century (Wadlow, 2015).

The sect is driven by Dan Fodio's political Islam and the 20th-century Mujaddid and Mahdiyya movements, which emphasise the belief in the hereafter. Fodio's teachings were influenced by the radical Salafism of the 13th-century scholar Ibn Taymiyya, known for his autocratic leadership (Anjide, 2018). BH is the fourth deadliest terror organisation in the world (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019) and is known in Arabic as *Jama'atu Ahl As-Sunna Li-D'awati Wal-Jihad*, meaning "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad." They are also known as *Yusufiyya*, the Nigerian Taliban, or BH (Loimeier, 2012). In 2002, Yusuf, the founder of the group, separated from his mentor, Sheik Ja'afar Mahmud Adam, over a dispute regarding Nigeria's secular governance. This resulted in Yusuf and his followers relocating from Maiduguri to Kanama village in Yobe State to establish an isolated community. Tensions resurfaced in 2003 over fishing rights with residents, prompting

police intervention. These events highlight the complexities surrounding the origins of the sect. BH leader, Mohammed Yusuf, is presented in Figure 2. 2.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 2. 2 BH leader, Mohammed Yusuf (The Guardian Nigeria, 2016: https://shorturl.at/WSoBE)

While some scholars trace the movement's origins to Kanama, Yobe State, between 2002 and 2003 (Roelofs, 2014; Bukarti, 2020; Malefakis, 2022), Zenn (2022) argues that it began even earlier with a Nigerian named Muhammad Ali in Saudi Arabia. He asserts that Ali introduced jihadism to Nigeria in 1994, aided by an Algerian jihadist. Ali secured funding through connections with Umran, his brother Umar, and intermediaries of Osama bin Laden, before the 9/11 attacks. Furthermore, Ali's significant "intense intelligence" from 1995 was later recognised and used by Yusuf between 2004 and 2005. This intelligence played a crucial role in the establishment of BH in 2009, evident in Yusuf's fiery preaching and calls for jihad (Zenn, 2022).

After a violent clash with security forces, Yusuf fled to Saudi Arabia but returned in 2004 after negotiating with Borno State officials. Once back, he mobilised economically disadvantaged youth around a radical ideology, condemning the government and police, particularly opposing helmet laws for motorcycle riders in Maiduguri (Friedman, 2014; Walker, 2016). This defiance led to a confrontation with police in July (BBC, 2016; Ford, 2014). In response, President Musa Yar'adua deployed the military, leading to Yusuf's arrest and subsequent death in custody, which sparked the 2009 uprising focused against the police. Following Yusuf's death, Mamman Nur took over leadership but fled under military pressure. Shekau then assumed control from 2010 to 2015, transforming the group into a deadly terrorist organisation (Anjide, 2018; Loimeier, 2012; Agbiboa, 2013; Mohammed, 2014; Comolli, 2015; African Spotlight, 2016).

Yusuf was a prominent figure in local broadcasts across Borno State, captivating

audiences with his impassioned sermons that fiercely criticised Western civilisation (Apard, 2015). His movement drew striking parallels to the *Maitatsine* insurgent group, which first emerged in the 1980s, showcasing a similar fervour for radical change. Driven by the ideologies of Wahhabism and the teachings of Sayyid Qutb, Yusuf envisioned a revival of Salafism (Barkindo, 2014). Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al-Shabaab influenced unemployed youths from Maiduguri, Damaturu, and Potiskum, drawing them into Yusuf's fold. He rejected Western education/democratic values and left his role as a civil servant in the Yobe State Government (Ishaku, 2012). His group labelled Western education as "modern witchcraft" (Barkindo, 2013), condemning socialism, capitalism, and military dictatorship. The sect targets police and military formations across the Northeast region (Campbell & Harwood, 2018; Este, 2014; Akhaine, 2015). BH has Africa as its main operational area, marked in red in Figure 2. 3.



Figure 2. 3 BH's main areas of operation in Africa (UNDP/ RAND Europe Research Report, 2017: https://shorturl.at/MDa23)

The sect recruits members from Borno State in Nigeria and neighbouring countries - Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. Those from Nigeria come from Almajiri schools in northern Nigeria (Çancı, & Odukoya, 2016; Sommerlad, 2018; Klobucista, 2018; Zenn, 2013). Almajiri are children who learn Islam from *Islamiyya* schools through Quranic memorization and recitation. In the northern region, Western education is treated with suspicion and considered inferior because it lacks Islamic content (Kukah, 2020). The militants manipulate this mistrust by associating Western education with witchcraft (Kukah, 2014). The vulnerabilities Almajiri study under Mallams in difficult conditions and are eventually recruited by BH because they have been indoctrinated (Meagher & Mustapha, 2020; Kukah, 2014; Deutsche Welle, 2019; Zenn, Barkindo &

Nicholas, 2013; Dyikuk, 2018b). Despite constitutional recognition of education since the 1980s, scepticism toward Western education continues in northern Nigeria, highlighting the urgent need for educational reform. Figure 2. 6 shows Almajiri Kids taking a nap.



Figure 2. 4 Almajiri Kids taking a nap (Dukku, U.H, 2015: https://igit.me/iJhLa)

Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi's deaths created a power vacuum in Iraq and Libya, allowing terrorists and arms to infiltrate Africa, facilitating the rise of the Islamic State (IS) (Anjide, 2018). BH formed connections with jihadist movements in AQIM to expand their Islamic strongholds across Sub-Saharan Africa, where groups like the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Ansar Dine are also gaining traction (Centre for Preventive Action, 2023). While Al-Shabaab and ISIL have Somalia and Sudan as their stronghold with spillovers into Kenya and Uganda (Cox et al., 2018), BH and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) use Nigeria as their base but extend their violent actions into Chad and Cameroon. They exploit poverty, illiteracy, and cultural norms in the region, drawing radical clerics who support their extremist narrative. The sect justifies attacks on Churches and Christians in their quest for an Islamic State (Dada, 2018). The Christmas Day bombing at St. Theresa's Catholic Church in Madalla, which killed thirty-seven people, highlights the threat posed by these extremists (Idris, 2012). A screenshot of President Goodluck Jonathan assessing the wreckage of the Church building attacked by the insurgents is presented in Figure 2.4 below.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 2. 5 Screenshot of President Goodluck Jonathan during an on-the-spot assessment of St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla, attacked by BH (CNN, 2011: https://shorturl.at/LQKCB)

Under Yusuf, the sect gained new spokesmen, including Abul Qaqa, Abu Darda, and Abu Zaid, who actively spread their jihadist messages (Abubakar, 2017; Mohammed, 2014). BH deploys harrowing tactics, using child soldiers and civilians as human shields, while exploiting women as cooks, sex slaves, and even suicide bombers (Dyikuk & Kanu, 2018; Anjide, 2018). They manipulate parents to offer their children as bombers or convince the vulnerable children to turn against their parents (Yusuf, 2019; Baker, 2017; UNICEF, 2016). BH undertakes unconventional warfare - hit-and-run tactics and sporadic bombings- targeting banks, churches, prisons, and markets, striking fear into communities (Anjide, 2018; Voronkova, 2017).

The insurgency has led to a humanitarian crisis and rising living costs in Maiduguri, making local and international NGOs, security personnel, government officials, politicians, and business leaders "entrepreneurs of insurgency" (Dyikuk & Maimako, 2019), who profit from the conflict. BH's deadly attacks in the Northeast had displaced millions (Carsten & Onuah, 2021; Fox, 2021; Maclean & Alfa, 2021), impacting the LCB region, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Anjide, 2018). The location and action of BH in the northeast bordering Niger, Chad and Cameroon are presented in Figure 2. 5.

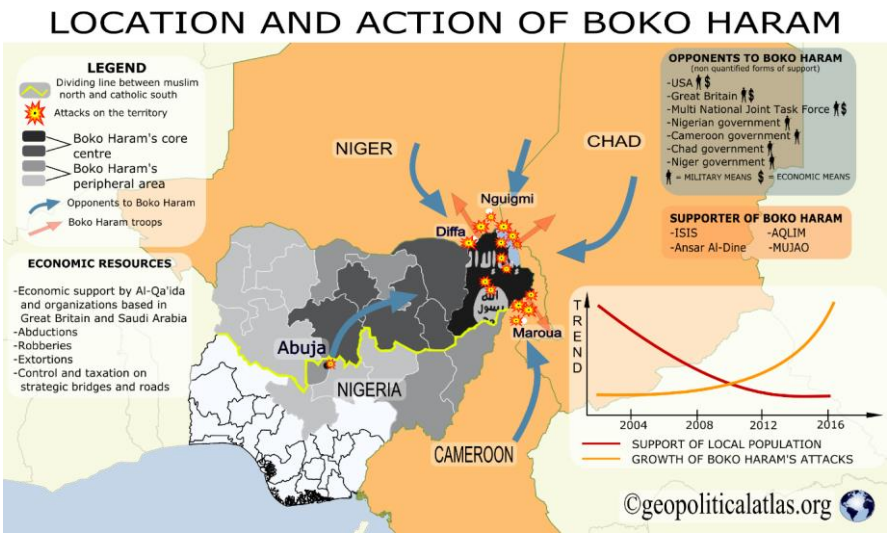


Figure 2. 6 Location and Action of BH (Mandela Projects, Inventory of Conflict and Environment (ICE), Boko Haram @geopoliticalatlas.org: https://shorturl.at/juTw2)

2.3. BH: Conspiracy Theories

Recent studies link BH to conspiracy theories – government's neglect and the exploitation of ungoverned spaces in the LCB (Umara, 2020; Ochonu, 2026). Some claim that politicians create and sustain the insurgency to undermine rivals or the Federal Government, while others suggest that BH's presence is linked to global competition for oil. Thurston (2016) argues that BH spreads conspiracy theories, and Nyelade (2025) emphasizes economic interests as key motivators, suggesting a northern elite scheme to pressure the federal government into granting amnesty like President Yar'adua's approach in the Niger Delta. A conspiracy theory emerged suggesting that northern elites formed BH to thwart President Goodluck Jonathan's re-election in 2015 (Owonikoko, 2022). Initial attacks on Churches and government infrastructure indicate a sinister motive behind the insurgency (Cook, 2012; Onapajo & Usman, 2015).

The declaration of a state of emergency from 2013 to 2014 created an environment where some believed Jonathan used BH to undermine Hausa-Fulani dominance (Adibe, 2014). Others argue that Western powers, particularly the US and France, created BH to destabilize Nigeria. Major Hamza Al-Mustapha claimed this was part of a strategy to exploit Africa's resources, linking the insurgency to the discovery of oil in Nigeria (Fassam, 2022; Akinyemi, 2022). He also noted issues of illegal mining in regions rich in resources like oil and uranium (Balogun, 2022; Oladeji, 2022). Al-Mustapha claimed that Californium, a valuable mineral, is central to the conflict (Babaji, 2022). Some analysts challenge this perspective, stressing its unscientific usage (Ebube, 2023; Feta & Maigana, 2023), Ochonu (2026) emphasizes the historical

context in Northern Nigeria. Umara (2020) explores how local narratives complicate peace efforts.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research variables, including BH's messaging and the government's counter-messaging. It provided a historical overview of the insurgency in northeastern Nigeria and its development into a full-scale conflict. It examined the Almajiri system, stressing how it provides an industry for BH to flourish. conspiracy theories suggesting motivations such as Western exploitation of African resources and northern support for the insurgency to gain amnesty.

3. MESSAGING AND STRATCOM IN BOKO HARAM DISCOURSE

The chapter clarifies the variables used in the study. It reviews existing literature on StratCom concerning the BH insurgency and Nigerian military operations. It gives an overview of the offline and online media resources utilised by the insurgents, highlighting existing patterns. It focuses on the use of offensive messaging within the BH insurgency. It explores the role of the international media in providing oxygen to BH. The chapter outlines the factors that contribute to the militants' evident reliance on StratCom techniques through their messaging campaigns.

3.1 StratCom in BH Onslaught

With StratCom in BH's war on the Nigerian state as our focus, we will review studies on extant patterns in BH messaging.

3.1.1 Extant Patterns in BH Messaging

3.1.1.1 Steganographic Messages

Research indicates that BH collaborates with cybersecurity experts to use cryptography, which ensures message secrecy (Tzschoppe et al., 2003), and watermarking, which protects digital content from unauthorized access (Ahvanooey et al., 2020). The sect utilises steganographic methods for covert online communication through social media (Kolade et al., 2015). This technology allows militants to hide messages in formats like BMP, GIF, and JPEG, making detection nearly impossible. Steganography is the practice of embedding information for secure communication with designated recipients (Waziri et al., 2012). In contrast, steganalysis involves the detection of such hidden messages (Chanu et al., 2012).

3.1.1.2 Communication on Telecommunication Networks

In Africa, terrorist groups like Boko Haram (BH) utilize mobile technologies as key components of modern terrorism (Minko, 2025; Edet & Anam, 2025; Jacob & Akpan, 2015). On February 14, 2012, BH spokesman Abul 'Qaqa' claimed that mobile operators and the National Communications Commission (NCC) helped security forces track them (Iqtidaruddin, 2012). BH emphasized their effective use of ICT, asserting that government monitoring was futile. After a July 2011 initiative by the National Security Adviser to establish emergency toll-free lines for intelligence, BH's attacks on telecommunications towers signalled their belief that they were gaining the upper hand. They craft messages to announce their intentions strategically. These attacks are calculated moves to intimidate authorities into granting concessions for detained

members (Africa Defense Forum, 2018). Onuoha (2013a) observes that BH mirrors tactics from other jihadist groups in regions like Afghanistan and Iraq, reflecting their understanding of communication's role in modern warfare.

3.1.1.3 Strategic Public Messaging

BH messaging is vital for shaping its members' beliefs through effective indoctrination. The group emphasizes its military strength and the resilience of its leader, Shekau, while targeting a broad audience to attract recruits (Ridwanullah & Villar, 2026; Bello & Mele, 2024; Oluyemi & Badmus, 2025; Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018). This strategy allows BH to articulate grievances that resonate with potential supporters, strengthening its core groups over time (Mahmood, 2017a). Collaboration with ISIS has amplified BH's propaganda through access to Al-Qaeda's Al-Andalus media arm (Ogunlana, 2019). Jihadists gain global media attention through extreme violence and strategic communication (Abubakar, 2017). Between 2012 and 2013, Shekau delivered about eighteen speeches while spokesman Abul Qaqa issued about fifty statements from September 2011 to September 2012. They also distributed flyers and audio cassettes in Nigeria's BAY states (Mahmoud, 2018), using tactics like cassette radicalization, media relations, and online video uploads to platforms like YouTube (Abubakar, 2020).

3.1.1.4 Online Recruitment Messages

Recent research indicates that BH utilises online platforms and mobile communication (Juelich, 2026; Osisanwo, 2024), exposing young people to narratives glorifying martyrdom and resistance, integrating these values into their identities (Edet & Anam, 2025). BH employs strategic online recruitment, blending digital outreach with real-world connections, resulting in online messaging growth from 13% in 2012 to 100% by 2015 (Mahmood, 2017a). Support from ISIS's cyber training further amplifies BH's efforts (Moore, 2017). Like Al-Shabaab, BH uses persuasion and propaganda to engage potential recruits (Omenma, Hendricks & Ajaebili, 2020). They effectively utilize audio cassettes and online content and previously exploited Twitter (now X) through the suspended *Al Urwah al Wuthqa* account for recruitment. By combining physical abductions with online tactics and offering "loans," BH leverages local grievances to attract recruits (Apard, 2020).

3.1.1.5 Coordination, Negotiations, and Conditions Compromise

BH's use of social media for coordination underscores its allegiance to ISIL (Homeland Security Today, 2026; Ayad, 2026; Cox et al., 2018). A central focus of BH's

messaging is on negotiations for the release of imprisoned members (Okunola & Ayodele, 2026; Wando, 2026; Batault & Samuel, 2024). In October 2016, they released 21 Chibok schoolgirls for ransom, followed by 82 more girls in May 2017 in exchange for five militant leaders (Africa Defense Forum, 2018). However, these negotiations have led to increased violence due to failures in subsequent talks (Kovacs, 2020). Zenn and Fox (2021) categorize BH's negotiations as "transactional" rather than "process-oriented," raising concerns about achieving lasting peace given the ongoing conflict and the insurgents' growing capabilities. They argue that, under current circumstances, transactional negotiations are the only viable diplomatic option for engaging with BH.

3.1.1.6 Deployment of audio/video materials

The insurgents use various media—visual, auditory, and audio-visual—to instil fear and control the population (Minko, 2025; Bello & Mele, 2024). They circulate tracks, music, and amateur videos criticizing Western education (Bukar, Hoechner, Galadima & Salisu, 2025; Oluyemi & Badmus, 2025; Zenn & Barkindo, 2013). BH leaders utilize impactful audio and video recordings, as well as leaflets, to challenge Western influence. In northeastern states, Yusuf effectively leveraged his oratory skills to enhance his image and influence public opinion (Adesoji, 2019; Elodie, 2015). BH has shifted from traditional media approaches to digital tactics, utilizing telephone communication and social media, especially YouTube, to amplify their messages (Shola, 2018). Videos of the movement's leader are strategically uploaded to maximize reach, reinforcing their narrative and aiming to recruit global supporters.

3.1.1.7 Use of Social Media for Hate Speech/Violent Religious Messaging

Terrorists like BH often use social media to spread hate speech, incite violence, and recruit followers (Emmanuel & Shafiu, 2025; Osisanwo, 2025). BH utilizes media presence to attract audiences (Thurston, 2016). Due to the rise in social media usage among global conflict movements, BH utilises platforms - Twitter (now X) to further its agenda (Shola, 2018). The group employs YouTube to spread propaganda, threaten the public, and recruit and train youths and funds to enhance its media operations (Zenn, 2018). In June 2016, major platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, agreed to develop databases to combat terrorist messaging, highlighting how the press can inadvertently support BH's narrative (Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018). They strategically craft credible narratives of their attacks to appeal to audiences and undermine government credibility (Abubakar, 2017; Cook, 2018; Ogbondah, Agbese, 2018; Omeni, 2022).

3.2 Conclusion

The literature review examined the essential role of StratCom in Nigerian security operations related to BH. It highlighted how the sect has skilfully exploited StratCom principles to promote its vision of a Salafist state. Central to this research is BH's messaging, which features prominent anti-Western sentiments, propaganda tactics, and brutal messaging techniques designed to instil fear in the populace. This chapter provided a basis for comparing past research with the empirical chapter to address BH messaging.

4. GOVERNMENT: COUNTER-MESSAGING AGAINST BH AND STRATCOM

This chapter reviews the role of StratCom in the Nigerian Army's counter-messaging efforts and existing initiatives. It examines factors contributing to shortcomings in these endeavours and explores the government's military and political strategies in the War on Terror. The chapter assesses media efforts in P/CVE and highlights collaborations between governmental and societal actors to counter insurgent messaging. It examines the UN's "whole-of-society" approach to COIN narratives. It also critically reviews Nigeria's P/CVE framework

4.1 Nigerian Army, StratCom and Counter-Messaging

In Nigeria, StratCom began in 1976 when General Olusegun Obasanjo's regime enacted Decree 27 following the failed coup by Buka Sukar Dimka, which resulted in the death of General Murtala Mohammed. This decree empowered StratCom to coordinate internal security, foreign intelligence, and counterintelligence (Ogbuleke & Erameh, 2020). Since then, StratCom has played a crucial role in enhancing national security by addressing violent extremism and promoting national integration (Cornish, 2011). This analysis will explore nine crucial ways in which StratCom supports NA's COIN operations:

4.1.1 Multimedia Approach

In its quest to craft an effective counter-insurgency strategy, the Nigerian military has adopted a comprehensive multimedia approach (Omachi, Monday, Nana-Mariam, 2024; Ogbuleke & Erameh, 2020; Yusuf, 2019). This strategy involves harnessing Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), seizing control of the network of service providers in the Sambisa Forest region and leveraging television and radio to challenge the insurgents' narrative effectively. However, despite these proactive measures, the insurrection persists, highlighting the ongoing struggle for security and stability in the region (Dyikuk & Maimako, 2019).

4.1.2 Kinetic Approach

Since 2009, the military has pursued aggressive counter-messaging strategies against the sect (Ogbozor, 2026; Kolawole & Enaifoghe, 2026). However, studies reveal that relying solely on kinetic tactics (hard or forceful messaging) has failed to resolve the insurgency, highlighting the urgent need for a non-kinetic approach (Adesote & Akande, 2023; Campbell & Weitz, 2006). Omenma, Abada, and Omenma (2020) also note that the war against BH has

primarily relied on kinetic actions. Malan (2017) argues that the post-9/11 response in the U.S. fostered persistent combat strategies in the global war on terror, significantly impacting kinetic operations in the Middle East and Africa. The West's reliance on forceful measures inadvertently fuels Islamist extremism, proving ineffective as jihadists excel in the "battle of narratives" (Malan, 2017). This calls for a re-evaluation of extant communication strategies against the terrorists, leading to lasting peace and stability.

4.1.3 StratCom Initiative

In 2013, the Nigerian government collaborated with the United States and the United Kingdom to launch the "Terrorism Prevention and Amendment Act," a strategic communication initiative aimed at combating terrorism (Kolawole & Enaifoghe, 2026). Recognizing that extremist narratives fuel terrorism, this initiative sought to improve military CT initiatives. Colonel John Fletcher, the UK's Defence Attaché, emphasized leveraging Nigeria's experiences to develop effective strategies (Channels Television, 2013). Nigeria's National Security Adviser (NSA), Colonel Dasuki Sambo, noted that military action alone would not resolve the insurgency, advocating for public diplomacy and StratCom (Channels Television, 2013). Rear Admiral Patrick Ahgoholor, Commandant of the Nigerian Defence Academy, considered StratCom essential for coordinating efforts across agencies. The experts recommended a comprehensive approach integrating communication, diplomacy, and military action to address the insurgency (Channels Television, 2013).

4.1.4 Counter-Messaging Campaigns

The Nigerian government and military have implemented strategic communication efforts in their counter-messaging initiatives (Yahaya, 2026; Mohammed, 2026). In 2013, the government, coordinated by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), mobilized armed forces and intelligence agencies to combat the insurgency. Leadership changes among military chiefs prompted revisions in strategy (Abubakar, 2017). While the army managed media outreach from Maiduguri, the Department of State Services (DSS) focused on security operations during President Yar'adua's tenure, a trend that continued under NSA General Andrew Azazi. As the insurgency persisted, operational strategies evolved, requiring additional security agencies to engage in public communications (Abubakar, 2017). This shift highlighted the importance of StratCom "to enhance the security and resilience of their populations" (Ogbuleke & Erameh, 2020, p. 42).

4.1.5 Use of Propaganda, Media Cover-Ups

The Nigerian government/Military has been accused of deploying propaganda and media cover-ups in their counter-messaging approach against the insurgents (Iwuoha, 2020). In response, under Major General Chris Olukolade, the DHQ in Abuja managed media content from a distance, rather than addressing the crisis directly at the Army base in Maiduguri (Abubakar, 2017). Government and military responses to abductions of school children are replete with propaganda and cover-ups. One major case occurred on November 21, 2025, when about 303 students were taken from St. Mary's Catholic School in Papiri, Niger State; at least 50 escaped within two days, and the rest were rescued and reunited with their families by late December and January. 25 female students were also kidnapped from the Government Girls Comprehensive Secondary School in Maga, Kebbi State, on November 17, 2025 (Saint, 2025). During the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls, BH criticized the government for cover-up and showcased its tactics, adopting ISIL's black flag to assert its allegiance to the international terrorist organization (Cox et al., 2018).

4.1.6 Media Campaign Efforts

The Nigerian government engages in a narrative power struggle with insurgents through media campaigns (Oluyemi & Badmus, 2025). Yusuf (2019) emphasized that these campaigns convey a crucial message: Boko Haram (BH) is anti-Islam. By urging citizens to report suspected terrorists, the campaigns foster community responsibility, using straightforward messages like "Stop the killing" and "Repent and surrender" in local languages. These efforts strengthened ties between civilians and the military, creating a supportive environment for mop-up operations and encouraging former BH members to surrender. The initiative unfolded in three stages: the launch of "Nigeria Unite Against Terrorism," the introduction of Lafiya Dole Radio by the military, and campaigns promoting vigilance against suspicious activities and foreign ideologies (Yusuf, 2019).

4.1.7 Forum for Speakers of the Security and Response Agency Initiative

A 19-member Forum of Spokespersons of Security and Response Agencies (FOSSRA), comprising representatives from the military, paramilitary, intelligence, and other agencies like the Nigerian Defence Headquarters (DHQ) (Abubakar, 2017; Shuaib, 2017), was established. FOSSRA aimed to enhance public relations through a functional website and monthly meetings in Abuja, where journalists were briefed on counter-militancy efforts. However, following General Muhammadu Buhari's election

in 2015 and the appointment of a new military leadership, including retired Major General Babagana Monguno as the NSA, the initiative faced setbacks. Media consultant Yushua Shuaib resigned after the arrest of his superior, retired Colonel Sambo Nasuki, on corruption charges, disrupting FOSSRA's operations and reducing the DHQ's media visibility. Consequently, the army had to manage public communications more effectively. Despite its ambitious goals, FOSSRA struggled to counter terrorists' messaging, highlighting the need for cohesive communication strategies in national security efforts (Abubakar, 2017; Shuaib, 2017).

4.1.8 Whole-of-Society Approach

Nigeria's former Chief of Defence Staff, General Lucky Irabor, passionately affirmed the government's unwavering commitment to eradicating the threats posed by BH and ISWAP (Mahmud, 2022). He championed a "Whole-of-Society" approach to security, which underscores the collective responsibility of every citizen in safeguarding the nation. Irabor stressed the critical importance of enhancing StratCom, noting that it can empower the public with the knowledge that security is not solely the duty of the military, but a shared obligation among all citizens. He urged communities to participate actively in intelligence gathering by reporting any suspicious activities involving unfamiliar individuals, thereby fostering a culture of vigilance and collaboration (Mahmud, 2022). Irabor called for the implementation of a dynamic communication strategy that engages citizens not only in understanding their vital roles in national security but also in countering extremist narratives and supporting the reintegration of former fighters into society (Mahmud, 2022).

4.1.9 Engaging Whistle-Blowers

On Monday, November 14, 2022, the DHQ in Abuja announced a list of nineteen most wanted terrorist kingpins and commanders, offering a N5 million reward for any helpful information leading to their capture. Major General Jimmy Akpor, the Director of Defence Information, presented photographs of the suspects, along with their names and origins, and provided contact numbers for military and security agencies to encourage public reporting (Aregbesola, 2022). Because effective communication shapes media narratives, influencing society (Dairo, 2017), the government initiated the whistle-blowing policy. Various security agencies were part of this media strategy (Abubakar, 2017) aimed at disseminating information that reports crime and promotes behaviour change, unity, and development among citizens (Ogbuleke & Erameh, 2020). Though two Ansaru leaders, who were not part

of the 19 identified in 2022, were arrested in August 2025, the suspected terrorists on the 2022 list have not been apprehended (Africa News, 2025). In March 2024, the DHQ updated a list of 90 Wanted Persons by March 2024 without placing a bounty on them. The poster was unsuccessful because many of the terror leaders on it continue to evade capture to date (Odita, 2024). Figure 4. 1 displays 19 wanted terrorists on the DHQ declares list with N5m bounty rewards for any whistleblower.



Figure 4. 1 Nineteen wanted terrorists on the DHQ declares list with N5m bounty (BBC, 2016: https://igit.me/l8PX0)

4.2 Primary Counter-Messaging Efforts

Nigeria employs three primary counter-messaging approaches: the military, political approach, and Dialogue and Peace Agreement Committees' approaches. The *military approach* includes the formation of the Special Joint Task Force (SJTF) in 2011 and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which enhances security capacities in the Sahel region (Ajala, 2024). This reflects a unified regional effort to combat terrorism and promote stability among LCBC member states (Gana & Bukar, 2021; Agbiboa, 2015; Fox, 2021). The *political approach* encompasses non-kinetic strategies, including the implementation of counter-terrorism laws and the state of emergency declared in the BAY states by former President Goodluck Jonathan, as well as the establishment of peace dialogue committees and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) (Humanitarian Outcomes United Kingdom, 2009; Yalmi, 2021; Gana & Bukar, 2021). The *Dialogue and Peace Agreement Committees*, initiated by former Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo in 2011 and Goodluck Jonathan in 2015, was meant to restore

stability in the region. These approaches were unsuccessful due to change in governments, lack of political will and bureaucracy. Together, these approaches constitute Nigeria's comprehensive strategy to address its security challenges (Gana & Bukar, 2021). While Table 4.1 shows the government's extant counter-messaging efforts and failures, Figure 4.2 contrasts between kinetic and non-kinetic counter-messaging.

Table 4. 1 Government's Extant Counter-Messaging Efforts and Failures

S/N	Counter-messaging Efforts	Counter-messaging Failures
1.	Speeches about the establishment of CJTF as a professional Indigenous police-military force	Reports on poor military intelligence surveillance
2.	Talks about founding the Department of Civil-Military Affairs	News about the lack of coordination and Synergy
3.	Messages about ensuring police-military collaboration	Information about the deployment of old cordon-and-search techniques and the use of roadblocks.
4.	Disclosure about the coming on board of Operation Safe Corridor (OSC)	News about logistical challenges
5.	Communication about the deployment of the good governance approach	Reports about the lack of political will
6.	Reports about institutional approaches, such as the establishment of COIN schools in Kaduna	Information about bribery, corruption, and kickbacks

Government's counter-messaging primarily comprises kinetic and non-kinetic efforts. While kinetic messaging is marked in red, non-kinetic messaging is highlighted in green:



Figure 4. 2 The Contrast between Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Counter-messaging

Meanwhile, factors responsible for lapses in the army's strategic efforts include: ignoring truth-telling diminishes trust (Abubakar, 2017; Frost & Nicholas, 2017; Iwuoha, 2020); remote coordination of counter-messaging operations limits outreach (Financial Times, 2018); ineffective communication in the battlespace hinders operations (Ogbuleke & Erameh, 2020); a narrow communication scope fails to engage diverse audiences (Ajala, 2022); rigid military frameworks create bottlenecks in messaging (Oriola, 2023); reliance on few outlets hampers effective public engagement (Yusuf, 2019). The army's lengthy radio jingles (ten to twenty minutes) are less effective than the ideal sixty seconds, and the focus on English alienates local informants.

4.3 The National Strategy for P/CVE: StratCom Assessment

The previous National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) established the StratCom Inter-Agency Policy Committee (SC-IPC), recognized as a crucial "messaging hub for content development and dissemination" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017). This committee is instrumental in aligning communication strategies with national goals and ensuring effective coordination across

platforms. By evaluating communication impact, the SC-IPC aims to drive meaningful change and achieve its objectives. Key communications-related elements of the plan include:

First, the SC-IPC emphasizes the importance of both online and offline engagement to combat violent extremism. Recognizing that insurgents exploit propaganda, the strategy promotes integrating strategic communication into P/CVE programmes at all levels of government. By partnering with community organizations, it empowers citizens to challenge extreme narratives.

The plan advocates for positive messaging through diverse channels, encouraging educators, religious leaders, cultural figures, and others to share counter-narratives. It highlights the effectiveness of radio, television, and the Internet in countering extremist propaganda, prioritizing careful planning and success measurement. The document acknowledges community leaders as guardians of tradition and advocates for identifying early warning signs of violent extremism through tools like posters and Theatre for Development (TFD). It recognizes the entertainment sector's potential to promote positive narratives via films and documentaries that support national values. Collaborating with labour unions and media influencers, the strategy aims to amplify messages on social media, thereby nurturing resilience against extremism.

It highlights the critical role of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in preventing extremist ideologies from gaining traction. It calls for cooperation among key stakeholders, including the international community, civil society, religious leaders, and political figures, to effectively utilize strategic communication in combating violent extremism, as outlined in Nigeria's 2014 National Security Strategy. The document encourages the Federal and State Ministries of Information, the National Orientation Agency (NOA), and government-owned media to initiate public awareness campaigns that directly confront harmful rhetoric. It emphasizes the crucial role of private media in promoting national unity and cohesion (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017) but fails to recognize the significant value of Afro-based communication traditions. Nigeria's counter-messaging faces significant challenges, including the lasting effects of British colonialism, rampant corruption, military heavy-handedness, and low literacy rates, which all hinder efforts to counter extremist ideologies (Damilola, 2021; Dyikuk, 2018a; Reuters, 2016).

4.4 UN's "Whole-of-Society Approach to Counter-Insurgency Narratives

The UN has identified three crucial areas in its "whole-of-society" approach to combating extremism and insurgencies. First, it is essential to understand the nature of the threat by differentiating between terrorists and the narratives that support violent extremism, inter-communal violence, and hate speech. Recognising the communication strategies employed by groups like Al-Shabaab and BH is vital. Second, ensuring a free press is critical for countering terrorist narratives, along with engaging the industry and carefully analysing the target audience. Ultimately, promoting a strong peacetime narrative that fosters social cohesion and community resilience is essential. It notes that protecting "credible messengers" from terrorist influence and effectively utilising media and civil society, especially after attacks, is key (Hutchinson, 2020).

The UN plays an essential role in combating extremism through innovative initiatives that engage communities affected by conflict. A key example is the document's "Whole-of-Society Approaches to Countering Terrorist Narratives and Incitement: UNOCT/UNCTC Experience," released by the UN in 2020, as part of the StratCom Project. In line with Security Council Resolution 2354, this document emphasises the importance of comprehensive counter-narrative strategies. It highlights the need to engage media and civil society to limit the public space for terrorists while ensuring adherence to international human rights laws. The "Comprehensive International Framework to Counter Terrorist Narratives" (S/2017/375) encourages national ownership and "whole-of-society" engagement, empowering local communities to create effective interventions that counter extremist narratives and promote positive messages (Hutchinson, 2020).

Through these initiatives, the UN advances a united front against extremism. Hutchinson (2020) emphasises understanding the nature of threats and protecting "credible messengers" as vital ways of preventing terrorists from manipulating media and civil society. This framework appears as linear as it polarises government and society as separate entities thus dichotomising P/CVE efforts. This UN approach to counter-insurgency narratives appears overly linear, treating government and society as separate entities and splitting P/CVE efforts into two clear sides. This research proposes a homegrown method as an alternative.

4.5 Conclusion

The chapter reviewed Nigeria's counter-messaging strategies against extremism. It highlighted the government's initiatives and the crucial role of media and societal collaboration in P/CVE. It gave an overview of the UN's "whole-of-society" approach to counter-messaging. The Nigerian government's military strategies - the MNJTF and CJTF and political initiatives - emergency declarations and Dialogue and Peace Agreement Committees were evaluated. The chapter presented a prelude to the methods and the need for integrating media components into the P/CVE framework to drive effective changes in the nation's counter-messaging.

5. METHODS

This study employs qualitative analysis. It uses a non-interview approach, providing deep insights into BH messaging and the government's counter-messaging. It combines Visual-Verbal Video Analysis (VVVA), a subset of Multimodal Analysis, for critically examining multimodal cues in the sample and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for interpreting ideological messaging and legitimacy, including hidden power structures in the data. It also details CDA and a three-dimensional CDA framework. It also explains the sample size, justifies the choice of the sample's timeframe and selection criteria, and explains VVVA and a step-by-step implementation of its matrix. Overall, this methodology enhances the understanding of CT communication and makes a significant contribution to the discourse surrounding counter-messaging.

5.1 Research Methods

This section outlines the methods used to examine 60 YouTube videos—30 with BH messaging from 2012–2018 and 30 featuring government counter-messaging from 2010–2025. Using VVVA and CDA, I reviewed thirty BH videos from seventeen major media outlets, including *Sahara TV, Africa News, CNN, AFP News Agency, eNCA, Daily Mail, The Telegraph, The Wall Street Journal, CBS Evening News, The New York Times, Our Gists, Naijapals, The Guardian UK, CGTN, On Demand News, and Euro News*, all published during the peak of BH attacks. Eleven were original BH clips, while nineteen came from reputable sources. The selection covered five videos from Africa, six from Europe, five from the Americas, and one from China. The thirty government videos came from six Nigerian outlets (*Nigerian Television Authority, TVC, Channels TV, Punch, TV360 Nigeria, A Square TV*) and seven international organizations (*BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, France 24, Emirates News Agency, GRV Global, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa*). Foreign media were included for both BH and government content due to their high-stakes but uneven influence in the Nigerian conflict, with each side pursuing different goals. Each video is marked as (V or S) in the text, linked to a citation number (University of Leeds, 2025).

Because the data contains both video and text, VVVA and CDA were

combined to offset each other's weaknesses. CDA has been criticised for its subjectivity and its tendency to prioritise textual interpretation over other aspects of communication, like production processes and audience reception (Philo, 2002; Philo, 2007). Still, it is used because it focuses on analysing media texts and visual elements, while VVVA helps assess the visual components, balancing CDA's limitations. Using both methods together offers a clearer view of how each addresses the other's shortcomings. The process is guided by high standards of reliability, credibility, trustworthiness, and inclusiveness in both selection and analysis. Coding sheds light on both BH messaging and the government's counter-messaging, highlighting the importance of visual communication in shaping narratives (Hecker & Kalpokas, 2025). Ontological objects are applied to understand data, reflexivity, context, symbolic meaning, vocabulary, and language (Dicks, 2019; Finlay, 2002; Kezar, 2002; Janin, 2023). The methods include:

5.1.1 Visual-Verbal Video Analysis (VVVA)

This study critically analyses both BH messaging and the government's counter-messaging, using VVVA to break down verbal and nonverbal cues in BH's YouTube videos. Rooted in social semiotics, this qualitative approach aims to uncover key aspects like "context" and "meaning." Aware of the limits of subjective selection, I used purposive sampling to carefully choose thirty videos from a total of seventy-one. Each selection was based on how well it conveyed the insurgents' messages. By following nonprobability sampling principles, the process stayed deliberate and focused, with criteria highlighting the most impactful video elements (Battaglia, 2025).

This perspective in media studies shows that communication is more than just language, drawing on images, sounds, music, and gestures (Jewitt, 2014). In VVVA, elements like visuals, sound, layout, and text play a big role in engaging readers within multimodal discourse (Rathnayake & Suthers, 2023a). The principles of multimodality include lexical grammar, emphasizing how meanings are expressed through visual elements (Machin, 2007). BH videos were examined to uncover the messages of government spokespeople and commanders, revealing their operational tactics as reported by various media outlets. Understanding whether BH's communications are deliberate and

tactical is key to evaluating their strategic and political communication. The study also explored how the government engages with insurgents and the public in the war on terror (Williamson, Given, and Scifleet, 2018). It delves into the content of these videos and what they depict, while analysing the government's counter-messaging to gain insights into discourses about insurgency and the role of indigenous communication in addressing terrorism.

The analysis of insurgents' narratives revealed how they use social media for strategic messaging, highlighting their vision and mission while applying StratCom to guerrilla tactics. Using a multilayered qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth look at verbal and visual content, uncovering meaningful links that deepened understanding. Visual communication goes beyond words, emphasizing the interplay of meanings through visual grammar, actions, and power dynamics—gaze, interaction angles, and spatial proximity. For example, photos from the War in Iraq show distinct participant types, from individual to group identities and from generic to specific portrayals (Machin, 2007). Multimodality explores how people shift between in-person and digital interactions, documenting texts, interactions, and social practices to create impactful presentations (Flewitt, Price, & Korkiakangas, 2018). Recognizing these patterns helps clarify contexts and processes, shaping contextualized narratives (Morse, 2008; Ouhaichi, Spikol, & Vogel, 2023).

5.1.2 Step-by-step implementation of VVVA Matrix

The research follows a step-by-step analytical process. It presents an analytical account of the collation, transcription, coding, analysis, synthesis/assessment of data across the two approaches used. The rationale is to ensure that what is seen and heard is not missed or lost; the following steps are followed:

1. Collation: The 60-video corpus was organised into two chronological sets. The researcher selected 30 videos from each category.

2. Transcription: This was followed by listening to each video multiple times and transcribing the verbal data. This included the text on the screen as well as translations.

3. Coding: I coded data as V1-V30 for BH videos and S1-S30 for the

government's videos. Attention was paid to specific matrices - the setting, main characters, visual imagery/symbols, visual actions, verbal/textual features, and camera techniques. Other matrices considered include theme and goal, Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2025), legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), and target audience.

4. Analysis: The researcher will compare how BH utilises visual cues to create power and fear versus how the government uses visuals to ensure unity while canvassing for unity and nationhood.

5. Synthesis/Assessment: The analysis would compare both the BH and government videos to ascertain which were more sophisticated in their messaging or counter-messaging over time. Table 5.1 presents the VVVA Template for the analysis of BH messaging versus the government's counter-messaging.

Table 5. 1 VVVA Template for Analysis: BH Messaging Versus Govt's Counter-Messaging

1. Stage One:	• **Video Code:** V1-V30 for BH videos and S1-S30 for the NG's videos • **Video:** Provided in Appendix 1 & 2 • **Source/Chanel:** Provided in Appendix 1 & 2. • **Date and Duration:** Provided in Appendix 1 & 2. • **Quality and Style:** High, low • **Audio Elements:** Clear, unclear
2. State Two: VVVA Coding Matrix	• **Setting:** Forest, desert, rural area, military camp, outdoor, city center • **Main Characters:** Shekau, fighters, government officials, politicians, military authorities, victims • **Visual Imagery/Symbols:** Armory, weapons, Koran, flags, aggressive fighters, and fighting or smiling soldiers • **Visual Actions:** Training, humanitarian aid, executions, press release, marching orders • **Verbal/Textual Features:** Arabic text, dialogue in Hausa, English subtitles, propaganda slogans • **Camera Techniques:** Close-up shot, cinematic, normal, surveillance style, amateur
3. Stage Three: CDA Matrix	• **Theme/Goal:** Threats, victory claim, condemnation of attacks, deradicalisation, peace-building • **Ideological Square (van Dijk):** a. **Our Positive:** Piety, strength, victimhood, self-glorification b. **Our Negative:** Hiding or minimizing errors c. **Their Positive:** Ignoring or belittling the government's successes

	d. **Their Negative:** Discrediting the government as either corrupt or illegitimate • **Legitimation Strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015):** a. **Authority:** Divine law, tradition, and the leader's mandate b. **Morality:** Righteous or Evil c. **Rationality:** Logic of violence and security d. **Myths:** Stories of glorification, martyrdom, and victories • **Target Audience:** Youth, women, local and regional governments, international community
Synthesis of Comparative Analysis	• **Tone:** Aggressive, persuasive, triumphant, apologetic, desperate, exclamatory • **Scale of Violence Shown:** Explicit, implied, none • **Intertextuality:** Reference to other events, global jihadi groups, and historical figures • **Effectiveness:** How compelling the messages are

Table 5. 2 Expected Key Themes

Elements	Focus on BH (2012-2018)	Focus on NG (2010-2025)
Visual	Weapons, masked fighters, training, gesticulations and aggressive non-verbal signs/communication	Government officials in *Agbada* (long West African robe traditionally worn over a shirt and trousers), soldiers in military uniforms, and community outreach
Verbal	Threats to the state, religious justification, verbal assault	Military might, COIN successes, surrender, patriotism, rehabilitation.
CDA	Delegitimising the state and Western education	Delegitimising the insurgent group as outlaws and calling for unity
Evolution	Shift from engaging in terror to capturing terror and messaging to propaganda	Shift from denial to non-kinetic means- the government's P/CVE

5.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA, from the Latin "discurrere," meaning "to run" (Maccabe, 1979), is an important way to understand how communication shapes how people see the world. By looking at speech, text, and discussions, it focuses on the processes and behaviours that guide interactions (Titscher et al., 2002). This thesis aims to uncover the rich meanings hidden in data, revealing deeper patterns (Fowler, 1991). Unlike other methods that search for hidden interpretations, CDA focuses on clear content and studies discourse within

wider social contexts. Its multidisciplinary nature makes it great for exploring meaning and meaning-making in social and cultural life (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Fairclough, 2010). Building on CDA (Fairclough, 1992), this research looks at government speeches through description, critical analysis, and interpretation. CDA embraces diverse interdiscursive and hybrid approaches, breaking down metaphors and examining language use and style (Fairclough, 2013). As Wodak and Meyer (2009) note, it is a key tool for finding evidence-based practices in discourse, making it vital for understanding communication and power.

I explored the literature using targeted search terms like "B Haram Messaging," "Strategic Communication," "Counter Messaging," and "Media and Conflict." This helped me find relevant articles from major databases and trusted news outlets such as *The Terrorist Perspective Magazine, Premium Times, Daily Trust, The Guardian, BBC*, and *CNN*. I pulled together a mix of materials, including news reports, opinion pieces, and feature articles, which added depth to the data. Using a qualitative research approach proved useful for generating insights and fresh solutions to human challenges. I selected articles based on their relevance to "Boko Haram messaging" and "government counter-messaging initiatives," while considering their historical context. Peer-reviewed journal articles and grey literature were also included, shaping the findings. The study draws on current debates and takes a critical look at key arguments from a wide range of literature (Mumford, 2009).

Using qualitative methods (Goldberg & Allen, 2015), this study aims to better understand complex social phenomena through critical analysis and immersion in specific contexts (Aspers & Corte, 2019). This approach shapes the creation of theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and methods, while embracing diverse multimodal genres. Methodology is key in determining how research is carried out, from choosing approaches to defining epistemological positions (Whittaker, 2012). The study is thoughtfully designed to address the specific research questions, with broad scholarly support for its flexibility and adaptability (Johnson & McLean, 2020). CDA experts ask: If social discourse shapes our perspectives, what shapes it in turn? What rules and ideologies guide our communication and perception? Who influences the viewpoints

expressed in discourse? (Williamson, Given & Scifleet, 2018). Exploring these questions deepens the investigation and leads to meaningful insights.

CDA is a powerful way to uncover dominant and subordinate discourses in society, while also exploring how social actors show resistance. It brings to light key patterns shaping our social world, highlighting their ethical and political importance (Williamson, Given & Scifleet, 2018). Structured CDA uses specific analytical techniques (Manning & Luyt, 2011) and organises data into flexible patterns (Bailey & Mouton, 2005), revealing a clear "essence" that communicates meaning (Simon, 2011; Morse, 2008). This wide sociological lens deepens our understanding of political communication and StratCom, showing how counter-messaging connects with StratCom policies in media studies and society. It is used to provide nuanced interpretation and analysis (Sherrill, 2003; Schreier, 2012), offering valuable insights into modern issues. Even with challenges like overlapping themes and researcher bias (Discourse Analyzer, 2024a), the researcher successfully organised the dataset.

Spotting patterns is key to understanding the government's counter-messaging efforts against BH. These repeated ideas in texts and conversations uncover deeper meanings, social habits, and ideologies hidden in language (Discourse Analyzer, 2024a). Recognizing these patterns helps show how language shapes social realities, influences identities, and reinforces power structures (Discourse Analyzer, 2024b). They highlight important issues and values in political speeches, media, and social platforms, offering a clearer view of how topics are framed. The researcher used a deductive approach, relying on predefined patterns to guide the study, unlike the inductive method where patterns emerge naturally. Coding was essential here, tagging parts of the data to match patterns, making it easier to organize and spot recurring themes (Discourse Analyzer, 2024b). In the end, patterns are a powerful way to see how political leaders create narratives of inclusion or exclusion. CDA looks at how the state uses institutional frames to shift the public away from BH's messages, while terrorists use diagnostic frames to blame the government and motivational frames to draw in recruits. Figure 5.1 shows the Three-Dimensional Framework (Fairclough, 1992).

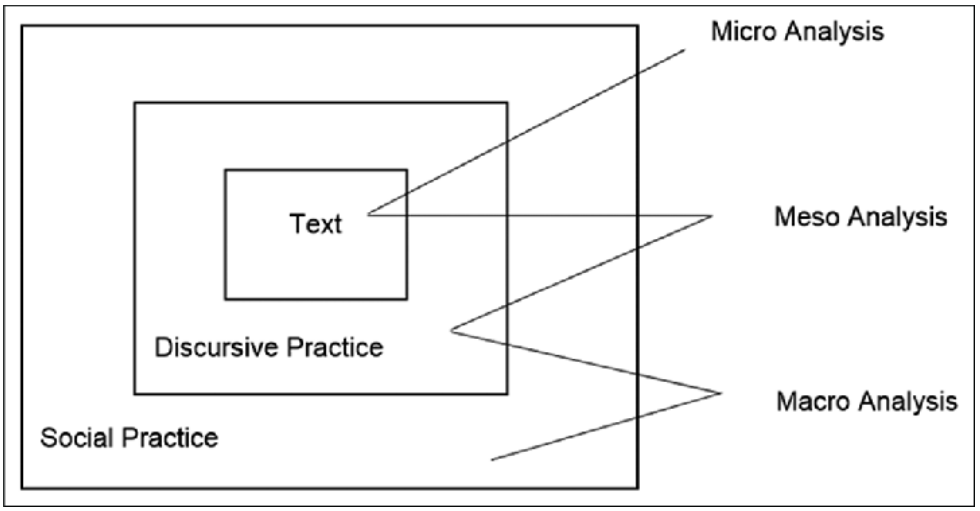


Figure 5. 1 Three-Dimensional Framework – (Fairclough, 1992; Ramanathan, Tan & Paramasivam, 2017).

The scope covers BH's efforts to undermine the Nigerian state through its messaging, contrasted with the government's attempts to counter radical narratives. The corpus includes BH content such as messages, transcripts of video appearances by leaders like Shekau, jihadist publications, sermons, and social media posts. YouTube videos featuring BH propaganda speeches by Shekau, his lieutenants, and subordinates. For the government's counter-messaging, videos considered were those which comprise NA press releases, statements from past and present presidents, media appearances, official security statements, and social media campaigns. To evaluate the government's StratCom, only YouTube was used, featuring presidential speeches, military press releases, national security strategy documents, and official broadcast policies. The corpus covers the peak of BH's violent messaging against the government, regional powers, and the international community, to understand the "battle for hearts and minds." Table 5.3 presents the three-dimensional framework (Fairclough, 1992) utilised.

The scope looks at BH's attempts to undermine the Nigerian state through its messaging, compared to the government's efforts to counter radical narratives. The material includes BH messages, transcripts of video appearances by leaders like Shekau, jihadist publications, sermons, and social media posts. YouTube videos featuring BH propaganda speeches from Shekau, his lieutenants, and subordinates were analysed alongside the government's counter-messaging, comprising NA press releases, statements from past and present presidents, media appearances, official

security updates, and social media campaigns. To assess the government's StratCom, only YouTube content was used, including presidential speeches, military press releases, national security strategy documents, and official broadcast policies. Table 5.3 outlines the three-dimensional framework (Fairclough, 1992) applied.

Table 5. 3 Three-dimensional CDA Framework Used (Fairclough, 1992)

1. Micro-Level: Textual Analysis	Vocabulary Analysis: Boko Haram's "Us vs. them," "believers vs. infidels, "terrorists vs. bandits," & government's use of euphemisms delegitimise the insurgents.	Grammatical Analysis: Speech (actor) and Receiver (recipient) – "Perpetrator vs. Victim," and "Active vs. Passive;" Government seen as "anti-Islamic," "Islamophobic," vs. the insurgents viewed as "enemies of the state," or "public enemy number one."	Metaphoric and Rhetorical Analysis: Metaphors used to demonise the state as an enemy or the actions of Boko Haram as heroic.	
2. Meso-Level: Discursive Practice	Production: How messages are produced, distributed, and consumed: Insurgents are viewed as "crude" or state, as "formal." BH uses social media to "instill fear." Vs. govt's use of traditional media to control the narrative; the audience that consumes/interprets the message.	Intertextuality: How the gov't speeches align with international "War on Terror" narratives and how BH videos radically exploit religious texts.	Strategic Frames: How messages are "framed" to achieve specific objectives – the state's institutional frames and insurgents' diagnostic and motivational frames.	Counter-narratives: How the state's Stratcom reacts to extremist claims, to "fill the vacuum" created by the group's digital propaganda.
3. Macro-Level: Social Practice	Ideological Tussle: How language reflects a power struggle between BH, which attempts	Power/Legitimacy: How both sides deploy rhetoric to legitimise their actions—Boko	Wider Political Context: How the wider political contexts polarise society,	

	to replace democracy with a Caliphate, and the govt's use of military action to reinforce democratic values/ national unity	Haram justifies violence as "divine," while the gov't justifies its tactics as "protecting sovereignty." Plus underlying ideologies - radical Islamism vs. liberal conservatism.	awareness of public security, and the sect's process of radicalisation.	
4.Interpretation/Critical Evaluation	Identification of Contradictions: How BH messaging and gov'ts' counter-messaging claims compare and contrast with observed reality.	Analysis of Effectiveness: Determining which side is winning the communication battle.	Recommendations: To fill empirical, conceptual, and practical gaps in the literature, recommend Afro-multidimensional Stratcom towards restructuring the government's communication strategies for improved messaging and overall security.	

1. Micro Level: This analysis focuses on vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical or metaphorical elements (Fairclough, 2013; Fairclough, 2010). It examined BH's word choices, such as "us" versus "them" and "terrorists," as well as crude language aimed at creating fear. It also examined how the government used euphemisms to undermine insurgents and challenge their narrative. Grammar analysis examines how speeches framed key roles – "perpetrator" versus "victim" – and used active or passive voice to either assign or obscure blame for violence. Other framing tactics examined labels used by the government portraying the insurgents as "public enemy number one," "enemies of the state," and the terrorists referring to the government as "infidel" and "anti-Islamic." The analysis also explored how both sides used metaphors in their messaging and counter-messaging.

2. Meso Level: This stage examines how insurgents and the government create, share, and consume messages, factoring in intertextuality, strategic framing, and counter-narratives (Fairclough, 2013; 2010). The concept of discursive practice emphasizes the

processes behind media creation—editorial decisions, institutional pressures, and their links to broader power structures. It examines how language and imagery choices reflect the production process and broader social dynamics, with media outlets' political and ideological leanings influencing both the message and its target audience. For RQ1, the focus was on BH's messaging style—fast, rough production and video propaganda projecting invincibility. For RQ2, the study assessed how effective this messaging was against the government by analysing its formal, top-down responses, while also considering the contexts, constraints, and institutional practices shaping how these texts are produced.

3. Macro Level: This analysis focuses on the ideological and power struggles shaping the broader political landscape (Fairclough, 2013; Fairclough, 2010). It examines discourse within its social, political, and historical context, extending beyond Nigeria given the insurgency's national, regional, and international impact. It examines how language reflects these struggles, contrasting BH's push to replace democratic values with an Islamic Caliphate under Sharia Law against the state's counter-narrative that reinforces and legitimizes democratic institutions. It also considers how the Nigerian government uses military action in its messaging to strengthen national identity. From a comparative angle, it would investigate how insurgents frame violence against the state as "divine," and the government's military actions geared at "protecting sovereignty." Exploring ideology and dominance, it would examine the apparent clash between radical Islamism and liberal conservatism to show how each narrative either challenges or sustains existing power structures. It would evaluate how competing narratives influence polarization, public perceptions of security, and the sect's radicalization.

4. Interpretation/Critical Evaluation: The analysis focuses on spotting contradictions and evidence to shape policy recommendations (Fairclough, 2013; Fairclough, 2010). It tracks inconsistencies to ensure balanced views, compares counter-messaging from both insurgents and the state with real events, and examines how BH often claims victories while the state struggles to maintain credibility during ongoing attacks. It also assesses who is winning the communication battle. The study proposes an Afro-multidimensional Stratcom—drawing on African traditions like dialogue, town hall meetings, and the involvement of religious and traditional leaders—to help the government restructure its communications and strengthen security.

CDA was used for its three-part method: description, which looks at linguistic features like vocabulary and grammar to explore labels in each side's messaging; interpretation, which considers how each side produces and consumes media (Fairclough, 2013; Fairclough, 2010), such as Shekau imitating Al-Qaeda's video style or the government issuing statements after attacks; and explanation, which examines socio-political factors like power and ideology in shaping narratives. Beyond messaging strategies, the study also explored how ethnicity, religion, politics, and power dynamics influence the conflict's discourse and national identity, helping to organize large datasets and highlight key communication issues. Figure 5.1 shows the research's chosen methodology.

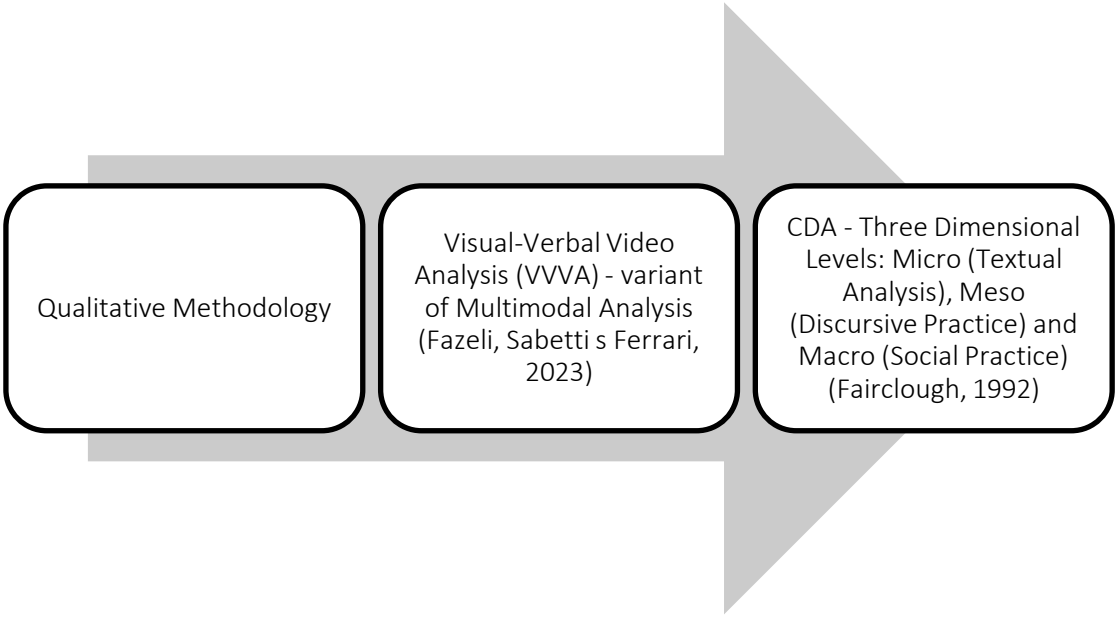


Figure 5. 2 Chosen Methodology

I used clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to select YouTube videos from media organizations for the study. Due to the limited availability of original BH messaging during this time, 11 original BH clips and 19 were chosen. This scarcity resulted from major tech companies blocking insurgents from social media between 2014 and 2016 (Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018; Chui, 2015; Malik, 2015; Ogala, 2015; Mahmood, 2017b), making media organizations the only dependable primary source for public access to BH materials. BH also currently lacks a YouTube channel. VA offers a useful perspective for examining human, non-human, and symbolic communications.

Using five VVVA attributes—multimodal, content, compositional,

emotional, and discursive—the researcher applied a six-step process to organize, collect, review, transcribe, extract, and code data (Fazeli, Sabetti, and Ferrari, 2023). The criteria were chosen because the data have multimodal and textual elements. VVVA serves as a social science tool for extracting data matrices from verbal, visual, and textual content, aiming to reveal themes across diverse data and improve analytical quality (Fazeli, Sabetti, & Ferrari, 2023). Non-textual data, such as videos and images, provided unique insights into the discourse. Video data and multimodality are coded and interpreted to deepen the understanding of StratCom in BH messaging and the government's counter-messaging. This method aims for insightful interpretations and solid findings.

The videos were translated from Hausa or Arabic into English, drawing on the researcher's deep knowledge of Hausa gained over 42 years living in northern Nigeria. Arabic messages were translated using Google Translator, with results checked against written transcripts from the media organizations that published the videos. The analysis examined a variety of multimodal cues, such as language, leaders' and fighters' body language, clothing, and settings. It also considered environmental details, weapons, artifacts, sounds, and emotional expressions. Comments and reactions on video platforms, though available, were excluded due to their limited relevance to BH's messaging and the Nigerian government's counter-messaging, as well as to reduce potential bias since some videos had no comments. BH messaging was manually coded based on the study's independent variable, while government speeches were analysed according to the dependent variable of counter-messaging.

5.3 Justification of Timeframe

The corpus covers 2010 to 2025, but BH videos zero in on 2012 to 2018—the height of Shekau's propaganda, influence, and BH's pledge to ISIS (Oyedeji & Ogungbe 2023). This active propaganda phase saw peak asymmetric warfare, territorial control, and leadership consolidation under Abubakar Shekau (Mohammed, 2014). It was the peak of the insurgency, marked by Shekau's introduction of long-form video propaganda, high-casualty campaigns like the 2014 Chibok abductions, and the internal split that formed ISWAP (Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018). This window forms the key dataset

for understanding raw extremist messaging, attack claims, and domestic religious delegitimization.

Within this period, BH's messaging shifted from a rough, amateur style to a more polished, tech-savvy digital presence, (Shola, 2018; Mahmood, 2017a) influenced by its ISIS alliance and grounded in a historical ideology that blends timeless theology, reformist roots, dissent, and rejection—all closely linked to Northern Nigeria's long political history (Ochonu, 2026). These roots tie into the group's use of tactical warning messages—like letters and pamphlets—within the larger backdrop of sectarian violence in Nigeria (Karr, 2026). Since 17 of the BH videos studied came from media sources, the researcher notes that they may have been edited for clarity, style, or agenda-setting. How this was addressed will be explained in the limitations section.

The government's counter-messaging sample spans 2010 to 2025, capturing the early kinetic and tactical state responses after the 2009 uprising, leading to current counter-messaging mechanisms. At the same time, the broader state counter-messaging effort shows a slower, ongoing adaptation aimed at long-term de-radicalization, shifting official narratives, and managing splinter group dynamics (Gana & Bukar, 2021). It goes beyond the peak of military action to follow institutional adaptation, regional MNJTF, and the development of psychosocial counter-extremism programmes (Ajala, 2024). This allows the researcher to gauge the delay between militant actions and the institutionalization of official counter-narratives. The sample draws from official press releases, military reports, and both archived and current news sources. While the government does not directly address each BH message, the researcher purposively chose this timeframe because it is the initial phase of speeches and counter-messaging against the insurgency, as well as the post-2018 period when the group split into factions. Even though these messages do not align one-to-one with the BH video dataset, the analysis aims to determine whether they effectively challenged identified patterns and to assess their overall influence.

5.4 Sample Selection Criteria

The selection process was guided by four main criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Stahl & King, 2020). These were

chosen for their relevance in multimodal research, which considers both visual and textual data (Hassan, 2024; Inayah et al., 2017). The idea of "trustworthiness" ensured the study met accepted standards of reliability and credibility (Bryman, 2008; Priya, 2021). The analytical lens drew from qualitative research standards, post-positivist evaluation criteria, and social governance frameworks, as well as critical social theories that highlight traditional metrics of modern research (Priya, 2021; Stahl & King, 2020).

To build a solid analytical base, all videos came from reputable local and international media outlets, minimizing the risk of spreading misinformation common on unverified social platforms. Each video featured either an insurgent leader or a government official explaining their group's vision and mission, offering valuable insights into the discourse. This ensured that perspectives came from credible voices discussing the insurgency. Content also had to include clear identifiers—logos, emblems, and military assets—to distinguish the government from BH and other militant groups like ISWAP and Ansaru. Proficiency in multiple languages, specifically Hausa, Arabic, or Kanuri alongside English, was another key requirement. Language use and frequency were also considered to make the material more accessible to wider audiences. Following these guidelines was crucial in creating a dependable framework for analysis, helping to deepen understanding of the government's ideological base and responses. Videos from questionable sources were excluded, as were amateur recordings without government or military officials promoting the state's stance or militant leaders promoting the Jihadi narrative.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher adopted a qualitative approach to address the research questions and a clear gap in the literature. Using VVVA and CDA, the study examined YouTube videos, providing ample material for insight. The framework incorporated counter-messaging with a solid four-point criterion for selecting data to ensure a variety of perspectives were represented. The analysis looked at textual, discursive, and social practices, showing the study's depth and thoroughness.

6. ANALYSIS OF BOKO HARAM MESSAGING

This chapter critically examines BH messaging to explore their StratCom. Using VVVA, a type of multimodal analysis, the study reviews how BH uses media to showcase their strategies. The research focuses on thirty carefully chosen videos from international media, analysed through six specific multimodal patterns to highlight BH's messaging.

6.1 Themes in BH Videos

Ten themes were initially identified for presentation, analysis, and interpretation, but after further review, they were refined to six. Only themes directly tied to the independent variable (BH messaging) and the dependent variable (government counter-messaging) were kept, while four unrelated themes were excluded. Table 6.1 lists themes and their renamed variants, and Table 6.2 presents themes alongside their assigned codes.

Table 6. 1 Themes and Renamed Theme-Variants

S/N	Theme	Renamed Theme
1	BH utilises propaganda to demonstrate bravado and its military might	Invisibility/Undefeatability Propaganda (IUP)
2	The messages of warning are directed to the Nigerian authorities	Warning against the Government (WG)
3	These videos underscore the sect's mission and vision as divinely given	Divine Vision/Mission of Jihad (DV/MJ)
4	As its name (Western Education is forbidden) implies, these messages discourage young girls and women from going to school	Demarketing Western Education (DWE)
5	These videos indicate that at its core, the insurgents aspire for an Islamic Caliphate run by strict Sharia Law in contravention of Nigeria's Secular status under a constitutional democracy	Supplanting Democracy with Sharia Law (SDSL)
6	The communication in these videos pushes a narrative that indicates an affront on both Christian and Western values	Anti-Christian/Western Rhetoric (ACWR)

Table 6. 2 Themes and Assigned Codes

S/N	Theme	Assigned Code	Number of Videos
1	Invisibility/Undefeatability Propaganda	IUP	4
2	Warning against the Government	WG	8
3	Divine Vision and Mission of Jihad	DV/MJ	7
4	Demarketing Western Education	DWE	4
5	Supplanting Democracy with Sharia Law	SDSL	2
6	Anti-Christian/Western Rhetoric	ACWR	5

6.1.1 Invisibility/Undefeatability Propaganda (IUP)

In a chilling video message, a suicide bomber speaking Hausa was shown in a burning vehicle, foreshadowing destruction. On 28 April 2012, this terrorist group carried out a devastating suicide car bomb attack on ThisDay Newspaper in Abuja, Nigeria, spreading chaos and fear. This, the group disclosed in a short video released by the terrorist organisation:

> Oh, brothers. We hope that God accepts this person as his favourite because of how he ran into the media house with his car and bombed the place, killing many people. However, they are claiming that only three people died. Anybody who sees this video and how the buildings are affected will know that more than three people were murdered in that attack. We thank God- Praise be to Allah who gave us victory. We will continue these attacks in the name of Allah. The date of this attack will soon be made, including others executed with the help of Allah (Sahara TV, 2012).

Using VVVA's *stage-one* analysis template, V1 was released on 2 May 2012 by Sahara TV. Titled "This is how Boko Haram attacked This Day Newspaper, Abuja, 28 April 2012," the video vividly portrays the brutality of terrorism. Lasting 1 minute and 14 seconds, it incorporates pre-recorded footage of the attacker, offering a stark reminder of the ongoing threat and grim reality of such acts. With no added text or soundtrack, the raw visuals demand unfiltered engagement, amplifying their emotional weight. In *stage two*, the setting is an outdoor road in Abuja's city centre, featuring a fighter-suicide bomber. The haunting imagery includes still and moving shots of the bomber, a black jeep, and buildings consumed by flames. The contrast of the bomber's white Kaftan against fire and smoke leaves a striking impression, while the vehicle's movement and scenes of destruction build a grim narrative. Visually, the bomber issues marching orders, blending speech with emphatic gestures to deliver a potent message. The verbal and textual elements are in Hausa, with the title emphasizing the attack's date to set a sombre tone. Close-up, cinematic shots—reminiscent of filming a moving car—along with dynamic camera angles, intensify the propaganda effect.

Stage three, which emphasizes the main theme or goal, focuses on instilling fear and showcasing BH's alarming capacity for mass violence. Drawing on the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 1998), the discourse reflects a stark "Us" versus "Them" divide. The phrase "Oh, brothers" acts as a strong rallying cry within the group. The sect's spokesman declares, "We hope that God accepts this person… because of how he drove into the media house with his car and bombed people" (Sahara TV, 2012), framing the act as both heroic and divinely sanctioned. Similarly, the claim, "Anybody who sees this video and how the buildings are affected will know that more than three people were murdered in that attack" (Sahara TV, 2012), disputes the government's casualty figures to sway public opinion. Repeated lines like "Praise be to Allah who gave us victory" and "We will continue these attacks in the name of Allah" (Sahara TV, 2012) add religious legitimacy to their actions.

The group also employs a legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) by making authority seem invisible. Statements such as "The date of this attack will soon be made known, along with others executed with the help of Allah" (Sahara TV, 2012) project invincibility and commitment to their perceived divine mission. While moral concerns are absent, the footage underscores the logic of violence and glorification of martyrdom and victory. With the ThisDay Newspaper building in Abuja as the target, the intended audience is the local media. Overall, the tone blends aggression, triumph, desperation, and exclamation, with explicit depictions of violence. References to previous attacks enhance the narrative's impact, and the visuals remain starkly aggressive.

Using the three-dimensional CDA at the micro-level of textual analysis (Fairclough, 1992) reveals BH's use of phrases like "Oh, brothers" and "We" (Sahara TV, 2012) to reinforce an "Us" versus "Them" divide, framing "In group" and "Out group" identities. Grammatically, the main actor is the suicide bomber, while the recipient is ThisDay Newspaper. Hidden meanings carry strong impact (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In this way, metaphorical and rhetorical expressions, such as "We hope God accepts this person as his favourite..." (Sahara TV, 2012), subtly signal BH's endorsement of martyrdom as heroic.

At

the *meso-level* of discursive practice, it is unclear who produced the video, though it was published by Sahara TV. The insurgents claim victory and use the media to "instil fear," while the government typically leans on traditional media to shape the narrative. On January 3, 2018, Shekau released another video claiming responsibility for attacks in northeastern Nigeria. Previously, in an August 2017 broadcast by Agence France-Presse (AFP), he asserted he was in good health and brushed off regional governments' claims that BH had been defeated. This consistent rhetoric underscores the ongoing threat posed by BH and the resilience of its leadership, as he also rejected statements that the group has been weakened:

> We are sending you this message about the operations we have carried out with the help of Allah. We have launched attacks on Maiduguri, Gambaru, and Danbua, and we claim responsibility for these attacks. Nigerian troops, the police, and those who cause us misdeeds cannot do anything against us, and you will gain nothing. In this religion of Allah, nobody will return to Allah unless their days have come to an end (*Agence France-Presse* cited in Africa News, 2018).

The insurgents made a bold call for a campaign against the Nigerian state, taking credit for attacks in two cities. They anticipated the media would spread their message. A video reveals how BH exploits religious texts and uses propaganda to push specific goals. They have effectively wielded propaganda (Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018) to scare the public and win sympathizers, portraying their leader as untouchable. In a YouTube video dated September 16, 2016, leader Shekau firmly pledged his dedication to militant actions, framing the battle against Nigeria and the world as "a personal responsibility," (V1) while stating he would spare fellow Muslims.

The *macro-level* reveals BH's use of language that reflects a seeming power struggle with the government, in its lofty ambition to replace democracy with a Caliphate. The video (V1) serves as a stark reminder of the persistent threat of terrorism and its grim reality. Viewed from the angles of power and legitimacy, the video points to BH's deployment of rhetoric to legitimize its actions— justifying violence as "divine," (V1) in keeping with its underlying ideologies of radical Islamism. The wider political context lies in how

they use media to polarise society and threaten public peace.

In a video released on 3 January 2018 (V.2), the sect's leader attributes the sect's successes to divine providence and accuses the Nigerian armed forces of significant "misdeeds," asserting that no positive outcomes will result from such efforts. He confidently declares that they are under God's protection, emphasizing that nothing happens without His approval. Using VVVA's *stage one* template for analysis reveals V2 as published by Africa News/Agence France-Presse. The 1-minute and 5-second clip is titled, "Boko Haram is responsible for recent attacks in northeastern Nigeria." As regards quality, the leader's message commands presence as it is in the striking visuals - still and moving images, accompanied by subtitles. Notably, the absence of a soundtrack allows their words to carry weight.

Stage two, which underlines the setting, indicates the video is shot outdoors. While the lone character is Shekau, the visual imagery reveals the leader, dressed in a white-and-black scarf, sitting against a stark black flag. The BBC (2021a) describes Shekau as "a man dressed in white clothes with a black turban." From a calm indoor setting, he delivers a message filled with threats, while an AK-47 rifle prominently crosses his chest. He uses visual cues, such as gestures, to convey his message. Shekau speaks Hausa in the video to reach his audience in the northeast, where Hausa is the lingua franca. To create audience impact, the camera technique was a medium close-up.

Stage three, which uncovers the goal or theme of communication, indicates a victory claim and condemnation of the military over attacks on the group. The Ideological Square did not play out, although the terrorists accuse the NA of "misdeeds" (V.2), to hide or minimize their errors, which signifies victimhood. There is also an element of self-glorification, as they attributed their success to divine assistance (V.2). The group seeks to legitimize itself through divine instruction given to its leader (van Leeuwen, 2015). By claiming that they are under God's protection (V.2), the terrorists invoke the moral code, portraying themselves as righteous and, invariably, the government as evil. There is an element of the logic of violence in the leader's menacing demeanour and in the stress that the sect is invisible and invincible (V.2). The myths of glorification and victory are apparent in the footage, as the message

targets the NA. Overall, while the tone is aggressive and triumphant, the scale of violence shown is implied in the message. The sect cited past victories to underline intertextuality. In terms of effectiveness, Shekau's message is threatening. His white-and-black scarf and sitting against a stark black flag underscore apparent visual elements that point to aggressive nonverbal communication.

Analysing V.2 based on the three-dimensional CDA Framework (Fairclough, 1992) presents the *micro-level* first, which evaluates the text or vocabulary used. In this case, BH's describe themselves as under God, who approves of their undertakings. According to grammatical analysis, the main actor is Skekau, while the recipients are the armed forces. The group paints the troops as perpetrators whom they accuse of "misdeeds" (V.2), presenting themselves as "Victims." Although there is no overt use of metaphor or rhetorical language, the message appears to demonize the state as an enemy and to present BH's actions as heroic.

At the *meso-level*, the message was produced or disseminated by Africa News/Agence France-Presse on their YouTube Channels, highlighting the interest of European and African media in covering jihadi stories. Regarding intertextuality, BH videos exploit religious texts for strategic purposes, such as insurgents' diagnostic and motivational frames, which the government attempts to counter. At the *macro-level*, the language in the video reflects a power struggle between BH and the government. The leader's claims of invisibility and invincibility in their self-acclaimed caliphate touch on the group's quest for power and legitimacy through justifying violence as a "divine mandate." In the political context, V.2 exemplifies a powerful message the sect uses to create fear appeals that threaten safety.

On April 2, 2016, Africanews released a video featuring Shekau, who defiantly rejected any suggestions of surrender. This came after a rare appearance in which he appeared weakened following a year out of the public eye. In a previous unverified video, Shekau hinted that his leadership of BH might be nearing its end, raising concerns about his future and that of the group. BH has consistently portrayed itself as a military force, displaying AK-47s on pickup trucks (Africanews, 2016). The group pledged allegiance to ISIS

in March 2015, but this alliance has shown little benefit. Since 2009, BH's campaign to establish a hardline IS in northeast Nigeria has resulted in about 20,000 deaths and displaced around 2.6 million people, highlighting the urgent need for action on this crisis (Africanews, 2016). The Pan-African media noted that the purported Shekau “appears thin and listless, delivering his message without his trademark” (Africanews, 2016), raising doubts about his authenticity. Despite reports of his death, he often released videos to refute claims from the Nigerian military.

Analysing V.15 with *stage one* of the VVVA template shows it was published by Africanews on April 2, 2016. The 1-minute, 22-second video, titled "Nigeria: Boko Haram Releases New Video Denying Surrender," has no sound. In *stage two*, the scene is set in the notorious Sambisa Forest, adding weight to the message. The main speaker, leader Shekau, appears with four hooded fighters in camouflage. He’s dressed in military fatigues, flanked by two fighters holding flags with Arabic inscriptions and two carrying AK-47s, with a field artillery tractor in the background. Holding a script in his left hand, he gestures to the audience with his right. The video also shows masked fighters in camouflage, armed men in Hilux vans, and the group’s flag prominently displayed. In Hausa and English, Shekau is seen standing in the back of a pickup truck, firing an anti-aircraft gun into the sky.

The camera technique used is a close-up shot. The video, which shows him firing an anti-aircraft gun into the sky, reveals the group’s goal, Shekau's survival, and BH's ongoing threat. It lacks a clear ideological square (van Dijk, 1998), although shooting in the air could indicate bravado and self-glorification or belittling the government's successes. The element of legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) is apparent in the video shot in the Sambisa Forest, which indicates a dangerous, no-return location. His anger and intensity could pass for "righteous indignation." By firing an anti-aircraft gun, he provides the logic of violence. The footage targeted at the armed forces and the Nigerian authorities underscores the myth of invincibility.

Using the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) offers a clear way to examine the video’s discourse on the BH conflict in Nigeria. On the *micro level*, the video tells a surrender story that pushes viewers to think

about the strategic messaging tied to the ongoing clash with the Nigerian state. It builds a “righteous” insurgent identity that refuses negotiations while admitting reduced operational strength, with Shekau cast as the central figure and opponents labelled as BH’s enemies. On the *meso level,* the video’s creation and release by a Pan-African media outlet highlight the role of African media in shaping the Jihadi narrative across multiple platforms. Strategically, the message is framed to meet specific goals—motivating frames meant to win over Nigerians and attract recruits. The videos’ intertextuality shows Boko Haram using religious texts to back up their claims, aiming messages at the Nigerian public to draw followers. On the macro level, the language paints Shekau negatively, calling him “thin and listless” (V.15), challenging ideas about his leadership and countering claims of military success over the insurgency. The rhetoric seeks to justify violence as divinely approved while rejecting liberal conservatism. More broadly, as BH keeps committing violence and deepening divisions, media coverage remains key to raising awareness about the group’s threats and the risks of radicalization.

In another video titled "Video of 'dead' BH leader telling Nigeria,' I am still alive," published by On Demand News on 3 October 2014, BH rejected the Nigerian government's August 2013 assertion of his death. Standing in the back of a pickup truck and firing an anti-aircraft gun, a man resembling Shekau defiantly demonstrated his survival and the ongoing threat posed by the sect. He emphatically states, "So here I am, alive. You talk so much about killing me, but that is not the point; we are still in our Islamic caliphate reigning, we are doing the teachings of the Koran" (V. 26).

Nigeria’s military claimed that the man posing as Shekau in the group’s growing number of videos was killed in clashes. When or where the video was made remains unclear (V. 26). Journalist Claire Lomas notes the militant leader denied reports of his death, reiterating that "it is not clear when or where the video was made" (V. 26). In the Hausa-language footage, Shekau stands in the back of a pickup truck, firing an anti-aircraft gun into the sky. The video also shows masked fighters in camouflage, armed men in Hilux vans, and the group’s flag prominently displayed. The aggressive and triumphant gestures highlight the group’s strength and violent capabilities through powerful

weaponry. While there's no intertextual reference to other events, the imagery—masked fighters, weapons, and the leader firing into the air—delivers a forceful non-verbal message.

In the four datasets, Hausa appears four times, while Hausa and English appear together once. The varying video lengths are telling: 1 minute (V.26), 1 minute 22 seconds (V.15), 1 minute 5 seconds (V.2), and 1 minute 14 seconds (V.1). It is striking how the terrorists manage to pack a powerful, threatening message into just a minute. This underscores the group's strategic communication style. VVVA shows evidence of both visual and verbal elements across the four analysed videos. BH issues threats to the armed forces and the state, backing them with religious justifications for its verbal attacks. In terms of CDA, BH works to delegitimize the state, shifting from capturing acts of terror to using propaganda as a messaging tool.

6.1.2 Warning against the Government (WG)

Following the massacre of 44 people at a northeastern Nigerian mosque, BH's leader issued a chilling threat against the United States in a video (V.3). He declared, "We have killed thousands of soldiers, and we will kill more. Our strength and firepower surpass that of Nigeria. We are ready to confront the United States of America" (CNN, 2013). The leader's message begins with propaganda threats aimed at the Nigerian armed forces, government, and their Western allies: "We have killed thousands of soldiers, and we will kill more. Our strength surpasses that of Nigeria" (CNN, 2013) on 14 August 2013. Following a massacre in a mosque, this statement reveals a strategic intent. It presents a striking account of a chilling message from the group's leader, Shekau, delivered during a session tagged "Boko Haram Hangout Monday."

Using stage one of the VVVA template for analysis, the video labelled V.3, published by CNN on August 14, 2013, is titled "Boko Haram Threatens the U.S. in Video." The 2-minute 24-second clip includes both audio and video elements. In stage two, the setting is indoors, featuring Shekau—a significant figure from Shekau in Tarmuwa LGA, Yobe State—likely born between 1965 and 1975 (BBC, 2014a). Weapons are a key visual symbol, with Shekau confidently holding an AK-47 against the right side of his chest, underscoring

its importance in his life. In the top right of the frame, the sect's flag is prominently displayed, representing bravery and rare courage. Replacing the Nigerian flag with an Islamic emblem reflects BH's ideology, which strongly opposes secularism as a form of idolatry (Zenn, 2013; Campbell, 2014). They declare that pledging allegiance to the nation or singing the national anthem is an act of betrayal, punishable by death.

Screenshots capture this dynamic scene—Shekau holding a long chewing stick, doubling as both an intimidating prop and a symbol of authority as he speaks to his audience (V.3). An expert notes that his choice of a large chewing stick reflects cultural traditions (Albert, 2021), adding to the unsettling tone of his address. Together, these elements highlight the weight of his threats and the strong impact of his message. Figure 6.1 depicts Shekau, the group's leader.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 6. 1 Screenshot of Abubakar Shekau in a YouTube video telecast (CNN, 2013: tiny.cc/31ku001)

In video V.3, the BH leader is dressed in a blue *kaftan*, a common men's garment in northern Nigeria. Reports indicate that suspected BH members involved in arbitrary killings between July 28 and 29, 2011, also wore kaftans (Human Rights Watch, 2012b). The insurgents' attire underscores the politics of identity (Dicks, 2019), with items like turbans and veils symbolizing both devotion and defiance. Speaking in Hausa, the leader uses striking multimodal communication techniques to intensify his threatening message. Shekau delivers his words with conviction, pairing them with expressive gestures that reinforce his stern warning to the Nigerian Government and

its Western allies. Drawing on terms related to depictive gestures (Dicks, 2019), his deliberate word choice and movements create an unsettling atmosphere that commands attention. Fluent in Hausa, Fulani, Arabic, and English, this Kanuri-born figure reflects a blend of cultural identity and militant ideology. It is filmed using a close-up shot.

At *stage three*, the leader reveals the sect's aim of discouraging fellow Muslims from supporting the Nigerian Government and its Western allies, sowing division within the community. In line with the group's ideological stance (van Dijk, 2015), his message glorifies the group, dismisses the Government's achievements, and undermines the state. Shekau's rhetoric reflects not only personal conviction but also a broader struggle for dominance and recognition in a turbulent environment. His speech conveys intense emotion devoid of empathy, directly threatening the Nigerian State and the West. While signs of anxiety emerge, he strives to project stamina, courage, and resilience throughout his address.

The video highlights the terrorists' strategy for legitimizing themselves (van Leeuwen, 2015), portraying their leader as having a divine mandate. At one point, he boasts and laughs, declaring, "We would now comfortably confront the United States of America" (CNN, 2013). He laughs mischievously but then abruptly frowns as if showing signs of mental instability (Albert, 2021). This sarcastic laugh suggests the insurgents see themselves as more than a match for both the Nigerian Government and its ally, the U.S. Statements like "Our strength and firepower is bigger than that of Nigeria […] As far as we are concerned, we would now comfortably confront the United States of America" (CNN, 2013) reinforce this claim. The depiction conveys the sect's belief in their superior firepower (Bergen, 2010). Supporting this is a screenshot showing his gestures and body movements, where he brandishes a stick to intimidate his audience (Albert, 2021). The video also presents BH as outsmarting Nigerian forces that have been battling them. These are the representation tactics the researcher examines. In 2014, Borno State Governor (now Vice President) Kashim Shettima admitted the group was better equipped and more motivated than Nigerian troops (Al Jazeera, 2014). Their presence in Mali has also raised U.S. concerns, prompting the U.S. State Department to place a $7-million bounty on the leader and designate the group as a terrorist organization (France 24, 2013), underscoring the threat they pose both within Nigeria and beyond (CNN, 2013).

Mentioning killing four times underscores the moral wrong of the insurgency, while boasting about killing thousands of soldiers (V.3) reflects the group's embrace of violence and the insecurity it causes for both the people and the government. Phrases like "Our strength surpasses that of Nigeria" (V.3) feed into myths that glorify their victories. The group makes it clear their main audience is Nigerian troops, the government, and its Western allies. The video's tone is aggressive, boastful, vicious, and full of exclamations. While the actual scale of violence shown isn't detailed, statements like "We have killed thousands" (V.3) are. Though there's no mention of other events, global jihadi groups, or historical figures, Shekau's bold words aim to weaken the Nigerian government and its allies while trying to pull fellow Muslims away from supporting them. Issuing such threats right after an attack on a house of worship shows BH's strategic intent. Drawing inspiration from ISIS, their claim of being able to confront the U.S. signals an ambitious push for global relevance. Research shows groups like Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban have used weapons of mass destruction in attacks (Bergen, 2010), underlining the serious threat they pose.

The message stands out with powerful visuals. The speaker, wearing a turban and scarf—traditional attire suited for the harsh desert climates of the Middle East and northern Nigeria—embodies the fierce determination of insurgents seeking control over these regions. His thick beard and strong presence convey both fearlessness and masculinity, matched by a voice filled with authority and purpose. The camera captures the scene from a striking angle, with a Mediterranean backdrop streaked in red against white, emphasizing the setting and intended audience (Dicks, 2019). This imagery taps into themes of martyrdom and the promised rewards for fighting in the name of Allah, central to the insurgents' narrative.

Using the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) to examine the same video, the researcher began with the *micro-level*, focusing on vocabulary. The repeated use of "we" five times and "our" twice (V.3) points to BH pushing an "us" versus "them" narrative. Grammatically, although the speech is by the BH leader, it targets the Nigerian armed forces, the government, and the West. While Shekau paints the state as BH's enemy, there are no overt metaphoric or rhetorical devices. At the *meso-level*, BH created the media, CNN aired it on its YouTube channel, and the public consumed it, portraying a "crude" sect using social media to spread fear. Intertextuality shows BH videos heavily exploiting religious texts, while the strategic

frame reveals how messages are shaped to boost insurgents' motivation to win the war. At the *macro-level*, the ideological clash suggests BH leverages language to undermine Nigeria's constitutional democracy and erode national unity. Alongside this are dynamics of power and legitimacy, with rhetoric used to justify violence. Politically, they aim to foster division through radicalization, aligning with CDA's core view that "linguistic elements reveal the connections between language, power, and ideology" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 5).

In a related YouTube video message (V.4), "Boko Haram leader threatens Cameroon in YouTube video," published by AFP News Agency on January 7, 2015, BH leader Shekau threatened Cameroon (V.4). He warned that it would suffer a similar fate to its neighbouring country, Nigeria. Shekau declared, "Oh, people of Cameroon, know that a man cannot become a Muslim without rebelling against democracy and polytheism. Your troops are nothing; even Nigerian soldiers cannot do anything to us. Even US troops could not do anything to us, not even the troops of the whole world" (AFP News Agency, 2015a). Here, there are interesting modes of address designed from a statement of doctrine to a gibe in direct address. There is a shift from addressing large audiences (a nation) to referring to individuals (a man) (V.4). Meanwhile, BH operates in Cameroon (Chétima, Mahamat & Garaktcheme, 2024; Kouma, 2017). In this campaign aimed at luring Cameroonians to his side, Shekau claimed that it is not possible to "become a Muslim without rebelling against democracy and polytheism" (AFP News Agency, 2015a).

Accessed using VVVA's *stage one* template, V.4 was hosted on the AFP News Agency website on January 7, 2015. Like the previous videos, the 41-second clip has clear video and audio elements. *Stage two,* which highlights the setting, indicates that the footage was shot in the desert, with six masked fighters surrounding Shekau, the main speaker. The forest background is an apparent signal of fear and death occasioned by Camp Zero, Sambisa Forest, home to BH, where those abducted are either executed or sold into black markets. The forest has various connotations for insurgent groups. Insurgents hide in forests to evade identification and arrest by government forces, as buffer zones to ambush unsuspecting members of the public, and security operatives, as a haven for demanding ransom for kidnapped victims, as a place for extracting resources like timber and rosewood and a territory for embarking on illicit trade to fund their activities in countries such as Cambodia, the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and Myanmar (Food and Agriculture Association, 2005).

In countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Nepal, and the Philippines, violent groups seek refuge in forests where they practice tactical manoeuvres and intentionally maximize such terrain to their advantage over the military, which is supposed to be better equipped (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2005; Chow & Han, 2024). For example, the Bodo movement militants, who were demanding a separate state in Northeast India during the 1980s, which led to a violent conflict in the Assam region, used the forest as a source of conflict and a means of war by engaging in the illegal extraction of resources (Dutta, 2020).

Similarly, the forest suggests that while the government has barracks, it also has the forest. They project themselves as guerrilla fighters who appear and disappear into the forest. Other people fear the dangers of the forest, whereas they have mastery over it. While others are at nature's mercy, they are familiar with the terrain. BH points to the forest as a natural habitat to which everyone has a right, one that even the government cannot claim as its own. They seem to suggest they represent the forest, which can evoke fear.

The visual imagery reveals the presence of hooded lieutenants who surround the commander, each holding two AK-47 guns, with two of them lifting the BH flag. Like a football formation, four fighters are seen in the front as attackers, while two defenders are on Hilux vans, ready for any eventuality. The use of guns and vans denotes sophistication and invincibility (V.4). Reports suggest that sniper rifles, field artillery, and armoured vehicles fall into the hands of insurgents with "technical know-how," who snatch trucks and drive them off-road where they are loaded with machine guns, rocket launchers, or other hardware (Reinl, 2019). Multiple rifles, bombs, and special ammunition were seized by the MNJTF in August 2013 (Onuoha, 2013b). Security operatives also intercepted hundreds of weapons from Libya and Mali across north-eastern Nigeria (UN, 2024). A security expert from George Washington University, Paul Williams, observed that most of the time, insurgents seize many guns, rocket-propelled grenades, ammunition, vehicles, uniforms, and IDs to use in subsequent raids or attacks (Reinl, 2019).

The insurgents' logo flies in from the right to identify themselves, like Al Qaeda's (Scheffler, 2014). Visible objects include six fighters, three Hilux vehicles, and

one armoured rocket launcher vehicle (V.4). The director of the Small Arms Survey from 2016 to 2019, Eric G. Berman, who has published widely on *African Peace and Security Issues,* affirms that BH's stockpiling of arms poses a long-term threat (Campbell, 2020a; Campbell, 2020b). Figure 6. 2 (screenshot) shows Shekau threatening Cameroon.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 6. 2 Screenshot of Abubakar Shekau, issuing threats to Cameroon (AFP, 2015a: https://shorturl.fm/uMWnK)

The video ends with Shekau reading from a text while sternly pointing at the camera. The main figure moves from shooting with one hand to using both hands, then shifts to reading with one hand and warning with the other, as fighters in military fatigues stand guard, showing complete loyalty (V.4). The BH commander speaks in Hausa, with AFP providing an English translation (V.4). Communication in the video blends spoken words with gestures and body movements tied to an earlier quote, along with captured screenshots. He starts by standing and firing sporadically into the air with one hand, delivering a harsh verbal warning to Cameroonian authorities, then uses both hands to fire aimlessly. The footage appears professionally filmed from multiple angles in a surveillance and panoramic style. Stage three reveals the message's goal: to intimidate and undermine multilateral efforts against the insurgents, shown in his ruthless tone and strong ideological commitment (Al Jazeera Media Network, 2016). Ideological dynamics (van Dijk, 2015) appear as the group boasts of strength and self-glorification— "Your troops are nothing" (V.4) claims Nigerian, US, and global forces cannot defeat them. They also seek to discredit government victories through a legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), invoking divine law and sacred text to argue that true Muslims must reject democracy and polytheism (V.4). The message paints the government as bad and the group as good,

with threats underscoring the logic of violence. The message, emotion, and discourse of the primary character in the footage are strategically directed at the Cameroonian and Nigerian authorities (Al Jazeera Media Network, 2016), thereby uncovering a deeper, richer meaning (Dicks, 2019).

The researcher also applied the three-dimensional CDA Framework (Fairclough, 1992) to the same video (V.4). At the *micro-level*, BH uses a divisive "Us" versus "them" narrative, referencing the people of Cameroon, "your troops," and "Nigerian soldiers cannot do anything to us" (V.4). Grammatically, Shekau is the actor, while the recipients include the people of Cameroon, Nigerian troops, US troops, and troops worldwide (V.4). His rants and verbal excesses highlight frustration and resentment (Apard, 2015). He is portrayed as a ruthless leader with a twisted ideology, acting as the sadistic architect of a campaign of mayhem and misery (Ahmed, 2014). The insurgents frame themselves as enemies of the state and public enemy. The claim that the government cannot "do anything to us" (V.4) is a metaphor meant to belittle the state and present the group as heroic. At the *meso-level*, the insurgents produced the footage, broadcast it via AFP, and audiences consumed it on social media. Intertextually, the BH video draws on religious texts to frame its message toward specific goals—threatening the public, showcasing military strength, or projecting victory—evident in the analysed footage (V.4). The leader and fighters convey strategy through overt mannerisms and actions, while deeper context emerges in the nonverbal postures of the fighters (Dicks, 2019), signalling physical and psychological support for the commander. As in earlier analysis, themes like hope, stamina, and resilience remain significant in this multimodal dataset, while the government works to counter the narrative.

At the *macro-level*, the terrorists exhibit their ideological tussle through a power struggle with the state, regional, or multilateral troops as the target audience in this data set suggests (V.4). The fight against secular democracy and polytheism in preference for a Caliphate based on continental or global Jihad also touches on the power of its legitimacy as a group which urges for rebellion (V.4). Its audience targeted message underlies its radical stance drawing lessons for the wider political context in Nigeria where the insurgents exploit religious sentiments to polarise society further. In a related development, another video message (V.5) featured the sect's leader's message to the Nigerian government (AFP News Agency, 2015b) with a clear warning:

> We say that these elections that you are planning to do will not happen in peace even if that costs us our lives, Allah will not leave you to proceed with these elections, even after us; because you are saying that authority is from people to people which means that people should rule each other, but Allah says that the authority is only to him, only his rule is the rule [which] applies on this land (AFP News Agency, 2015b).

Using VVVA's *stage one* analysis template, V.5 was published by AFP News Agency on February 18, 2015. Titled "Boko Haram leader vows to disrupt Nigeria election in a new video," the 1-minute-21-second clip is high quality with clear audio. *Stage two* shows an outdoor scene with Shekau as the main speaker, featuring strong visual imagery and symbols, like a flag in the top right corner and the leader speaking sternly. The video includes a press-release-style message with marching orders, and Shekau points at the audience using a chewing stick that reappears in this clip. Given reports that many BH foot soldiers use drugs, charms, and amulets (Zenn, 2015), the stick may symbolize a magic wand with protective powers. Despite accusing rival militias of using magic, BH members reportedly use such items themselves for protection and to threaten abductees with magic books (Matfess, 2017; Locka, 2017; Ifeka, 2024), as discussed under reflexivity criteria challenging presumptions (Dicks, 2019). The leader sits confidently, holding a prepared speech that he delivers extemporaneously. The video, in Hausa with Arabic subtitles, is accompanied by English translations from AFP, and international media also provided subtitles and transcripts. A professional close-up shot is used throughout.

Stage three unveils the theme – Threats to the Nigerian government ahead of the general elections, including the fear that the polls would not take place in peace. In line with the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), the leader projects self-glorification while undermining the government's power. They also showcase their legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), divine authority claiming that "Allah says that the authority is only to him," and "All will not leave you to proceed with these elections" (V.5). Though no direct insinuation of morality as regards righteous or evil, Shekau's points to the group's righteous indignation, proving the logic of violence and creating a chaotic situation ahead of election. The video also passes for myths of self-glorification, projecting victories. The target audience is the Nigerian government.

This quotation provides clues for understanding BH's message. The message

touched on politics and secular authority, which the group opposes (V.5). It legitimizes theocracy, a timeless creed to which the sect always has recourse. The multimodal characteristics or modes of communication reveal verbal messaging and a combination of speech and bodily gestures or movements related to quotations, as seen in the screenshots. In the screenshot below (Figure 6.3), Shekau threatens to disrupt the country's elections.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 6. 3 Screenshot of “Abubakar Shekau” threatening to disrupt Nigerian elections (AFP, 2015b: https://shorturl.fm/8iByp)

The video features an AK-47 across the leader's lap and a grenade-propelled weapon to his right (V.5), highlighting the group's display of firepower. The imagery, featuring the leader in a black kaftan and scarf against a dark blue backdrop, evokes themes of terror and mortality. The group's flag, prominently displayed, signifies its existence as an international organisation with a structured hierarchy, utilising symbols as communication tools, as noted by Heintze and Dijkzeul (2011). Shekau, the leader, is associated with one of the deadliest terrorist organisations, characterised by a lack of empathy in his messaging (V.5). The communications team appears to craft messages that instil fear in the Nigerian government while reaffirming the sect's commitment to divine principles. This underscores the role of fear appeals in the group's strategy (Ette, 2024).

At the *micro-level*, the researcher used the three-dimensional framework (Fairclough, 1992) to analyse V.5. References to "We," "Us," and "Our" for BH versus "You" (V.5) twice point to the "Us" versus "them" dichotomy between the insurgents

and the government. Based on the grammatical analysis, the main actor is the sect's leader, while the recipient is the Nigerian government. Notably, there is no use of metaphoric or rhetorical language. The *meso-level* indicates that the video BH produced was published by AFP and consumed by the public. It is crucial to note that the English translation by an AFP journalist, along with the apparent subtitles and transcripts of the video message (V.5), indicates the role that international media play in shaping insurgency communication discourse. International media produce or reproduce content based on national, regional, and global appeal as well as house style and agenda-setting. This way, they shape the narratives according to their leaning. International media's obsession with Jihadi stories (Udovičić, 2026; Banyongen, 2020; Abubakar, 2017; Kukah, 2014)[1] makes local media leverage them for stories (Ogbodo, 2018), thus providing oxygen for BH narratives. This way, BH reaches audiences indirectly through social media platforms like YouTube, where content is shared, reshared, and featured by both local and international media.

The fact that the clip is on YouTube shows how BH uses social media to push its agenda. In terms of intertextuality, their videos heavily draw on religious texts, with this footage mentioning "Allah" (V.5) twice. The framing makes it clear the message is crafted to meet a specific goal – using diagnostic and motivational frames to stir moral panic and pressure the government to cancel the upcoming elections. On the *macro level*, it reflects an ideological clash, as the leader questions the principles of democracy and the idea of power coming from the people (V.5). His words hint at a struggle for dominance between BH and Nigerian authorities. It also ties into issues of power and legitimacy, with the insurgents using rhetoric to justify violence as "divine" in line with their radical Islamist ideology, which contrasts sharply with Nigeria's liberal conservatism and that of its Western allies. Politically, this could be an attempt to win over Muslims, as seen in their reference to "Allah" (V.5), risking the radicalization of vulnerable groups, deepening divisions, and threatening national security.

In a video broadcast (CGTN, 2015), Shekau, whom the Nigerian military claims to have killed several times, issues a scornful message to the AU regarding its troop deployment plans (V.24). He threatens Chad's president. He references ongoing violent actions by BH, including a recent bus hijacking in Cameroon. Shekau said, "Arise

[1] The gory reportage of the gruesome murder of Yusuf Mohammed and other civilians by Mike Hanna of Al Jazeera was published on 10 February 2010 - "Nigeria killings caught on video." https://youtu.be/T1hc1zKnLr0. Accessed 24/07/2025.

all of you…Your alliance will not do anything to us. Amass all your weapons and face us. We welcome you" (V.24). The report clarifies that BH derided the AU's intervention plans and expressed intentions to confront the soldiers (V. 24). VVVA's *stage-one* analysis reveals that *China Global Television Network* (CGTN) published V.24 on February 11, 2015. The video "Boko Haram vows to take on AU troops" is 1 minute 52 seconds long. The quality is high, with video and clear audio. The setting, which is *stage two*, is a desert, the Sambisa forest. The main character is Shekau, flanked by two masked fighters. The visual symbols include weapons, a script, and aggressive fighters. Multimodal elements of the video include Shekau's attire, weaponry, and a Hausa-language script, suggesting a deliberate strategy in the messaging. The visual actions include a threatening press release by BH. The verbal features include Hausa-language dialogue with English subtitles from CGTN and propaganda slogans from BH. The camera techniques include close-up shots, cinematic shots, and surveillance-style shots.

In *stage three*, which focuses on the theme, the video delivers a mocking message to the AU about its troop deployment plans, issues threats to Chad's president, and claims victory in Cameroon, where terrorists hijacked a vehicle and kidnapped many. It showcases the group's ideology (van Dijk, 2015) of strength and self-praise, while undermining the government's COIN achievements. Framing its strategy as legitimate (van Leeuwen, 2015), the leader boldly challenges the AU, reinforcing his authority. The video rejects morality based on right or wrong, instead promoting the logic of violence as the fight expands from Nigeria and Cameroon to the entire African continent. Through myths of self-glorification and victories, the message targets Nigerian and Cameroonian authorities, along with the AU.

In using three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) for V.24, the micro-level reveals BH's use of "Your alliance" and "face us," highlighting the in-group and out-group narrative. Based on grammatical analysis, the actor is Shekau, the receiver is AU, and the President of Chad. BH plays "Victim," while presenting the authorities as "Perpetrator." By saying "We welcome you" (V.24), the terrorists deploy metaphoric and rhetorical statements to demonize secular authorities, whom they aspire to confront as enemies and whose actions they portray as heroic. At the meso- or discursive-practice level, the video was produced by the group, reported by the foreign media (CGTN), and consumed by the public.

The phrase from the title, “BH vows to take on AU troops,” and the commentary is worth revisiting. The Chinese media noted that "Nigerian militant group Boko Haram has mocked plans by the AU to send a regional force into north-east Nigeria. The group released a video welcoming the AU force and vowing to seize the soldiers, one by one" (V.24). This commentary raises serious questions: Why is China interested in reporting and reproducing insurgents' media? Why does it seem keen to report conflicts in Africa? This framing by the international media attempts to position the insurgent group above the Nigerian authorities, a perspective that a video produced and released independently by BH may not present.

Meanwhile, the insurgents come across as "crude." While this clip reveals the insurgents' use of social media content, its reporting and amplification by traditional media change the narrative about jihadists' communication. The audience that consumes and interprets the message is the public - caught between the terrorists' attempt to control the narrative and the possibility of panic through media like the one published by CGTN.

Its intertextuality is evident in BH's radical exploitation of religious texts to justify their actions and strategic objectives, as well as in their diagnostic and motivational frames. The *macro-level* underlines the group's seeming power struggle between BH and the secular authorities it confronts. The video accentuates power and legitimacy dynamics, how the terrorists deploy rhetoric to legitimise their actions - veiled under ideologies - radical Islamism, different from the liberal conservatism that the AU and Chad Republic uphold (V.24). On the wider political context, the video has the wider political implications for peace and security in the West subregion and the entire continent as the insurgent's regional and continental Jihad tends to weaken governance and polarise society.

In a separate video (V.25), the leader claims that the group will release the Chibok girls only if the Nigerian government agrees to a prisoner swap, stating, "If you want your girls, bring back our *yanuwa* (brothers)" (Africa News, 2016b). This video, released on September 25, 2016, was notable as it followed military claims of Shekau's critical injuries in an airstrike. President Muhammadu Buhari expressed willingness to negotiate for the remaining Chibok girls, highlighting ongoing dialogues with credible sect representatives. The screenshot of a video released by the group shows the abducted schoolgirls in hijab, as indicated below in Figure 6. 4.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 6. 4 Screenshot of a video released by BH in which Abubakar Shekau claims the abduction of over 200 Schoolgirls (Al Jazeera English, 2014: https://shorturl.fm/DLU8t)

In *Stage one,* the researcher used VVVA's framework to analyse V.25. Released by Africa News on 26 September 2016, the clip "Abubakar Shekau resurfaces, insists on hostage swap for Chibok girls" is 1 minute 16 seconds long. The audio and video quality are high. On *stage two*, the setting is indoors, and the main character is Shekau. For the first time, he faces what appears to be 18 copies of the Qur'an to the left and right. The background is entirely black, and the sect's flag flies at the top left, bottom, and top right (V. 25). Two masked, aggressive fighters with 4-K47 rifles and bulletproof vests flank the leader. Seated in a bulletproof vest, with a black and white scarf around his neck. Other visual actions include a press release with marching orders from the group, as well as verbal and textual features, including dialogue in Hausa, Arabic, and English. Shekau mimics the #BringBackOurGirls movement by using the propaganda slogan "bring back our *yanuwa* (brothers)" (V.25). The camera technique used is a combination of a close-up shot and a normal professional shot.

Based on s*tage three,* the theme of the message is threats to the governing of a prisoner swap as a condition to release the Chibok girls. When it comes to ideological stance (van Dijk, 2015), the terrorists project self-glorification to undermine the government. As it pertains to the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), the group attempts to leverage the leader's mandate based on its version of divine authority. Although there is no direct predilection for morality about righteousness or evil, the

logic of violence and insecurity is apparent, given that the group was still holding the schoolgirls. The video reveals the myths of self-glorification and defiance. The target audience is the Nigerian government, to which the group dares to demand a prison swap with the girls in captivity.

The researcher applied the three-dimensional CDA method (Fairclough, 1992) to analyse V.25. On the *micro-level*, BH uses phrases like “if you want” and “your girls” versus “our brothers” to tap into the “us” versus “them” sentiment. The grammatical analysis shows Shekau as the speaker and actor, with the Nigerian government as the audience. Rather than relying on metaphor, the group addresses the Nigerian state directly. On the *meso-level*, BH’s video was broadcast on Africa News’ YouTube channel. While the South African outlet typically covers peace and security issues in places like Mali and the DRC, this content shifts focus to Nigeria, West Africa’s most populous nation, underscoring the role of diplomacy and international relations in insurgent political communication and the strategic messaging of African media like Africa News. Such messages, consumed by relatively uniform audiences, reveal how insurgents use social media to instil fear, while traditional media provides a platform for jihadists to shape the narrative. Drawing on intertextuality, BH’s radical stance uses religion against the government’s war on terror, with the ongoing outrage over the schoolgirls’ abduction still resonating internationally. By aligning words with actions, their kidnapping of the girls and press release demanding a prisoner swap highlight their diagnostic and motivational strategic framing.

The *macro-level* analysis interrogates the content considering social practice to ascertain the group's ideological tussle and how BH uses language to reflect a power struggle in its attempt to replace democracy with an Islamic Caliphate. It is difficult to ascertain whether the intended prisoner swaps for the girls signal power-sharing or compromise. Nonetheless, the request runs along with the militants' quest for power and legitimacy, evident in its charged rhetoric (V.25). Although the group does not directly legitimize its actions in the video, in other videos, BH has always justified its violence as a "divine duty." They do this knowing that while the government does not directly counter specific Jihadi videos immediately, it nonetheless justifies counter-messaging in the protection of its sovereignty. With radical Islam as its underlying ideology, accessed from its wider political implications, the disturbing video about the abducted schoolgirls keeps gaining international condemnation, presenting the

government as incapable of rescuing the girls, traumatizing their families, discouraging some parents in the north from sending their girls to school, and further polarising the Nigerian public along ethnic and religious lines.

In a separate video, Shekau expressed admiration for the gunmen who killed 12 people at the offices of the French newspaper Charlie (CGTN, 2015). In a bold statement, he said, "Oh, you French people, oh, you who follow the religion of democracy, between you and us is enmity to eternity" (CGTN, 2015). The leader stressed that he is "very happy with what happened at the heart of France" (CGTN, 2015), indicating that the action is heroic and in keeping with BH's mission.

Stage one involves V.27, a 57-second video published by CGTN Africa on 15 January 2015, titled "Boko Haram Leader Praises Attack on Charlie Hebdo," analysed using VVVA. It is the shortest clip, with high-quality audio and visuals. Stage two reveals an indoor setting featuring Shekau as the main figure, surrounded by symbolic imagery. Bearded, he wears a brown hat, black scarf, white *Baban riga* (a long cloak worn by northern elites), and holds an AK-47 across his chest. He raises his right fist in the air, with the group's black-and-white flag in the right corner and its logo in the top left. The background includes milk-coloured curtains with red flowers. Verbally, Shekau reads from Arabic script to make his point, while a close-up camera shot emphasizes threats and victory claims. Ideologically (van Dijk, 2015), the message projects strength and self-glorification, ignoring the government's counter-messaging. The legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) relies on the leader's claimed authority, framing violence as justified. The video portrays myths and stories of glorification, killings, and victories, aimed at the fighters involved and the French government.

The researcher used the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) to also analyse V.27. At the *micro-level*, Shekau deploys "Oh, you French people," "oh, you who follow the religion of democracy," as well as "between you and us" (CGTN, 2015) to create the "Us" versus "them" disparity. Based on the grammatical analysis, the speaker is Skekau, and the recipients are the killer-fighters and the French government. Though there is no use of metaphorical or rhetorical language, the group apparently presents the fresh government as an enemy or BH as heroic.

At the *meso-level*, the clip was produced by BH, released by CGTN Africa, and consumed by large audiences. Insurgents leverage BH social media, such as YouTube Channels of traditional international media organizations, to instil fear and control the

narrative. Both the target audience and other heterogeneous consumers are left to interpret jihadi messages like this one depending on their proximity to the incident. The clip's intertextuality underpins how BH videos radically exploit religious texts that further align with international terror narratives. This discourse relates to the sect's strategic objective, an attempt to internationalize terror through the Charlie Hebdo attack in its diagnostic and motivational frames using digital propaganda. At the *macro level*, the apparent ideological tussle the video presents is a language that reflects a power struggle between the group and its perceived enemies. As a corollary, the power legitimacy indicates that the terrorists deploying rhetoric to legitimize their actions justify violence as heroic and divine in contradistinction to the government's attempt to protect its sovereignty, including lives and livelihoods. The message in the video underlines radical Islam's position on the liberal democracy practiced in France. The implication for the wider political contexts is the attempt to create fear, achieve mass murder, and make society ungovernable.

In a 2014 Euronews video, the group's leader reportedly stated, "The group denied claims by the Nigerian government that it agreed to a ceasefire." The footage appeared after the Nigerian military and presidency unexpectedly announced they had struck a deal with the terrorists to end hostilities. In it, Shekau, the leader, claimed that over 200 abducted Chibok schoolgirls had been converted to Islam and married off. More than 500 women and girls remain captive, enduring horrific conditions and being forced into marriages within the terrorists' camps (Euro News, 2014).

Identified as V.28 in VVVA's *stage one*, the 48-second video, published on November 1, 2014, is of good quality with clear audio and visuals. Set indoors, it features Shekau with an AK-47 against his chest, pointing emphatically at the audience, the sect's logo visible in the top-left corner. Euronews also released three other videos showing Boko Haram's activities: one with four Hilux vans and nine hooded fighters in military fatigues, likely in Sambisa Forest; another with Shekau in camouflage, standing in a truck and firing an anti-aircraft gun into the air. The scenes resemble a press release, with the leader delivering a defiant speech.

There is also a chilling video of Shekau, dressed in military khaki with a striking red hat wrapped in a scarf. Even more disturbing is a third video showing the abducted Chibok girls, wearing light blue and black hijabs, reciting Quranic verses in Arabic—a heartbreaking reminder of their situation. Figure 6.5 captures a mother holding a

photo of her daughter, one of the kidnapped Chibok girls.

Figure 6. 5 Martha Mark holds the picture of her daughter, Monica, one of over 200 Chibok schoolgirls kidnapped by the terrorists in 2014 (AP Photo/Sunday Alamba, 2016:

Regarding the verbal features, an unsettling use of Arabic frames the group's menacing message. The camera used a close-up shot technique. Stage *three,* the goal, concerns BH's denial of the government's purported ceasefire. Regarding its ideological stance (van Dijk, 2015), BH portrays itself as a victim by claiming that the government lied about the ceasefire. It tries to belittle the government's successes in counter-messaging. Talks about the conversion of the schoolgirls to Islam and marrying them highlight the group's legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) and authority in keeping their leader's mandate. Applying morality, the group portrays itself as righteous and the government as evil, since it reportedly makes false claims (V.28). In terms of rationality, the title, which underscores issues with ceasefire claims, further highlights the logic of violence. By pitching the government on the wrong side, the terrorists indicate the myths of glorification and victories. The target audience is the Nigerian government and military.

Applying the three-dimensional CDA (Fairclough, 1992) tool to the data, at the *micro-level*, the footage indicates an "Us" versus "them," because the group tried to falsify the government's claims of a ceasefire (V.28). On the grammatical analysis side, the main actor is Skekau, and the recipient is the government.

Despite the obvious lack of metaphor or rhetorical language, the sect nonetheless attempts to present itself as heroic and the state as a purveyor of half-truths. At the *meso-level,* the messages were produced by BH, distributed by Euronews, and consumed by large audiences. It is curious why a European channel would host a Jihadi message on its YouTube channel, even though BH operates in sub-Saharan Africa. The abduction of the schoolgirls had gained international outrage, calling for their rescue. Designating the group as an "Islamist rebel group" (V.28) may have been decided based on the sect's anti-Western rhetoric. On intertextuality, since foreign media reproduced the speeches, it aligns with the international "War on Terror" and the sect's radical exploitation of religion. In addition, the strategic frames present the government telling half-truths and BH as presenting the whole truth - diagnostic and motivational frames that BH aspires to achieve and the government tries to counter.

At the *macro level*, the ideological tussle reflects a power dynamic between BH and constitutional governments. While BH utilizes rhetoric as seen in the video to legitimize its actions, which justifies violence as a godly mandate (V.28), it underscores power and legitimacy, questioning the government's sovereignty. With an ambitious ideology of entrenching radical Islam, uprooting liberal conservatism as implications, in the wider political context, messages like these (V.28) have the capacity to dampen the spirit of audiences, further hampering public security and dividing the nation.

A separate video (V.29) published by the leader of the BH group chants these words in Arabic: "Sometimes it stretches, and sometimes it folds until God explains. To our Mujahideen brothers in the Islamic State. Determining the years of the caliphate in the Levant region - The mountains did not bend for a moment, our proud forelocks..." (V. 29). AFP reported that "Boko Haram leader Shekau vows that the group will defeat the regional armed forces. In a second of the latest videos, images of the leader of the Islamic State group, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, are shown" (V. 29). It is common for BH to brag about defeating the government and standing up against the world. It shows a group of militants in camouflage dresses carrying the Islamist flag.

Al-Baghdadi is also seen in the video for the first time wearing a long beard, a black hat, and a long tassel. This footage follows a scene of the terrorists on a

procession in loaded Hilux vans and motorcycles; then an episode of two militants firing machine guns while shouting *Allahu Akbar* (the Arabic phrase for God is the greatest). The shouting continues as BH members in military camouflage shoot machine guns at the back of two camouflage-painted Hilux vans. The group's flag flies at the top left (V. 29).

Using the VVVA at *stage one*, the next dataset, designated V. 29, was published by AFP News Agency on 9 February 2015. Titled "Al Baghdadi shown for the first time in Boko Haram video," the clip is 37 seconds, one of the shortest. Both the audio and video qualities are clear. As per *stage two*, the video's setting is the city. Visual imagery begins with fighters holding Jihadi flags, and Al Baghdadi, the main character, is taking the staircase, moving upstairs. The verbal features include Arabic music with English subtitles and propaganda slogans. The camera techniques include close-up shots, cinematic shots, surveillance-style shots, and amateur footage. *Stage three* unravels the theme – the sect's vow to defeat the regional armed forces.

Regarding the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), the message projects the group's strength and self-glorification. The group's leader, who reveals his determination to engage the regional troops, points to the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015). The video does not directly touch on morality in terms of right or wrong; however, there is a sense of the logic of violence since the sect pledged to defeat the regional forces (V.29). Again, the myths of glorification and victories are apparent in the clip, which has the regional troops as target audiences.

At the *micro-level*, applying the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) for analysis presents copious references to "To our Mujahidden brothers in the Islamic State," "Our knights," and "Our proud forelocks," thereby invoking the "Us" versus "them" dichotomy. Through the grammatical lenses, the actors are both the fighters and Al Baghdadi, and the recipients are the public. Instead of using metaphors, the clip reveals the use of background music. At the *meso-level,* the video appears to be produced by ISIS/ISL/Daesh when BH paid allegiance to the Jihadi sect, forming ISWAP. The messages were reported by AFP and consumed by anyone who accessed its YouTube channel. The French channel hosting the terrorists' media could indicate the interest of global media in Jihadi stories, further highlighting the danger the insurgents pose beyond Africa. Beyond

utilizing social media, this video (V.29), the BH's narrative also appears on traditional media channels, where it is propelled rather than controlled.

The sect's allegiance to ISIS highlights intertextuality – the dilemma of BH's radical exploitation of religious texts versus how the government's speeches are in tandem with the international "War on Terror." The strategic frame is the specific objective of the sect's vow to defeat the regional armed forces in line with the insurgents' diagnostic and motivational frames. At the *macro-level*, the alliance between the local and international groups reflects a power struggle and a quest for legitimacy – the deployment of rhetoric to legitimize their actions as divinely instituted. The implication is a broader justification of its tactics to undermine the government's sovereignty and liberalism. While the wider political contexts present the message in a way that polarises society, it also creates fear about public security. WG reveals Arabic three times - V.29, V.28 and V.27; Hausa and Arabic once- V.25; Hausa twice - V.24 and V.3; Hausa, English, and Arabic twice- V.5, V.4.

6.1.3 Divine Vision/Mission of Jihad (DV/MJ)

BH released a chilling video that boldly proclaimed their ruthless intentions. In this footage, they asserted that Allah had granted them the courage to infiltrate the Giwa Barracks in Maiduguri and incinerate it. Their message was clear and alarming; they called upon women to return home, threatening that those who failed to comply would be kidnapped and sold into slavery as infidels (eNCA, 2014). This group demonstrates a brazen disregard for human life and safety, openly vowing to kill more students and enslave women (V.6).

The data was analysed using VVVA's *stage one* template. Labelled V.6, the clip titled "Boko Haram releases threatening video" was published on 30 March 2014 by eNCA. The 1-minute 2-second clip is high-quality, with clear video and audio. In terms of *stage two*, the setting is both a rural area and the barracks in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno. The main characters are the fighters. It features visual symbols such as armoured vehicles, weapons, and aggressive fighters. As regards visual actions, the aggressive fighters are shooting sporadically.

The video captures a harrowing glimpse into the brutal realities of insurgency, showing militants in armoured Hilux vans navigating chaos, firing indiscriminately, and setting barracks on fire—AK-47s in hand, urgency etched into

every movement. The visuals are striking, with each frame revealing fighters chatting amid the roar of flames and the rattle of gunfire. Shot compositions heighten the tension: insurgents storming Giwa barracks, buildings blazing, bullets slicing through the air, civilians scrambling for safety. Thick smoke and deafening noise create an atmosphere of pure terror. Beyond the armed figures, the chaos makes it nearly impossible to distinguish individuals, as civilians are tragically caught in the crossfire (V.6). A soft, haunting Arabic song plays in the background, adding a chilling religious undertone to BH's ruthless operations. The language mirrors depictive gestures (Dicks, 2019), with the attackers' words and actions stripped of empathy, radiating cold detachment. This delivery style intensifies the stark violence, while camera work blends close-up, cinematic, and surveillance shots to devastating effect.

On *stage three,* it uncovers the goal of the message - a stark reminder of the ongoing threat BH poses, revealing a disturbing conviction that underpins their violent actions. When examined to unravel context and meaning (Dicks, 2019), their invocation of divine victory underscores a grave ideology rooted in jihad that drives their terrifying agenda. The leader's words are unambiguous; he speaks with chilling clarity, articulating a frightening vision for the future that targets explicitly vulnerable groups, particularly girls and women. The communication is striking, encapsulated in the title "Boko Haram Releases Threatening Video," and its distribution through eNCA News in English ensures that their menacing message reaches a broad audience. Figure 6.6 shows a screenshot of one of the fighters in a drive-in shootout.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 6. 6 Screenshot of BH fighters in a shootout (eNCA News, 2014: https://youtu.be/GzoO0nPw2ZY)

The clip indicates the group's ideological disposition (van Dijk, 2015) – strength and self-glorification and their strategy of legitimation (van Leeuwen, 2015) – relying on divine authority to match their threats with action. Accessed on moral grounds, the video does not address righteousness or evil; nonetheless, the group's threats are vicious, which also relates to the group's logic of violence - infiltrating army barracks in the city and incinerating them to show its power and shame the security agencies. The stories of glorification, killings, and victorious raids underpin the video's myths. The target is women, the Nigerian government, the Nigerian armed forces, and those who fail to comply with their message.

The research also used the three-dimensional framework (Fairclough, 1992) to analyse the data. His CDA considers the *micro-level* first. By sending their message to a threefold audience (V.6), the terrorists differentiate themselves from their audience – an apparent "Us" versus "them" projection. In a grammatical analysis, the actors are the fighters, while the receiver includes women, the government, soldiers, and people who defy their message. The video does not use metaphorical or rhetorical language, although it tends to portray the armed forces and government as weak and the BH as strong and heroic. At the *meso-level,* BH produced the video, and Channel TV broadcast it on its YouTube channel and traditional media outlets to large audiences. This messaging presents a key step in insurgency discourse – how BH strategically leverages third parties to advance its propaganda across both traditional and social media. It underscores BH's enduring digital propaganda.

The intertextuality discourse from the clip aligns with local terror transported into international terror narratives and the sect's radical exploitation of religion, given their claim that Allah gave them courage to enter Giwa barracks (V.6). Their strategic diagnostic and motivational frames are apparent since they frame their message to achieve specific objectives – create terror, boost the morale of fighters, and show the insurgents are winning. At the last level, the *macro* level, the study critically examines the ideological tussle in the video. The language reflects a power struggle between BH and the government, as well as power dynamics - the militants' use of rhetoric to legitimize their actions. The message underlines a deeper ideological underpinning - radical Islam. More than that, the wider political implication is that the message could create fear and polarise the Nigerian state.

In another development, BH leader Shekau dismissed claims of his death by the Nigerian military in a new video (V.7), saying:

> Here, I am alive. I will only die when Allah takes my breath. The wish of President Obama will not kill me; the wish of François Hollande will not kill me; the wish of Benjamin Netanyahu will not kill me; the wish of Ban Ki-moon will not kill me; the wish of Queen Elizabeth will not kill me; the wish of the infidels of the world will not kill me. Not to talk of Jonathan…Kashim, the tiny one...nothing will kill me until my days are over (AFP News Agency, 2014).

In the clip (V.7), Shekau dismisses claims by the military that he is dead, as shown in Figure 6. 7.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 6. 7 Screengrab of Abubakar Shekau dismissing claims by the Nigerian Military that he is dead (AFP News Agency, 2014: https://shorturl.fm/F0nQb)

Based on VVVA's *stage one* template, the video labelled V.7 was published by AFP on 3 October 2014. Entitled "Boko Haram Leader Dismisses Reports of His Death" (V.7), the clip is 47 seconds long and high in audio and audio-quality elements. On *stage two*, the setting features a dense forest, and while the appearance of the leader and fighters is consistent with previous videos, the emotional elements of empathy and compassion are notably absent from their messages (V.7). The main character is Shekau, flanked by 7 fighters. The visual imagery reveals the use of weapons (AK-47s, rocket launchers), flags, Hilux vehicles, and aggressive fighters. The gestures and body movements in the clip convey powerful messages directed at Western and Nigerian politicians, reinforcing the undeniable strength and resilience of the group's leader.

The visual elements further underscore this narrative, as illustrated by the impactful screenshots of gestures showcased throughout the video (V.7). The visual

actions reveal press release by the leader and fighters, clad in military attire, are situated in a forest, as shown in various angles of the clip (V.7). Key visuals include three Hilux vans, two flags of the organisation on the right, and another flag on the left, along with eight hooded gunmen armed with AK-47 rifles and machine guns loaded with live ammunition (V.7). About verbal or textual features, the video reveals a compellingly combination of Arabic and Hausa with a precise English translation provided by the AFP News Agency. It employs a rich array of communication tools, including chants, oral speech, and written text, accompanied by a stirring Arabic soundtrack. The video combines close-up and surveillance-style camera techniques. *Stage three* points to the goal, namely, claiming the survival of its leader and the resilience of the group. The ideological stance (van Dijk, 2015) suggests the sect's strength and self-glorification, as well as an attempt to belittle the government's successes and accuse it of half-truths.

Regarding legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), the group seeks to demonstrate its authority through the leader's challenge to the government. Even though the video does not deal with morality, it highlights the logic of violence amid heightened insecurity. It also relates to the myths of self-glorification and the militants' victories. Though the leader mentions Obama, Netanyahu, Ban Ki-moon, Queen Elizabeth, infidels, Jonathan, and Kashim (V.7), the target audience is the West, the international community, and Nigerian politicians.

Using the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992), the analysis starts at the *micro-level* by examining vocabulary. Naming leaders from the West, the international community, and Nigeria positions the group in opposition to authority through an “Us” versus “Them” framing. Grammatically, Shekau is the actor, while the three sets of leaders are recipients, with the group casting itself as the “Victim” and these leaders as “Perpetrators.” Calling Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno State “the tiny one” serves as a metaphor. The repeated use of “kill” reflects rhetoric aimed at demonizing these leaders as enemies. At the meso-level, the video—produced by the sect and published by AFP—targets a broad audience, with the French channel covering Jihadi stories from Africa during a time of crude insurgent displays, highlighting BH’s reliance on foreign media to sustain its social media presence. Intertextuality reveals how terrorists exploit religious texts to instil fear and strategically frame messages to meet insurgent goals through digital propaganda. The

macro-level analysis underscores language as a tool in the power struggle between BH and the government or its military actions. By rejecting claims of his death, Shekau seeks to assert legitimacy and justify BH's assaults, often cloaked in radical Islamist ideology. Politically, such messaging deepens divisions, spreads fear and portrays society as unsafe and unstable due to the sect's extreme actions.

In another YouTube video, the leader of the group sets fire to a flag while declaring loyalty to Allah and reciting their Jihadi pledge, altering the Nigerian pledge to reflect the goals of the terrorist organization (V.8). He avowed:

> We thank God for making us enter Baga and Doro-Baga in victory. Today, we declared Baga part of our territory—one of our operational bases. Jonathan, you are in trouble. All governors of Nigeria are in trouble. All this is war equipment. You see, it is from Baga and Dogo. Your army kept deceiving the world that you cannot fight us because you have no arms – lies! You have all that it takes; you are just cowardly soldiers. You forgot that it is God that arms. Is it not amazing that we who started with sticks and machetes are today the headache of the almighty Nigerian soldiers? What a shame! (Daily Mail, 2015).

Shekau, described as horrifying and extreme, declared: "I pledge to Allah my God; to be faithful, loyal, and honest; to defend His Islam. Allahu Akbar! Nigeria is fake, and Islam is all that matters! War upon war... Who is the unbeliever?" (Daily Mail, 2015). In contrast, Nigeria's national pledge states: "I pledge to Nigeria, my country, to be faithful, loyal, and honest, to defend her unity; so help me, God."

Using the VVVA's *stage one* template for analysis, the Video coded as V.8. was published in the Daily Mail on 6 March 2015. The Video, "Boko Haram Leader Threatens War, Burns Nigerian Flag," is a 2-minute 34-second amateur video with clear audio. On *stage two*, the setting is the dreaded Sambisa forest. The main characters are Shekau and 7 of his fighters. In the visual or symbolic elements, there are weapons (a fierce leader and aggressive fighters holding AK-47s) and the sect's flag flying in the top right. The visual actions reveal the leaders making what appears to be a press release to drive home their point. The Video features the organization's flag and logo, a draft of a commander's speech flapping in the breeze. Visuals show the Nigerian flag in flames, fighters shooting into the air, and the leader raising the BH flag while reciting

a modified national pledge, prompting chants of "Allahu Akbar"[2] (V.8).

Evidence indicates BH members replace Nigerian flags with Islamic ones (Zenn, 2013) and burn the Nigerian flag, ending the Video with a display of seized military weapons. The scene features three Hilux vans, an armoured rocket launcher, and seven commanders with AK-47 rifles, as the hooded fighters, dressed in black, sing war songs (V.8). On the verbal/textual features, the video shows the leader chanting in Arabic, with an English translation provided by the Daily Mail. There is also an Arabic soundtrack in the background. The communication methods include spoken speech, bodily movements, and gestures. The camera shots include amateurish close-ups and surveillance-style shots. Filmed from various angles, the Video combines three episodes into one. The goal is to undermine the legitimacy of the Nigerian state by burning national symbols like the flag. From an ideological perspective (van Dijk, 2015), the message conveys strength and self-glorification while attempting to belittle the government's counter-messaging. The claims of victory in Baga and Doro (V.8), is strategically done to discredit the government and legitimise BH's strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) as a force to reckon with based on living out its leader's divine mandate namely – "I pledged to Allah my God," "Islam is that matters" (V.8). Showing some form of righteous indignation, the group claims that the government tells "lies" (V.8) – an indication of evil in terms of morality. Meanwhile, on rationality, with words such as "a group which started with sticks and machetes are today the headache of the almighty Nigerian soldiers," "all this is war equipment," "Nigeria is fake," "War upon war," (V.8), Shekau confirms the logic of violence and security. The apparent myth of self-glorification is the group's bravado and indulgence about victories in the Barga territory (V.8). The intended target audience includes the Nigerian government and its troops.

For a rounded analysis, the study also adopted the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) to analyse the same data. The micro-level reveals parallels – BH invokes the "Us" versus "them," divisiveness in its messaging. For instance, in the first part of the discourse, the leader refers to "we" 3 times, "Our" 2

[2] *Allahu Akbar* is an Arabic phrase for God is great, God is greater, or God is greatest. Voices of children shouting a religious chant in the background each time the sect's leader speaks, although their faces do not show in the Video.

times, and "You" 4 times. The grammatical feature presents the leader as an actor and the government and troops as recipients – thereby pointing to the government as the "Perpetrator" and "enemy." The sect supposedly demonizes the state as an enemy while presenting its actions as heroic, though it makes no use of metaphor. Using the rhetorical frame, the militant's leader questions the superiority of the Nigerian troops (V.8).

The *meso-level* underlines the discursive practice – Produced by the group and broadcast by the Daily Mail, a UK-based traditional media outlet, the content is for the consumption of the public. Like other videos hosted by foreign media, it is curious how international media seem to provide oxygen for insurgent groups like BH, who utilize media to stay relevant and cause cross-border panic. Local media is constrained by restrictions, military protocols, and government scrutiny, making it difficult to report and broadcast Jihadi stories. This situation provides leverage for foreign media to control Jihadi narratives on the international scene, making local media rely on the West for sources of news, hence the rampant phenomenon of *Afghanistanism*, or parachute journalism. By declaring loyalty to Allah and reciting their jihadi pledge, the BH video suggests that the group radically exploits religious texts, hence intertextuality.

Based on strategic frames, the message is "framed" to fulfil the insurgents' diagnostic and motivational frames. Based on context and meaning criteria (Dicks, 2019), the content delivers a potent message to Nigerian authorities, warning them to either embrace Islam or face war. This powerful message aims to undermine the government's international standing, suggesting that BH, equipped with advanced weaponry (Bergen, 2010), can confront well-equipped armies. At the macro level, social practice indicates an ideological tussle, as can be deduced from the Video. It indicates a seeming power struggle between BH, which is stuck with its jihadi mindset, and the government's determination to secure its people and territory. For instance, by changing the words of the National Pledge, the Jihadi sect declares war on Nigeria while seeking to recruit sympathizers who reject national loyalty. Their StratCom furthers their violent agenda. As seen in the accompanying screenshot (V.8), Shekau is burning the Nigerian flag in Figure 6.8.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 6. 8 Screenshot of BH leader burning the Nigerian flag (Daily Mail, 2014: https://shorturl.fm/pvqqg)

While BH often justifies violence as "divine," underlying its ideologies, its expansionism in terms of power and legitimacy has implications for the nation politically. The combination of speech and burning of national symbols bridges the say-and-do gap, showing how BH deploys rhetoric to legitimize its actions. This trend can further divide the nation along the fault lines of religion and ethnicity between a majority Muslim north (where BH operates) and a predominantly Christian south.

A similar video showed Shekau saying, "In every nation, in every region, [they] now have a decision to make. Either you are with us, I mean, real Muslims who (sic) are following Salaf's footsteps, or you are with Obama, François Hollande, George Bush, Clinton. I do not support Abraham Lincoln, Ban Ki-moon, and his people generally, and any unbelievers. Kill! Kill! [repeated 8 times] - This war is against Christians. I mean Christians generally" (The New York Times, 2014). The leader of the terrorist organization claimed that they aspire to reinstate a medieval Islamic caliphate in northern Nigeria. He stressed that they are responsible for the abduction of hundreds of schoolgirls whom he referred to as slaves, about three weeks ago, threatening that he would sell them in the market (The New York Times, 2014). The clip (V. 16) paints a picture of the declaration of a religious war by the Jihadists since it is in their nature to continually fight in the name of Allah (Rinehart, 2021). It provides insight into the audience's perception of BH messages. Shekau claimed that his group was fighting to restore a medieval Islamic caliphate in northern Nigeria. He also took responsibility for the kidnapping of hundreds of schoolgirls, referring to them as

enslaved people and threatening to sell them (V. 16).

Leveraging VVVA's *stage one* framework, Video V.16 was published by The New York Times on 5 May 2014. The clip, "Boko Haram Leader Abubakar Shekau: 'Kill, Kill, Kill," is 4 minutes 6 seconds. *Stage two* concerns the setting – therefore, the footage looks amateurish and blurry, although the audio is clear. A requirement of stage two is the setting: the footage features a forested area, likely the Sambisa Forest. It has Shekau as the main character, flanked by two hooded fighters. The visual imagery shows the leader and aggressive fighters, with armoured vehicles behind them, and an armoured vehicle and a Hilux truck in the background. The visible BH flag adds to the context. Shekau, speaking in English and flanked by two hooded fighters in camouflage, wears a hat and holds a script in one hand while carrying an AK-47 (V. 16). Shekau often leverages religion for engagement. The visual actions include the leaders delivering a press release. It features English text with subtitles.

Although it is amateur footage, shot in 2014, the camera techniques combine close-up shots with a surveillance style. *Stage three* emphasizes the message's goal. As such, the leader argued that they are fighting to restore the medieval Islamic Caliphate in Northern Nigeria, urging leaders of the West and the international community to embrace Salafism (V.16). This underscores the group's ideological disposition (van Dijk, 2015), strength and self-glorification, and determination to tackle the international community. Invoking its version of divine law, tradition, and their leader's mandate, the terrorists position themselves as an unchallenged authority through a legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015). The message does not mention morality, though it calls for the killings of unbelievers (V.16), which, based on rationality, translates to fulfilling the requirement of the logic of violence and heightened security. The war against the West and Christians appears to fulfil the myths of positioning itself as glorious and of victories. The target audience includes Holland, Bush, Clinton, and Ban Ki-moon, including all unbelievers and Christians (V.16).

The data was also analysed using three-dimensional CDA (Fairclough, 1992). At the *micro-level*, the text or vocabulary used by BH deploys the "Us" versus "them" narrative by saying, "Either you are with us, real Muslims…," and "This war against Christians." From a grammatical analysis point of view, the speaker is Shekau, while the addressees include the leaders of the West, the international community, and Christians. While avoiding metaphorical language, the leader rhetorically and

sarcastically states, "I do not support Abraham Lincoln" (V.16), presenting itself as heroic. The m*eso-level* indicates that the video was produced by the group, hosted by The New York Times, and consumed by everyone. By reposting and publishing insurgents' communication, NYT goes beyond its local news environment to meet the needs of a global audience. However, finding the media on their YouTube channel could embolden the insurgents and their sympathizers since jihadi groups crave media attention. What is more, such reportage may be occasioned by the US's tackling of the war on terror after 9/11.

The intertextuality based on how the insurgents' communication aligns with the global determination to contain terrorism narratives further shows how BH uses videos to radically exploit religious texts. Their exploitation of digital propaganda fits into the group's strategic diagnostic and motivational frames – declaring a religious war against the West, the comity of nations, and all non-Muslims. The *macro-level* touches on social practice - how the group engages with ideological tussles. Its quest for a Caliphate in defiance of the Nigerian government reflects a power struggle apparent in the video - a call to war against Christians (V.16). This also relates to the militants' power and legitimacy – relying on rhetoric to legitimize its actions and justify violence as "divine." The declaration of war against the West and Christians is in keeping with the sect's fight with the government. The wider political context is that, given the multi-religious and multicultural nature of Nigeria, the video invokes the underlying ideologies of radical Islamism in contestation with liberal conservatism – failure to resolve this would truncate peace and national development.

In a different video clip, Shekau addressed Muslims, saying, "Those accessing this message through cassette and those listening to my voice, we are not excited to hear someone is observing Sallah or fasting and calling him an infidel. Allah knows our hearts" (Our Gists, 2021). The militant leader continued his proselytization, stressing:

> Any article of faith that you do not know, and you are doing, and you go before Allah. You have no excuse that He tells an infidel to send you to hell, explaining it is necessary – it is for your good, that is why we are explaining. Anyone who truly loves religion and explains these things is for your good. That is why we are explaining it…. Without it, there is no Sallah, fasting, preaching, or almsgiving. How will you not correct it? Have you ever seen

> someone doing business without investment? Without trade, there is no business [….] That is why we are preaching *Tauhidi* [monotheism – believing in one God] because, without *Tauhidi,* there is no worship. Have you ever seen anyone doing business without investing their own money? That is why we are explaining…" (Our Gists, 2021).

Since the messaging highlighted three of the five pillars of Islam—Salah, fasting, and almsgiving—it would pass for a Friday sermon by an Imam to a Muslim community (V. 17). There have been calls to defeat the leader of BH and dislodge the group (Abubakar, 2017). Examined based on VVVA's *Stage one* framework, V.17 was published on 24 June 2021 by *Our Gists*. It has "Abubakar Shekau (Boko Haram's leader), before picking up arms" as the title and a duration of 2 minutes 5 seconds. Though the audio is clear, the clip seems amateurish and has low video quality. As regards *stage two*, the setting or environment is indoor. The background is plain, suggesting a hall (V. 17). The main speaker is Shekau. The visual imagery depicts a leader with a long beard; he appears wearing a white hat (Hula – in Hausa) and a *Baban riga* addressing his supposedly Muslim audience.

The visual actions show a typical Friday sermon. When it comes to verbal or textual features, Shekau addresses the audience "before picking up arms" (V.17). This is evident in his speaking Hausa and in his appearance in plain civilian clothes, alongside two others on each side wearing similar attire. The camera technique is a standard close-up shot of an amateur video. Concerning *stage three,* the goal unravels a sermon about monotheism, emphasizing the need for worship (Sallah), fasting, preaching, almsgiving, and proselytization. The sect's ideological disposition (van Dijk, 2015) indicates articles of faith, piety, and acts of worship. The legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) points to authority, divine worship, and the leader's mandate. The morality can be viewed in the video as the leader navigates between worship and business, claiming, it is for your good…" (V.17). There is no logic of violence or myth of stories of glorification, martyrdom, or victories. His fellow Muslims are the target audience for the message.

The researcher deployed the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) to also analyse V.16. On the *micro-level*, by addressing Muslims and referring to non-Muslims as infidels, the group's leader invokes the "Us" versus

"them" differentiation. The grammatical analysis reveals Shekau as the actor and an audience that the clip does not show. The video does not contain metaphors or rhetorical language. Concerning the *meso-level*, the message was produced by BH, distributed by Our Gist, a local YouTube media channel, and consumed by everyone. Its intertextuality shows how BH relies on religious texts rather than on the government, which upholds the constitution.

The strategic frames reveal a message framed to achieve proselytization and acts of worship through digital propaganda. At the *macro level*, rather than underlining a language that reflects a power struggle between the insurgents and the government, the video is principally a sermon. The video lacks the legitimacy of BH, as BH demands divine worship (V.17). In the wider political context, this implies the group's determination to proselytize and radicalize audiences in a multi-religious and multicultural society. Given the intended audience, such a video could polarise an already tense and divided society.

In a similar video, the group's leader invokes Allah and thanks Him for defending believers (V.18). He goes on to say:

> Indeed, Allah does not like everyone to be treacherous and ungrateful (Quran 22:38) […] Unbelievable permission for those who fight because they are unjust, even though God is powerful in victory. Those who were expelled from their homes were treated unjustly. They say, 'Our Lord is God.' He said, 'And you did not throw.' I threw, but God. He threw, and he said, 'The temptation is worse than killing and praying…May God's peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you. The matter has not reached night and day; God does not leave a house of mud or wool without me entering it. God bless this religion - may God not humiliate disbelief through him and against his family and companions. All of them and those who follow them in goodness until the Day of Judgment after you… Praise be to God and peace be upon the Messenger of God and extended to the world (Naijapals, 2012).

VVV *stage one* was used to analyse the data. Labelled V.18, the clip was published by Naijapals on 11 January 2012. The 14 minutes 57 seconds is titled, "Boko

Haram leader declares war on Nigerian Christians." The video quality is moderate, though the audio quality is good. Regarding *stage two*, the setting is outdoors, and the lone character is Shekau. The video itself is rich in multimodal elements - visual imagery/symbols that enhance its impact. Shekau, the speaker, is portrayed wearing a vivid red-and-white turban paired with a bulletproof vest, confidently brandishing two Kalashnikov rifles against a bold green backdrop. The visual actions show the leader making a press release. The verbal and textual features highlight his choice of language—switching seamlessly between Arabic and Hausa—and, alongside the seemingly innocuous chewing stick in his hand, add layers to the message. The camera technique is a close-up shot. It is a professionally crafted shot (V. 18) designed to invoke fear and convey a powerful narrative.

Stage *three* underscores the goal – the exploitation of religion - which he achieves by invoking the phrase "God bless this religion" (V.18) to claim victory. This victory claim not only underscores the significance of the sect's beliefs but also spotlights the divine mission of Jihad. The Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015) highlights piety, strength, victimhood, and self-glorification. The group's legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) points to divine authority expressed by the leader, a "right call" in the name of "Allah," which further underlines the logic of violence. The closing of the insurgents' threatening message to the "treacherous and ungrateful" (V.18) is strikingly paradoxical; it ends with a prayer for peace directed toward the world. This move raises an important question of reflexivity that challenges existing presumptions (Dicks, 2019) about Islam as a religion of peace. There are stories of glorification and victories underscoring extant myths in the footage. The target audience is Muslims and their fellow fighters.

Applying the three-dimensional tool (Fairclough, 1992), the *micro-level* reveals BH's "Us" versus "them" dichotomy. This polarity is further apparent in references to "those who fight," "those who were expelled," and "blessings be upon you." The grammatical analysis identifies Shekau as the sole actor. He does not use metaphoric or rhetorical language but speaks plainly in defence of believers. At the meso-level, the video is produced by BH, distributed by Naijapals, a local media company, and consumed by the public, seemingly making it possible for insurgents' narratives to survive in both social and traditional media.

Regarding intertextuality, the group exploits religious texts radically. It

strategically frames its messages to achieve specific objectives – diagnostic and motivational frames of emboldening its fighters and gaining the sympathy of fellow Muslims (V.18). At the macro-level, the language used reflects power and dominance in their quest for a theocratic state in defiance of the Nigerian state. By the same token, this power dynamic is evident in the sect's attempt at deploying rhetoric to legitimize its violent acts as "divine." Asking God to "humiliate disbelief through him and against his family and companions" has wider implications in a political context. The insecurity, fear, and division it can create further highlight the danger of the sect's radical messaging.

On November 9, 2018, Sahara TV showed the sect's leader declaring Jihad with the words, "Praise be to Allah" (Sahara TV, 2018). Shekau noted that:

> We see ourselves beneath the flag/banner of Allah's prophet, and we drink the water of Alkasara. May Allah make it possible that in all His works, we do not seek personal benefit. My standing by the grace of Allah is a call and message by the will of Allah to everyone. There is nothing in common between us and those who hate Allah, infidels…or hypocrites whose works have reached the peak of infidelity- fighting. If not this religion- the owner who constructed a roof for us- the owner who has created the earth and said, everything is mine" (Sahara TV, 2018).

The disturbing video features Shekau, the notorious leader of *Jama'atu Ahlil Sunnah Lil Da'awatu Wal Jihad*, a faction of BH. He responds to those who claimed he died and spoke ill of his mother. In the message, he stressed that God "is the one to work for," noting that "these individuals are waging war without neglecting acts of worship, Sunnah, or permissible actions in their practice of Islam" (V. 21). He called for an assembly to encourage people to embrace Islam, stating, "Those who reject us, we fight. I challenge you to accept the message of Allah, for there is no strength greater than his" (V. 21). He asserted that their current activities reflect Allah's victory and emphasised their commitment to raising the flag of Islam, which he claimed is the largest religion in the world. Addressing the enemies of Islam, he warned, "We fight through Allah's victory without relying on our strength or weapons. Anyone who doubts our resolve should attempt to challenge us and will face the consequences. If

you respond to this call, you will find peace. Refusal, however, leads to calamity" (V. 21).

The researcher used VVVA's *stage one* template to analyse the data. The clip tagged V.21 was published by Sahara TV on 9 November 2018. While the title is "Exclusive: In first video since July, Shekau taunts those who said I have died," the video is the longest in this dataset – 7 minutes, 17 seconds. The video has high video and audio quality. *Stage two,* which refers to the setting, shows an outdoor video shot. The main characters include Shekau, the main speaker, and four fighters standing behind him. The visual imagery includes weapons and masked, aggressive fighters. In a striking visual, Shekau appears alongside four fighters dressed in military fatigues, with an AK-47 slung over his chest. Adorned with a scarf or turban, the clip captures the viewer's attention. This imagery is not merely a display of power; it serves as a chilling reminder of the group's persistence and their ability to leverage media to amplify their influence and provoke fear. The visual actions contain a press release by the leader.

Regarding verbal features, while the leader speaks fluently in Arabic and Hausa, English subtitles are provided. This discourse highlights BH's sophisticated approach, which employs both media and confrontation in its communication tactics. The camera techniques used include a close-up shot and a professional style. *Stage three* deals with the goal that combines victory claims with threats, calls for proselytization, and urges everyone to embrace Islam or be killed. The ideological perspective (van Dijk, 2015) unveils piety, strength, self-glorification, minimizes the sect's errors, and belittles the government's successes. This view also relates to the terrorist's legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), divine authority, religious tradition, and the leader's mandate. In this footage, Shekau exudes confidence as he praises his fighters, boasting of their so-called "successes" in recent battles in Kumshe, Gulumba, and other conflict-ridden areas of northeast Nigeria. He mockingly addresses those who declared him dead, underscoring his defiance. In line with context criteria (Dicks, 2019), this development raises critical questions about BH's strategic use of both mediated and unmediated communication. According to Montgomery, Higgins, and Smith (2019), there are essential distinctions between public offensiveness — particularly through media channels—and private confrontations among individuals. The clip invokes the moral codes of righteousness on the sect's part and evil for those who refuse to embrace Islam (V.21). On rationality, the message evidences the logic

of violence just as it underlines myths of glorification and victories. Its main target includes the public, infidels, and Muslims.

As regards data analysis, three-dimensional CDA tool (Fairclough, 1992): At the *micro-level,* Shekau's deployment of "there is nothing between us and those who hate Allah," "a roof for us," and labeling non-Muslims as "infidels or hypocrites" (V.21) underpin the "Us" versus "them" differentiation between the terrorists and others. Since the grammatical analysis is key, the speech had one actor, Shekau, facing the camera to address the world – recipients. The use of "the owner who constructed the roof for us" points to metaphoric and rhetorical language referring to Allah and his favour for the groups, including Muslims. The *meso-level* indicates the discursive practice in terms of production. Sahara TV, a Nigerian channel based in the U.S., published the message for the public. Publishing the insurgents' propaganda by this organization shows the enduring nature of BH messaging and how it transcends borders, creating the attention the terrorists desire to "instil fear" and possibly beat the government, which often relies on traditional media to control the narrative. The clip discloses elements of intertextuality as the message shows how BH videos radically exploit religious texts and unveil their diagnostic and motivational strategic frames – producing messages to achieve Jihad by undermining the government's war on terror and boosting the morale of its fighters.

The *macro-level* considers how language reflects a power struggle between BH and the government. The video suggests the group's aspiration to replace democracy with a Caliphate "beneath the flag/banner of Allah's prophet" (V.21). This tall ambition further points to its quest for power and legitimacy, given that the message explains its existence under "Allah" (V.21) rather than Nigeria's "sovereignty." While this points to its underlying ideology of radical Islamism, others who consume the media would likely question the place of liberal conservatism in this discourse, underscoring the wider political context in a multi-religious context. A message with a religious tone, coming from an insurgent group to global audiences and a country of over three million people, can divide opinion and ultimately create fears and anxieties about peace and national security. Overall, the analysis of BH messaging across seven datasets shows the following language usage: Hausa and Arabic, V.21 & V.7; Hausa: V.18 and V.17; English: V.16 and V.6; English and Arabic: V.8.

6.1.4 Demarketing Western Education (DWE)

In a shuddery video, Nigeria's extremist leader, Shekau, delivers a stark warning to those who support Western education. This footage accompanies the group's claim of responsibility for the horrific abduction of over 200 teenage schoolgirls from their school in Chibok, situated in the northeastern region of the country, on 15 April 2014. He says:

> A lady of 12 years old, I will give her out for marriage, and a lady of 9 years, I will give her hand in marriage, as they gave my mother, Aisha, the daughter of Saidu Abubakar, the wife of the Prophet, out in marriage at the age of 9. You are in for calamity, infidels of the world. We must follow God. Die of bitterness. Brethren, behead unbelievers. That I captured a girl going to school [embracing Western education], and it is bothering you. Leave Western education, ladies, and go and get married. Leave Western education. I was raised educated. I am the one who captured your girls. I will sell them in the market. There is a market for selling people. God commanded me to sell them. I will sell women as commanded by Allah until the land is filled with the blood of unbelievers (The Telegraph, 2014).

The data was analysed using VVVA's *stage one* template. The clip, "Nigeria: Boko Haram's disturbing video threats," labelled V.9, was published by The Telegraph on 15 April 2014. It lasts 1 minute 37 seconds. Although the audio quality is loud and clear, the video is blurry. Additionally, using compelling visuals and auditory elements, the video amplifies threats against supporters of Western education. *Stage two*, being the setting, indicates the Sambisa forest. Shekau is the main character, flanked by two fighters. The visual imagery is striking – It shows an armoured tank and both the leader and his lieutenants carrying AK-47 rifles, with the organization's flag flying at the top right. Shekau, dressed in a bulletproof vest and red trousers, stands against a backdrop of armed fighters. The absence of background music heightens the tension, while on-screen text reinforces the group's menacing intent.

The visual actions reveal Shekau releasing a message like a press release. Considering the textual features, it presents a dire message from the leader of the terrorist organization, speaking in Hausa. Though amateurish, the camera techniques

include close-up and normal shots. *Stage three* points to the goal - Shekau not only threatens further violence but also chillingly declares the intention to sell the abducted girls in black markets, showcasing the depths of his group's brutality and their disdain for the value of education. The leader highlights the group's ideology (van Dijk, 2015) through his claims of strength and self-glorification.

On legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), the video underscores the terrorist's claim of divine authority – The leader advocates for teenage marriage as aligned with Islamic teachings, referring to critics as a "calamity" (The Telegraph, 2014). He employs striking phrases such as, "I will give her hand in marriage as they gave my mother Aisha," and "I will sell women as commanded by Allah until the land is filled with the blood of unbelievers" (V.9). Similarly, the group condemns Western education with statements like, "Leave Western education" and "I was raised educated" (V.9). These remarks provide a religious justification for rejecting Western values (Dicks, 2019), as they prefer *Ilimin Islamiya* (Islamic education) under a theocratic regime led by their Jihadi sect. Their campaign against Western educational systems is aggressive, targeting schools, teachers, and students to eradicate Western influence and impose their strict interpretation of Islam (Kingsley, 2023). Insurgents employ strategic tactics in their violent attacks on education, aiming to instil fear and compliance (Segun, Dele-Adedeji & Donnelly, 2016). Regarding morality, the message is not directly about righteousness or evil, though it reveals disturbing issues like the selling of the abducted girls and forced marriage of minors. While references to "calamity" and "die of calamity" (V.9) speak to the logic of violence, there are myths and stories of glorification, martyrdom, and victories. The intended audience is all those who support Western education – invariably the Nigerian public, regional governments, and the international community.

Analysed based on the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992), at the *micro-level*, V.9 reveals separate references for "Brethren" and "unbelievers." This textual or vocabulary frame emphasizes BH's use of "Us" versus "them" in its communication. The vocabulary analysis (Dicks, 2019) also reveals an apparent lack of empathy in Shekau's aggressive messaging. This video starkly underscores the real dangers posed by extremist ideologies, reminding us of the ongoing battle against such militant threats in society. In like manner, the grammatical analysis identifies Shekau as the main speaker, facing the camera to address anyone who cares to listen. Though

BH seems to demonize unbelievers, there is no metaphoric or rhetorical language in the monologue. At the meso-level, the video is packed by insurgents and broadcast by The Telegraph, a foreign media outlet, for the consumption of heterogeneous audiences. Like the other BH videos, which find their way into the social media handles of mainstream media, the insurgents' jihadi narrative seems to control the cross-border landscape, given videos like these. The video's intertextuality arises out of the apparent conflict between the terrorist's radical exploitation of religious scripture and the audience it describes as unbelievers.

The strategic frame ensures that the sect designs its messaging to achieve its diagnostic and motivational frames through digital propaganda. The *macro-level* critically examines how language reflects a power struggle between BH and the government it aspires to topple. Little wonder Shekau says: "Leave Western education" (V.9). A clear example of the legitimacy of power is how BH deploys rhetoric to legitimize and justify violence as a divine command. From the wider political context, a call to "behead unbelievers" (V.9) in a multi-religious nation tends to pitch BH and their sympathizers against non-Muslims. This message can polarise society, creating great concerns about the dangers of radicalization, the sect's undermining of democratic values, and its risk to national unity.

In a similar striking video, Shekau warned that Islamic values are threatened by secularism and the temptations of Western education and music, stating, "As a result of secular education [sports] and music... many Muslims lose their Islam" (The Wall Street Channel, 2014). His choice of words — "secular," "education," "sports," and "music"—serves to blame the West for the decline in Muslim values, echoing the ideology of the group's founder (Afzal, 2020a). By claiming that "many Muslims lose their Islam," Shekau aims to rally moderate Islamists around a shared concern for eroding values. The group's strategy focuses on discrediting Western education and its secular aspects, reinforcing their extremist views. Despite its brevity, the message is powerful and precise.

Using VVVA, *stage one* points out the basics of the data. Tagged V.10, one cannot ignore a 1-minute YouTube video broadcast by The Wall Street Journal in its compelling report of 7 May 2014, titled "Is Boko Haram's Leader Dead? Insane? Neither?" (V.10). The video boasts impressive production quality with clear audio and video elements. On *stage two*, the setting, the scene, is set in the dense Sambisa

Forest, capturing immediate attention. The main character is Shekau with 3 fighters behind him. The visual imagery/symbols depict the leader with a script and fighters holding AK-47s. Fighters often wear military uniforms or traditional attire, such as the *Kaftan*, as noted by Amnesty International (2021). The use of colour and setting effectively highlights the main characters in their recognizable khaki military fatigues (V.10), reflecting their notorious history. For instance, on 17 September 2013, they staged a deceptive checkpoint near Benisheik in Borno, committing heinous acts that resulted in 143 casualties (CNN Newsource, 2024).

This harrowing narrative underscores the ongoing threat these groups pose, compelling viewers to confront the harsh reality. It shows an armoured tank, two masked fighters waving flags, and a commander who holds a script in one hand while emphatically making his points with the other. While the primary figure and fighters convey combat readiness without overt messages or emotions, a notable sense of empathy and compassion still enhances the narrative (V.10). In terms of visual actions, the leader speaks extemporaneously while holding a text. Featuring a blend of still and moving images, it provides clear on-screen subtitles while skipping background music, allowing the content to take centre stage. Based on verbal/textual features presented in English, the video combines impactful spoken text with dynamic body language, vividly illustrating key quotes through the leader's gestures. The camera techniques used are a combination of close-up and surveillance-style shooting.

Stage three underpins the goal of condemning the incursion of secularism, Western education, and secular music on Islamic values. Additionally, the sect's anti-education agenda (Afzal, 2020b) is both systematic and calculated. This group rejects Western education, using schoolchildren as suicide bombers, bombing schools, and issuing ominous threats to governments and parents about student abductions (Dyikuk, 2018a). Their operations are meticulously coordinated (Wahab, 2022) and executed with chilling effectiveness. The ideological stance (van Dijk, 2015) presents a reliant group that claims victimhood while celebrating its self-glorification. While the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) invokes religious authority and the leader's mandate, it also highlights a sense of morality, showing empathy and compassion. Conversely, the combat readiness of the leader and fighters (V.10) suggests a justification for the logic of violence. The myths of glorification and victory are apparent from the video, which targets the public.

The study used the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) to analyse the data. On the *micro-level*, there is no “us” versus “them” narrative; the grammar positions Shekau as the main actor, with his fighters beside him as he speaks to the camera. The video avoids metaphoric or rhetorical flourishes but still portrays BH’s actions as heroic. At the *meso-level*, though the militants shot the footage, it was aired by The Wall Street Journal for a global audience. From a discursive practice angle, having a foreign outlet broadcast it puts the sect on the world stage. This ensures their crude propaganda appears on prominent websites, easily found via search engines. Intertextually, BH keeps using videos to twist religious texts and craft messages designed for international media, sidestepping the state’s institutional framing while pushing their own diagnostic and motivational frames in digital propaganda. On the *macro-level*, the language underscores a power struggle between BH and perceived enemies, with the dramatic pairing of firearms and armoured vehicles (V.10) amplifying the group’s image of strength. In broader political terms, the video risks deterring international travel, deepening social divides, and threatening public safety.

In an exclusive interview, Saleh, who has been a member of the sect for seven years, told CBS reporter Debora Patta Sales that the group planned the abduction of the Chibok girls three months ago. He stated that the group would not release the girls unless the government freed their imprisoned members (V.11): "We go to their schools and attack soldiers and policemen. We do not force anyone to accept Islam; we preach. If the government does not release our brothers, we will not release the girls, and I will not disclose what we might do [to them]" (CBS Evening News, 2014). This situation demands urgent attention to protect education and ensure the safety of all.

The researcher used VVVA's stage one template to analyse the data. Based on *stage one*, the clip was labelled V.11. Published by CBS Evening News on 20 May 2014, the 1-minute footage titled "Boko Haram member: Kidnapped girls willingly converted to Islam" sets a compelling tone. The quality is high, with clear video and audio. Considering *stage two*, the setting is outdoors. It shows a fighter, Saleh, as the main character being interviewed. The visual imagery shows a fighter answering questions in a blurred-background environment that heightens the tension before moving to the safer environment of the CBS studio.

Additionally, the news agency provides valuable commentary and background

on the insurgents, while on-screen text and subtitles (V.11) reinforce crucial messages. This approach not only informs but also deeply engages the audience, emphasizing the urgency of the topic—as seen in the screenshot of Saleh in Figure 6.9.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 6. 9 Screengrab of Abubakar Saleh, who spoke about the Chibok schoolgirls (CBS News, 2014: https://youtu.be/s6flerfasbk).

In terms of visual action, the video clip captivates without a soundtrack, allowing the focus to remain on the powerful visuals. Saleh, the interview subject, conceals his identity with a turban and is dressed in a light brown kaftan (V.11). Saleh, linked to the infamous Shekau, claims to have been part of this dangerous group for seven years (V.11). The verbal feature indicates a dialogue in English. His speech fluctuates between toughness and calmness, revealing an emotional vulnerability as he requests a safer setting for the interview. While he withholds details about the abducted schoolgirls, he indicates that they are safe and will not force the girls to convert to Islam (V.11). This dialogue exposes the chilling anti-Western narrative surrounding education, revealing the group's cold calculations in abducting schoolgirls and the grim reality of their hidden locations, where these youths are denied their fundamental right to education. Saleh's language in his CBS News interview conveys the gravity of the situation.

Dicks (2019) emphasizes the importance of communication modes—verbal expression, gestures, and body language—that enhance the impact of the powerful quotes in the interview. The exchange is highlighted in still images. The intensity of the

dialogue is palpable. The camera technique is a close-up shot. The production is professional, shifting from a blurred background to CBS's studio. *Stage three* reveals the goal of the message – In this case, the video reveals a troubling agenda to undermine education and abduct schoolchildren (V.11). The video's language—terms like "school," "release," and "we will not tell you what we are going to do"—indicates their intentions. A fighter demands a swap of the kidnapped girls for imprisoned members, highlighting their negotiation tactics (V.11). Reports of another video show a gunman insisting that the girls will only be released if the government frees their captured fighters (BBC, 2014b). Nigeria's readiness to consider a prisoner swap for the Chibok girls further complicates matters (Maclean & Akinwotu, 2016). The group's language, including references to "soldiers," "policemen," and "if they do not release our brothers," showcases their enmity towards Western education and institutions, which they view as obstacles to their goals (Thurston, 2016; Al Jazeera, 2010; Barkindo, 2016; Pieri, 2019). This situation demands urgent attention and action. Understanding the organization's message requires examining its key characteristics.

On the sect's ideological stance (van Dijk, 2015), the report suggests a combination of Piety and resilience for a group that plays victimhood and self-glorification as justification to keep the abducted schoolgirls. Apparently, they try to ignore the government's counter-messaging and counter-insurgency efforts in general. With attempts to minimize its errors and ignore the government's successes, the group invokes the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) by leveraging divine authority as evident in the statement: "we do not force anyone to accept Islam; we preach" (V.11). On morality, they portray themselves as righteous since they claim that they do not force people to embrace Islam. However, "we go to their schools and attack soldiers and policemen," plus "we will not release the girls," seems evil. This rendering also proves the logic of violence and security. It also contains the myths and stories of glorification in the capture of the girls, refusal to release them, and victories in attacking schools and security agents. The expected target audience is the Nigerian government and the international community.

Using the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992), the *micro-level* analysis of V.11 shows how BH leans heavily on an “us” versus “them” narrative. This comes through in repeated phrases like “We go,” “We do,” “We preach,” and “We might,” instead of references to “their schools,” “the government,” or “the girls”

(V.11). Grammatically, the main players are a fighter, Saleh and the public as the audience. There is no real use of metaphor or rhetoric beyond the statement that they wouldn't reveal what they planned to do with the girls. At the *meso-level*, the clip was produced by CBS and broadcast globally, likely influenced by the worldwide outrage after the Chibok schoolgirls' abduction. It reflects how mainstream media can amplify Jihadi narratives, giving insurgent leaders a platform without considering how such messages can fuel fear among audiences. Saleh's interview underscores how BH uses religious texts to counter "War on Terror" narratives, showing intertextuality, and by emphasizing preaching, abductions, and attacks on security forces, he reveals the group's diagnostic and motivational frames. On the *macro-level*, the language highlights a power struggle between BH and the government, with both sides using rhetoric to justify or discredit actions. BH frames violence and the abduction as part of its radical Islamist ideology. In the bigger political picture, the fact that over 90 girls remain missing keeps this interview a painful reminder for families and communities.

In a disturbing video Shekau, the leader of BH, declared, "I abducted a girl pursuing a Western education, and you are worried— [laughs sarcastically]. Have you not heard? I, too, received a Western education. Girls, your place is to marry" (V. 23). He also added, "I have taken your daughters and will sell them. Allah commanded me to do so" (V. 23). This alarming message reveals BH's mission to undermine Western education, gaining the title "Western Education Forbidden." Shekau's group is responsible for the abduction of over 200 teenage girls—many still missing today (V. 23). His views reflect deeply rooted cultural beliefs in Nigeria's northern regions that women should mainly do domestic chores (Save the Children International, 2021; Mamman, 2007; Maduagwu, 2015). This serves as a crucial reminder of the urgent need to defend girls' rights to education and challenge oppressive ideologies.

The VVVA's *stage one* template was used for analysis. Labelled V.23, the clip titled "Boko Haram leader says in a video group abducted the girls," published by The Wall Street Journal on 5 May 2014, runs for 37 seconds. The video is blurry but has clear audio. *Stage two*, focused on the setting, shows it was filmed in the Sambisa Forest. The main figure, Shekau, is flanked by two masked fighters. The imagery presents an aggressive leader with fighters in camouflage, an armoured vehicle in the background, and the BH flag in the top right. Wearing military camouflage, brown trousers, and a black scarf, Shekau holds a chewing stick and a script in one hand while

gesturing with the other, with an AK-47 slung across his chest. The two hooded fighters beside him wear military fatigues (V.23). The visual action captures Shekau delivering what seems like an impromptu press statement. The speech is in Hausa with English subtitles, filmed in a close-up, surveillance-style shot that looks amateurish.

The group's language, with mentions of "soldiers," "policemen," and "if they do not release our brothers," reflects deep hostility toward Western education and institutions, which they see as barriers to their aims (Thurston, 2016; Al Jazeera, 2010; Barkindo, 2016; Pieri, 2019). The situation calls for urgent attention and action. Understanding their message means looking at its key traits. Ideologically (van Dijk, 2015), the report points to a blend of piety and resilience, with the group using victimhood and self-glorification to justify keeping the abducted schoolgirls. They seem to dismiss the government's counter-messaging and counter-insurgency efforts. By downplaying their mistakes and ignoring the government's achievements, they employ a legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), drawing on divine authority, as in the claim: "we do not force anyone to accept Islam; we preach" (V.11). Morally, they present themselves as righteous because they say they don't compel conversion, yet "we go to their schools and attack soldiers and policemen" and "we will not release the girls" reveal clear malice. These statements highlight a logic of violence and security, wrapped in myths and tales of glory tied to capturing the girls, refusing their release, and triumphing in attacks on schools and security forces. Their intended audience appears to be the Nigerian government and the international community.

Using the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992), the *micro-level* analysis of V.11 shows how BH plays on the "us" versus "them" divide, with frequent use of phrases like "We go," "We do," "We preach," and "We might," contrasted with "their schools," "the government," and "the girls" (V.11). Grammatically, the main actors are fighter Saleh Abubakar and the public as the audience. There is no real metaphor or rhetoric beyond the claim that they won't reveal what they'd do with the girls. At the meso-level, the clip, produced and aired by CBS for global audiences, likely responded to the outrage over the Chibok schoolgirls' kidnapping. It shows how mainstream media can amplify Jihadi narratives worldwide, giving insurgent leaders a platform without weighing how such messages might instil fear in viewers. Saleh's interview also illustrates how BH's videos twist religious texts (V.11) in opposition to global war on terror narratives, revealing intertextuality. By

emphasizing preaching, abduction, and attacks on security forces, Saleh exposes the group's strategic framing—both diagnostic and motivational. On the *macro-level*, the language reflects an ongoing power struggle between BH and the government, each side using rhetoric to validate its own actions while discrediting the other. BH frames violence and the abduction of the girls as part of its radical Islamist ideology. In the bigger political picture, with over 90 girls still missing, the interview remains a raw and painful reminder for the families and communities affected.

In a disturbing video Shekau, the leader of BH, declared, "I abducted a girl pursuing a Western education, and you are worried— [laughs sarcastically]. Have you not heard? I, too, received a Western education. Girls, your place is to marry" (V. 23). He also added, "I have taken your daughters and will sell them. Allah commanded me to do so" (V. 23). This alarming message reveals BH's mission to undermine Western education, gaining the title "Western Education Forbidden." Shekau's group is responsible for the abduction of over 200 teenage girls—many still missing today (V. 23). His views reflect deeply rooted cultural beliefs in Nigeria's northern regions that women should mainly do domestic chores (Save the Children International, 2021; Mamman, 2007; Maduagwu, 2015). This serves as a crucial reminder of the urgent need to defend girls' rights to education and challenge oppressive ideologies.

VVVA *stage one* template was used to analyse V.23. The clip, "Boko Haram leader says in a video group abducted the girls," published by The Wall Street Journal on 5 May 2014, is 37 seconds in length. In terms of quality, the video seems blurry, though the audio is clear. Stage two, which concerns the setting, indicates that the video was shot in the Sambisa Forest. The main character is Shekau, flanked by two masked fighters. The visual imagery depicts an aggressive leader with fighters in camouflage. There is an armoured vehicle in the background, with all the parties' holding weapons and the BH flag at the top right. Dressed in military camouflage, Shekau holds a chewing stick and a script in one hand, gesturing with the other. He wears brown trousers and a black scarf, with a 4K47 gun around his neck and chest, and is flanked by two hooded fighters in military fatigues (V. 23). The visual actions show the leader of BH speaking in what appears to be a freestyle press release. The verbal/textual feature is a Hausa dialogue with English subtitles. The camera technique is a close-up shot and surveillance style, though the video looks amateurish.

Stage three reveals the threat of killings - Shekau's rhetoric challenges the

essence of education, insisting that girls should marry and bear children instead. The ideological perspective (van Dijk, 2015) reveals resilience, defiance, and self-glorification. The group also shows the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), invoking divine authority – "Allah commanded me to do so" V.23 – to undermine Western education, which they consider evil, and promote Islam, which is the way of righteousness. Based on rationality, there is an apparent logic of violence portrayed in the myths of glorification and victories – "I have taken your girls" V. 23 – The target audience is the Nigerian government.

The three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) was used to analyse V.23. At the micro-level, the textual analysis captures BH's use of "Us" versus "them," and Shekau's use of the first-person singular "I" thrice, second-person singular "You," and "Your," twice each, underscores the point. According to grammatical analysis, Shekau is the main actor, alongside his fighters. Since he faces the camera, the audience is the viewers of the video. Though the leader does not use metaphors or rhetorical grammar, there is a deployment of sarcasm to make the group appear heroic (V.23). In the meso-level discursive practice, the video was made by BH but rebroadcast by The Wall Street Journal for global audiences. Like the previous media, this development presents insurgents with a platform to amplify anti-Western rhetoric on social media. The intertextuality speaks to the invocation of religious content as justification for strategically framing messages to align with the militants' diagnostic and motivational frames.

The *macro-level* shows how language reflects a power struggle between BH and the government it keeps fighting. To achieve this, the insurgents take advantage of power to deploy rhetoric about undermining the education of women and girls while taking concrete steps to justify their violence against Western values, which they consider liberal and conservative. Given the popularity and global acceptance of Western values – education and liberal democracy- V. 23 has implications for the wider political context. A northern part of the country that is educationally backward and a southern part that is more literate reinforce a polarised society, weakening democracy and impeding national unity and development. Overall, the videos analysed feature Hausa in three instances: V.23, V.10, and V.9, and English once in V.11. Arabic is not used. Despite their short lengths, the messages are impactful.

Shekau's rhetoric challenges the essence of education, insisting that girls

should marry and bear children instead. The ideological perspective (van Dijk, 2015) reveals resilience, defiance, and self-glorification. The group also shows the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), invoking divine authority – "Allah commanded me to do so" V.23 – to undermine Western education, which they consider evil, and promote Islam, which is the way of righteousness. Based on rationality, there is an apparent logic of violence portrayed in the myths of glorification and victories – "I have taken your girls" V. 23 – The target audience is the Nigerian government.

The data was analysed using the three-dimensional CDA tool (Fairclough, 1992). V.23. At the *micro-level*, the textual analysis captures BH's use of "Us" versus "them," and Shekau's use of the first-person singular "I" thrice, second-person singular "You," and "Your," twice each, underscores the point. According to grammatical analysis, Shekau is the main actor, alongside his fighters. Since he faces the camera, the audience is the video's viewers. Though the leader does not use metaphors or rhetorical grammar, the video employs sarcasm to make the group appear heroic (V.23). In the meso-level discursive practice, the video was made by BH but rebroadcast by The Wall Street Journal for global audiences. Like the previous media, this development presents insurgents with a platform to amplify anti-Western rhetoric on social media. The intertextuality speaks to the invocation of religious content as justification for strategically framing messages to align with the militants' diagnostic and motivational frames.

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6.1.5 Supplanting Democracy with Sharia Law (SDSL)

In a viral video, Shekau vowed to disrupt Nigeria's general elections after suicide attacks killed 38 people in the northeast, underscoring their commitment to their agenda at any cost (V.12). He maintained:

> The reason and meaning of this message is that we are the ones who fought against you in Gombe, and Allah only knows what we found there. You do not need to know it. You are claiming that we do not know how to fight, but we forced your forces to flee from their bases and we freed our imprisoned brothers from the prisons that you had oppressed them in- only praise be to Allah (The New York Times, 2014).

The terrorists firmly reject democracy, civilisation, and modernity, advocating for a theocracy based on Sharia law (National Counterterrorism Centre, 2015; Jatau & Maza, 2023). Their ideology is evident in their teachings and propaganda (Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018), revealing a troubling link between religion, power, and politics. Shekau also noted:

> In every nation, in every region, [they] now have a decision to make. Either you are with us, I mean, we are Muslims who are following solid footsteps, or you are with Obama, Francois Hollande, George Bush, Bush! Clinton!! I forgot not Abraham Lincoln. Ban Ki-moon and his people generally and any unbeliever, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill! This war is against Christians, I mean Christians generally (The New York Times, 2014).

This dataset was analysed using VVVA's *stage one.* The video (V.12) released on 5 May 2014, titled "Boko Haram leader releases video," was published by The New York Times. The 1-minute and 1-second clip has high audio quality, but the video looks amateurish. *Stage two,* the setting, indicates that the video was shot in Sambisa Forest. The characters include Shekau and his fighters. The core characteristics, communication methods, visual elements, and traits of the key figure and fighters (commanders just below Shekau) remain consistent. The leader and his fighters exude a chilling presence, conveying messages devoid of empathy and compassion, and urging viewers to confront the stark realities of extremist ideologies (V.12). The visual symbols include an armoured vehicle, an aggressive leader and fighters, and soldiers

fighting or smiling. The visual actions show how the insurgents use messages and emotional rhetoric to instil fear in audiences—particularly the Nigerian government and citizens—to compel adherence to the rule of Allah, replacing civil democratic governance.

As per verbal/textual features, although scripted, the speech made in English is delivered compellingly and underscored by gestures that emphasize the goal of replacing democracy with a theocracy. Shekau, clad in military fatigues and flanked by two hooded commanders with AK-47s, delivered his speech (V.12). Although the footage is often blurry, it effectively captures the main character speaking spontaneously, with subtitles that clarify the message. The visuals feature khaki military fatigues set against a forest backdrop, with multiple angles revealing details like the organization's flag and a convoy of Hilux vans (V.12). He asserts that the group's mission is to restore a medieval Islamic caliphate in northern Nigeria, making this demand a central theme in their campaign (BBC, 2016; Barkindo, 2016; Zenn, 2020).

The camera technique includes both close-up and surveillance-style shots, although the video seems amateurish. *Stage three* projects the goal as victory claims in Gombe and threats. The ideological perspective (van Dijk, 2015) projects self-glorification, intimidation, and a declaration of war against the West and Christians. By the same token, the group's divine authority, "we are Muslims who are following solid footsteps" (V.12), points to a legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015). The mention of kill 6 times and the declaration of war against Christians touch on morality. However, the message was not about righteousness or evil. The apparent logic of violence is apparent in the myths of glorification and victories. The target audience includes the armed forces, Western leaders, the international community, and Christians.

The researcher also analysed the same data using the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992). Based on the *micro-level*, the references to "we are the ones who fought against you," "we forced your forces to flee," "we freed our imprisoned brothers," versus "fought against you," "Your forces," "you had oppressed," (V.12) creates Boko the "Us" versus “them," in the insurgents' communication. The grammatical analysis reveals that Shekau is the actor facing the camera, flanked by fighters. The receivers are obviously all those who can access the video. There are no specific metaphors or rhetorical language, though the leader used

plain language to demonize the armed forces, the Nigerian state, the West, and Christians.

The *meso-level* indicates that the video was published by the group and by The New York Times and consumed by the public. The implications of publishing such Jihadi communication, crude as it is, point to how traditional media intersects with social media on the one hand and how BH uses social media to instil fear ahead of mass murders and control the narrative. The intertextuality highlights how the jihadists who proclaim to be "Muslims" claim to be following "solid footsteps" – A step which contradicts the government's constitutional democracy and counter-narratives. With a clear aim of exploiting religious texts, the group exposes its strategic frames - insurgents' diagnostic and motivational frames of leveraging digital tools for propaganda – waging war against the West and their allies, and Christians, plus boosting the morale of fighters.

In social practice at the *macro level,* their language reflects a power struggle with the government it challenges. With a phrase like "praise be Allah" (V.12), the sect displays the power of legitimacy to justify its violence as "divine." From the wider political context, such a statement, which celebrates Islamism, not only undermines liberal democracy but also polarises society, further threatening peace and national development.

A similar YouTube video presents a zero-tolerance stance on education. The video criticizes Nigerian authorities, references the bombing of ThisDay's office in Abuja, and underscores the sect's goal of replacing democracy with sharia law. Militant leader Shekau states, "We agree with the Western education work that was done in the town of Mabodo, which we reconciled with the Nigerian authorities" (The Guardian, 2013). Providing context, *The Guardian* noted that:

> Nigerian military says the leader of militant Islamist sect Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau may have died of gunshot wounds. A statement from the army claims Shekau was killed several weeks ago after a clash with Nigerian soldiers. Past reports of Shekau's death have proved false, and there has been no independent confirmation of the army account. The army said Shekau was hit during a gun battle near one of his camps in the northeast on 30 June. He was then taken over the border into Cameroon, where he was believed to have died between 25 July and 3

August (The Guardian, 2013).

Assessed on context and meaning criteria (Dicks, 2019), the terrorists use propaganda to convince the public that the government is also deploying propaganda in its counter-messaging. Meanwhile, The Guardian also traces the history of the sect to its founder, adding that the Islamists attribute their activities to religious underpinnings.

The leading BH wants to impose Islamic law in Nigeria's north and is one of the biggest threats (s) to stability in Nigeria. The group has been blamed for attacks on security targets and churches across Africa's biggest oil-producing country. Though Shekau's death would hinder BH, the group has several factions and no single leadership structure. Shekau assumed the leadership when the founder, Mohammed Yusuf, was killed in police custody during a crackdown in 2009. Since he took command, the group's insurgency has intensified, killing thousands in the last two years. He is the only high-profile BH member and appears in several videos, swearing to bring down Nigeria's government. The US, concerned about tensions in West Africa, has offered a £4.5m reward for information leading to Shekau's capture (V. 20).

Using VVVA's *stage one* framework, the video labelled V.20 was published by The Guardian in the UK on 20 August 2013. Titled "Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau killed, claims Nigeria military," it runs for 1 minute and 24 seconds with high-quality video and audio. *Stage two* identifies a mix of settings including Sambisa Forest, a desert, a rural area, and combined outdoor scenes. The main figure is a leader mentoring a militant group. The footage shows fighters with rifles shouting "Allahu Akbar" - God is great (V.20). The leader appears holding an AK-47, reading from a Hausa script, dressed in camouflage with a white muffler. The group's logo appears against a black background, along with their flag featuring an open Quran, followed by graphic scenes of a bombing site. Shekau, wearing a white kaftan and bulletproof vest, is seen reciting the Qur'an (V.20). Another member, Abu Qaqa, claims an Imam ordered them to kill him due to alleged media misrepresentation. The camera work combines professional close-ups, cinematic shots, and surveillance-style footage.

The *stage three* points to the theme – it reveals Threats of bombing and supplanting liberal democracy with Sharia law. This relates to the group's ideological disposition (van Dijk, 2015), namely, showcasing its strength by exhibiting acts of self-glorification. By declaring war on the West, the government, and Christians, the sect

invokes the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) based on divine authority and its leader's mandate. What is more, though morality is not the focus of the message, the declaration of war and calls for killing non-Muslims speak to the heart of what could be termed evil as opposed to righteousness. Assessed in terms of rationality, such a call satisfies the logic of violence and fulfills the myths of glorification and the group's apparent victories. The message targets the Nigerian government, Nigerian troops, and the media (V.20).

V. 20 was also analysed, deploying three-dimensional CDA (Fairclough, 1992). The *micro-level* points to the insurgents' exploitation of the "Us" versus "them" narrative, since they position themselves as having a threefold audience. Based on the grammatical analysis, the actor is the leader alongside his fighters, delivering messages to a large audience, as noted. Instead of using metaphorical or rhetorical language, the insurgents spoke plainly, demonizing the state as an enemy while portraying their actions, such as bombing, as heroic (V.20). The *meso-level* reveals messages packaged by the Jihadists and broadcast on The Guardian UK's YouTube channel. As observed in other insurgent media hosted by international outlets, it is interesting that a reputable foreign media organization would publish a story about an insurgency that does not affect the UK.

While audiences who consume and interpret this message may be left in fear, the Nigerian government is further confronted with the issue of internal security and managing international relations since these stories show how "crude" and relentless the militants are, besides their utilization of social media to "instil fear" and control the narrative. By citing the ThisDay bombing, the group BH videos radically exploit religious texts, underscoring intertextuality since the government tackles their acts of terror. To replace democratic rule with Islamic rule while campaigning for Islamic education, the sect reveals its strategic frame and extremist agenda.

The *macro-level* presents the extant ideological tussle between the terrorists and the government. By criticizing the government, BH creates a power struggle and deploys rhetoric to legitimize its actions as divinely endorsed. This power and legitimacy have wider implications in the political arena. This is because challenging the government and its educational policies divides society along religious and cultural lines, thus impeding national unity and democratic values. Overall, the SDSL video language analysis reveals that English is used in V. 12 and Hausa in V. 20. Notably,

Arabic was omitted, highlighting differences in language inclusion across the other videos.

6.1.6 Anti-Christian/Western Rhetoric (ACWR*)*

In a video message from AFP News Agency on 9 February 2015, Shekau declared, "the troops of Allah are victorious" (V.13), asserting his sect's impending victory over regional armed forces:

> Your alliance will not achieve anything. Amass all your weapons and face us. We welcome you. Africa is too small; we never rose to fight Africa. We rose to fight the world. We are going to fight the world on the principle that whoever does not obey Allah and the Prophet will either obey or die or become a slave…You sent 7, troops; why don't you send 7 million? This is small. Only 7 thousand? By Allah, it is too small. We can take time one by one; we can seize them one by one. What is your 7 thousand? Infidels, certainly, the troops of Allah are victorious. There is no truce between us and you, until death; we fight, and we carry out Jihad (AFP News Agency, 2015c).

In a provocative display, the group exclaimed, "Your alliance will not achieve anything. Gather all your weapons and face us" (AFP News Agency, 2015c). They boldly stated, "We did not rise to fight Africa… Africa is too small. We rose to fight the world" (AFP News Agency, 2015c), showcasing their confidence in defeating regional forces (V.13). Mockingly, they referenced "7 thousand troops" and "7 million," asserting that "the troops of Allah are victorious" (AFP News Agency, 2015c).

Examined based on VVVA's *stage one* template, the Video tagged V.13 was published on 9 February 2015 by AFP. The clip titled "Boko Haram leader vows to defeat regional force in new video" has a duration of 1 minute and 59 seconds. The quality of the Video and audio elements is high. For *stage two*, the setting is Sambisa Forest, and the main characters are the leader, Shekau, flanked by six aggressive, hooded fighters. The visual imagery shows Hilux vehicles, the fighters carrying AK-47 rifles, and two rocket launchers. It also has visual actions. Below is a screenshot of Shekau, shown in Figure 6.10.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 6. 10 Screenshot of Abubakar Shekau daring to take over Africa and the world (AFP News Agency, 2015c: https://shorturl.fm/Ps9ol)

The video powerfully features Shekau gesturing animatedly, flanked by six-armed fighters with AK-47 rifles. The fighters in black scarves stand with Shekau, who commands attention in a black jumper. Five of them are positioned in Hilux vans behind him, while two stand at his sides. Set against a dark forest backdrop, the footage captures the scene from various angles. As he delivers his fierce message, the fighters maintain a fixed gaze on the audience, reflecting an alarming absence of empathy and compassion in Shekau's words. As regards verbal or textual features, the video features the leader speaking in Hausa and Arabic, with an English interpretation (V.13). This video effectively combines speech and action, with the leader's gestures enhancing his threats, making it clear that they see themselves as combatants against a global adversary. The camera technique is surveillance style. *Stage three* unveils the goal of impending victory over regional armed forces and bogus claims that they can fight troops from around the world. Their use of "Allah" and the chilling vow to "fight and carry out Jihad… until death" (V.13) highlights their anti-Christian and anti-Western agenda.

Shekau ominously declares their intention to challenge not only regional forces but also the entire world (V.13). The ideological stance (van Dijk, 2015) projects strength, self-glorification, minimizes errors, and ignores the government's successes. In like manner, the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) indicates reliance on divine authority and a call for Jihad. The message does not outrightly address righteousness or evil, but the call to "obey or die or become a slave" (V.13) points to the logic of violence. Its glorification claims of victory underscore the extant myth in its narrative, targeted at the Nigerian government, regional, continental, and global

troops. In response, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), comprising soldiers from Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Benin, has been engaged in a fierce battle against insurgency since 2015 (Lenshie, Jacob, Ogbonna, Shehu, Onuh, Idris, & Ezeibe, 2023).

The data was also analysed using the three-dimensional CDA tool (Fairclough, 1992). The *micro-level* references to fighting the troops of Africa, the world, and infidels set BH against others in an "Us" versus "them" rendering. Shekau delivers the speech, facing the camera and addressing his intended audience. Though it presents BH as heroic, the content lacks metaphorical or rhetorical language. The *meso-level* indicates the content was filmed by BH and broadcast by AFP. It is, however, consumed by everyone on the internet. By broadcasting insurgent messaging at face value, the French media may be warning of the dangers posed by jihadi narratives. However, reporting such a "crude" message could empower and embolden the sect. This reportage is in addition to how the video would be perceived by the Nigerian government, given international relations and global perceptions. On intertextuality, the exploitation of religious texts by BH amid the government's "War on Terror" further underlines the group's strategic framing of messages like this one, which aspires to assert the jihadi group's impending victory over regional forces.

The *macro-level* investigates the ideological tussle in the message. It projects some form of power struggle between BH and the government in the sect's ambitious quest for an exclusive Islamic Caliphate, which undermines national unity. The declaration of Jihad proves the point about power and legitimacy since BH justifies violence by deploying rhetoric to legitimize its actions. The wider political implication is that this message, which uses religious messaging, the invocation of Allah, and a call for Jihad, to engage the continental and global troops, seems divisive, endangering public and national security.

On March 15, 2018, the Daily Mail published a YouTube message featuring a man claiming to be Shekau, the leader of BH (V.14). This announcement followed Nigerian airstrikes against insurgents in the Taye village area of the Sambisa Forest, Borno State. The military has once again claimed that Shekau was "fatally wounded in the shoulders" (Daily Mail, 2018) and declared him dead, raising questions about the accuracy of such statements. However, a man surfaced online declaring that he was unharmed in a video statement:

> Oh, good brothers, glad tidings that now, God permitting, the time has come for fighting. Now the time for fighting has come! Now is the time for fighting. Now the time for fighting is upon us. Oh, tyrants of Nigeria, and oh, nonbelievers of the world. Especially the tyrants of America, France, and Germany, and the tyrants of the councils of *Iskanchi* [immorality], as we say in our local language. Moreover, you, God permitting, know who I am saying: Die in your frustration! Die in your frustration. Die in your frustration (Daily Mail, 2018).

The data was analysed using VVVA's *stage-one* template. Labelled V.14, the video titled "Video shows Boko Haram's leader Shekau," published by the Daily Mail on 15 March 2018, is a 1-minute, 2-second clip with solid video and audio quality. *Stage two* identifies the setting as Sambisa Forest, with Shekau as the central figure, flanked by two fighters. Visual elements include weapons (AK-47 rifles) and hooded, aggressive fighters. The scene resembles a leader's press release. Spoken content is mostly in Arabic, accompanied by an English transcript (V.14). The absence of a soundtrack amplifies the visuals. The piece uses multiple modes—speech, text, gestures, and body language—supported by on-screen captions. Filmed in a surveillance style, the dynamic angles reveal a lush green forest backdrop that starkly contrasts the violent rhetoric (V.14). Shekau, in a black turban, stands with armed fighters in camouflage, delivering messages devoid of empathy and claiming divine sanction for their victories to validate their cause.

Stage three unveils the goal: a combination of threats and an impending claim of victory. The call to action, "Oh brother," (V.14) effectively rallies support for the sect. The leader's statement, "Glad tidings that now, God permitting, the time has come for fighting" (V.14), highlights a strong push toward anti-Christian and anti-Western ideologies using Islamic rhetoric. The ideological dimension (van Dijk, 2015) suggests strength, self-glorification, minimizing errors, and ignoring the government's successes. Based on the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), the insurgents deploy divine authority and the leader's mandate. Notably, the phrase "God permitting" (V.14) is repeated to seek divine approval for their actions. There is no direct mention of righteousness in terms of morality; however, the leader mentions "councils of *Iskanchi* [immorality]. Stressing "die in your frustration" thrice signifies the

logic of violence. There are apparent myths of glorification and victories. The target audience is apparent in the video. The critical message is clear: "Oh, tyrants of Nigeria, and oh nonbelievers of the world. Especially the tyrants of America, France, and Germany, and the tyrants of the councils of *Iskanchi* [immorality]" (V.14). The use of terms like "tyrants" and "nonbelievers" directly targets Christians and the West, framing them as adversaries.

Using three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992), the micro-level textual analysis indicated BH's "Us" versus "them" dichotomy since the leader referred to his group as "Good brothers," and his audience as "tyrants of Nigeria," "tyrants of America, France and Germany" (V.14). Based on grammatical analysis, the actor is Shekau while the readers are his audience. Though there is no overt use of metaphor or rhetorical language, the group portrays its actions as heroic and the government, along with its Western allies, as enemies. At the *meso-level*, the message was produced by BH, reproduced by the Daily Mail, and consumed by global audiences. Based on intertextuality, the BH video radically exploits religion through strategic frames such as anti-Christian and anti-Western ideologies - the insurgents' diagnostic and motivational frames. By repeating, "Now the time for fighting has come" (V.14), the speaker creates a sense of urgency while entrenching the group's digital propaganda. The clip ominously concludes with "Die in your frustration" (V.14), reinforcing their belief that with God's support they will defeat their enemies.

At the *macro level*, the group's ideological tussle reflects a seeming power struggle with its intended audiences. By deploying rhetoric, the leader tries to legitimize their actions— violence as endorsed by God. In the wider political context, by addressing the Nigerian government and nonbelievers in the world, what they termed "tyrants of America, France and Germany," the message has the capacity to create fear and polarise Nigeria and the international community.

Shekau starkly expresses his anti-Christian/Western frustration in another video (V.22). His words, "Christians, it is you we are addressing. I trust in Allah, I trust in Allah. You have been going round saying, bring back our girls- bring back (sic) our army; bring back (sic) our army. Jonathan! Jonathan!! Girl, girl…Christian! Bring back our army…refinery…I suppose you hid it—a woman, created by God" (AFP, 2014). The statement carries political, religious, cultural, and educational undertones. The message, as evaluated using context and meaning criteria (Dicks, 2019), appears to

elevate Islam above all human institutions. In what AFP (2014) describes as a new video, the media organization explained that the leader of Nigeria's BH Islamists mocks the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, which calls for the return of more than 200 schoolgirls whom BH has kidnapped (AFP, 2014).

The data is analysed using *stage one* of the VVVA template. Labelled (V.22) and published by AFP on 13 July 2014, the clip is titled, "New Nigerian Boko Haram video mocks Bring Back Girls campaign." The 33-second footage is high in video and audio quality. Stage *two*, the setting, is Sambisa Forest. The main character is Shekau, flanked by 7 fighters. The visual symbols include the leader and the hooded aggressive fighters in military camouflage, holding AK-47 rifles. In the background is a green, forested area with two armoured tanks and a Hilux van. The visual actions show the leader speaking in a press-release style.

He grips a script in his left hand, an AK-47 slung across his chest, dressed in army boots, military fatigues, and a black scarf wrapped around his head. With a dramatic gesture, he raises his hand and dances (V. 22). The footage shows a bearded Shekau speaking in both English and Hausa, while Arabic music plays softly in the background. It is ironic how the sect condemns secular music for eroding Islamic values (The Wall Street Channel, 2014) yet uses Arabic tunes to accompany their videos. The mix of speech and the soundtrack emphasizes the religious undertone. Shekau often projects masculinity through his booming voice and oratory, flies the sect's flag, and claims to fight in God's name (Rinehart, 2021). The camera work is tight and reminiscent of surveillance footage.

Stage three reveals the goal threats of anti-Christian and Western rhetoric with political, religious, cultural, and educational undertones. The ideological dimension (van Dijk, 2015) underscores strength and self-glorification, as the sect mocks the *#BringBackOurGirls* campaign. His blame of the loss of Islamic values on secular music underpins victimhood and the group's designation of the government as corrupt. The militants deploy a legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) through divine authority; hence, "I trust Allah, I trust in Allah" (V.22). There is no direct allusion to morality, but the statement, "Bring back our army" (V.22) strongly suggests the logic of violence. With extant myths of invisibility rather than glorification and victories, the message is targeted at Christians and President Goodluck Jonathan.

The researcher deployed the three-dimensional CDA method (Fairclough,

1992) to analyse the data. At the *micro-level*, the leader mentions Christians, President Jonathan, versus their army. This is indicative of BH's invocation of the "Us" versus "them" dichotomy. The grammatical analysis reveals Shekau as the actor facing the camera, flanked by 7 fighters. The recipients are a global audience, given that international media published the video. Except for raising his hand and dancing, Shekau does not use metaphoric or rhetorical language. Nonetheless, the message seeks to demonize the state as an enemy while presenting BH's actions as heroic. The *meso-level* indicates the message was produced by BH, distributed by AFP, and consumed by global audiences.

On intertextuality, BH videos radically exploit religion while strategically framing messages to achieve specific objectives – their diagnostic and motivational frames – using digital propaganda to express their Christian/Western sentiments. At the *macro level*, there is a seeming ideological tussle – the message reflects a power struggle between BH and the audiences it engages. The quest for power and legitimacy can be seen in the sect's deployment of rhetoric to legitimize its actions by justifying violence as divinely endorsed by Allah. This power dynamic has implications in the wider political context. This message is not in tandem with national unity and national sovereignty. It can divide the nation on religious lines since it is directed at Christians and the government.

Being the longest video of the sect in this data set, the YouTube video published by *Sahara TV* on 18 February 2015 shows the leader of the Jihadi group praising Allah for assisting in planning and executing their rhetoric against Christians and the West (V. 19).

He said:

> We utterly destroyed them and their people, all of them. Moreover, may Allah's prayers and salutations be upon our master and guardian, Muhammad. The seal of Prophets and leader of the messengers and upon his entire family and companions and what follows: O' you the disbelievers and the hypocrites of Nigeria; O' you the leaders of Cameroon, Chad, Benin; O' you the leaders of Africa, you all must know; whoever believes these verses then by the grace of Allah he will realise that he is the winner as long as he is being sincere. Allah says-

> But the evil plot encompasses only him who makes it. Allah also says- And we destroyed the edifices and towers of Pharaoh and whoever they manufactured (Sahara TV, 2015).

Speaking further, he noted: “Repent to Allah, and support His religion, His Book, the Sunnah of His Prophet” (Sahara TV, 2015), and we would consider you, our brothers. To the government, Shekau said:

> Oh, you are the prime minister of Nigeria, and your Senators and whoever is with you. Oh, you Idris Deby, the president of Chad, and his ministers, and whoever that is with him. All of you created a constitution that was organised with numbers and pages, and you established it as a rule of your government. Moreover, you made the people follow it; you made them follow it by force, you made them fear your aircraft, and you jailed whoever opposed you. Moreover, you know what all of your rulers do, and if the Prophet Muhammad and his companions were here in this life, you know that they would not dare to do. Moreover, you had imposed on people; even some of your religious scholars did not remember or think about what the kingdom of Shaikh Usman Ibn Fodio was, and how he ruled his land by following the Quran. They would not even dare to say his constitution and rules you have today (Sahara TV, 2015).

He condemns those who support Hollande and Obama, comparing them to the previous administrations of Bush and Clinton, and labels Israel as "disbelievers" (Sahara TV, 2015). He credits the recent victory in Gombe to Allah, asserting, "You say we cannot fight, yet we have driven your forces from their strongholds and freed our imprisoned brothers. All praise be to Allah. These words serve as a powerful response to today's pressing issues" (Sahara TV, 2015). On the upcoming elections, he dared the government, saying:

> We say that these elections you are planning will not happen in peace, even if that costs us our lives. Allah will not leave you to proceed with these elections even after us, because you are saying that authority is from people to people, which means that people should rule over one another. However, Allah says

> that authority is only with Him; only His rule applies to this land. So, we see the disbelief of those who believe in democracy. We do not doubt that. Moreover, the one who has a doubt is a disbeliever himself (Sahara TV, 2015).

Using VVVA's *stage one* template, the video was tagged V.19. Published by Sahara TV on 18 February 2015, the clip titled "Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau threatens Nigeria elections," is 11 minutes and 27 seconds. The quality is high in video and audio. Concerning *stage two*, the setting is indoors. The main character is Shekau. The video presents compelling multimodal indicators. The organisation's flag is visible in the top left corner. Shekau's striking appearance includes a thick beard, a green hat with a black veil, and black attire (kaftan). A gun rests on his lap, while another elaborately decorated weapon sits beside him. Using a chewing stick to emphasise his points, he engages viewers against a light-blue background while seated on a green sofa. The visual action shows him making a press release. On the verbal and textual features, Shekau addresses his audience in Arabic, English, and Hausa, the typical languages used by BH (BBC, 2014a). The lack of sound only enhances the powerful visual message he conveys (V. 19). Shekau delivers a speech in Figure 6. 11.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 6. 11 Screenshot of Abubakar Shekau, delivering a speech (BBC News, 2014: https://youtu.be/jiaFQB6t5tE).

The camera technique is a close-up shot. *Stage three* relates to the goal. Threats of executing plans against the Christians and the West. The message boldly challenges the international community, particularly French President François Hollande, Jewish individuals, Christian allies, and democracy advocates from the U.S., France, Italy, Germany, Russia, and Africa. It serves as a warning to Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger, Idriss Déby of Chad, and Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, highlighting their failures in the fight against him (V. 19). The ideological dimension (van Dijk, 2015).

The sect boldly expresses its anti-Christian and anti-Western views while showing its strength and self-glorification that it would win. As regards legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), BH invokes divine authority by using "Allah," "Prophet Muhammad," "Shaikh Usman Ibn Fodio," "the Quran" and urging, "Repent to Allah" (V.19). The leader touches on morality in the phrase, "But the evil plot encompasses only him who makes it," (V.19). By crediting their victory in Gombe to Allah with the claim, "we have driven your forces from their strongholds," (V.19), the sect ponits to the logic of violence. This framing adds up to the myths of glorification and victories. The target audience includes Christians, Jews, the governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Benin, the US, France, Italy, Germany, and Russia.

Based on the three-dimensional CDA tool (Fairclough, 1992), V.19 was examined at the *micro-level*. BH's use of an "Us" versus "them" narrative is apparent in the group's positioning itself against its intended audiences. Based on a grammatical analysis, the lone actor is Shekau, who faces the camera and addresses the intended recipients. He uses the metaphoric and rhetorical language of "we destroyed the edifices and towers of Pharaoh and whomever they manufactured" to demonize the state and its Western allies as enemies and itself as heroic—the *meso-level* concerns production. The footage is packaged by BH and broadcast on Sahara Reporters' YouTube channel for its intended audiences.

The intertextuality indicates how BH videos radically exploit religious scripture to contradict the government's CT efforts. The strategic frames specifically challenge the Christian and Jewish communities, including the governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Benin, the US, France, Italy, Germany, and Russia. The *macro-level* relates to the ideological tussle. The message, "Allah says that authority is only with him; only His rule applies to this land," reflects a power struggle between BH and the

government, whose democratic rule it aspires to replace with Sharia law. The power and legitimacy are seen in the deployment of rhetoric to legitimize their actions, justifying violence in Gombe as "divine." The wider political implication is that pitching the group against the Christians and Jews, including the government and its allies, could polarise society, creating internal and external tensions and acrimony.

In a video broadcast, Shekau declared his intent to make his fight against Nigeria and the world (V.30). The leader often reveals this as his personal mission (Boh, 2016). Despite being replaced as the group's leader by Sheik Abu Musab al-Barnawi, Shekau vowed to continue his struggle, emphasizing his commitment to protecting his fellow Muslim brothers (V. 30). This highlights both his defiance and determination in the face of global opposition. It further disclosed that:

> Boko Haram's six-year insurgency has killed thousands and displaced up to 2 million people in north-east Nigeria and across the Lake Chad region… Shekau had circulated an audio message in which he said he was still active and was not ready to accept those appointed by ISIS (Africanews, 2016).

The leader claims that, contrary to popular belief, he is neither dead nor incapable of fighting, and that he took over BH's command in 2009 after the execution of its historic leader, Mohammed Yusuf (Africanews, 2016).

Using VVVA's *stage one* template, the Africanews video from September 16, 2016, labelled V.30 and titled "Shekau's 'Personal Responsibility': to fight Nigeria and the entire world," is a 51-second clip with high video and audio quality. In *stage two*, the setting appears to be a dense forest, likely in the Sambisa region, surrounded by tall elephant grass. The main figures are Shekau and two masked fighters. Shekau, wearing green military camouflage, a blue hat, and a black scarf, holds one AK-47 upright in his hand and carries another on his back. Nearby, two fighters in brown uniforms with black scarves over their faces hold AK-47s in their right hands and cross their left arms over their chests. The scene shows Shekau delivering a speech resembling a press statement, speaking in both English and Arabic. The camera work alternates between close-up and surveillance-style shots. *Stage three* focuses on Shekau's stated goal—to fight against Nigeria and the world. His ideological stance (van Dijk, 2015) reflects strength and self-glorification, while his legitimation strategy

(van Leeuwen, 2015) emphasizes a show of power and his capacity to challenge the MNJTF. The message is less about morality and more about the logic of violence, framed as a fight against Nigeria and the world. It uses myths of glory and victory to target audiences including MNJTF troops, the Nigerian government, fellow Muslims, and the international community.

The data was carefully analysed using the three-dimensional CDA approach (Fairclough, 1992). On the *micro-level*, the insurgents position themselves against local, regional, and international forces while trying to win over other insurgents, reinforcing BH's "us" versus "them" narrative. The main figure, Shekau, speaks directly to the camera, addressing the intended audience and portraying the group as heroic without relying on metaphors or elaborate rhetoric. At the *meso-level*, the message is produced by the militants, broadcast by AfricaNews, and consumed by the public. Considering intertextuality, the BH video deploys digital propaganda to exploit religion through strategic frames, radically challenging the government, regional forces, and the West while expressing commitment to fellow Muslims.

The *macro-level* portrayal reflects a power struggle between BH and ISIS under al-Barnawi's leadership. Tied to power and legitimacy, Shekau uses rhetoric to justify BH's fight against al-Barnawi, framing it as divinely ordained "sovereignty protection." The video carries broader political weight, as despite internal clashes between Shekau and al-Barnawi, their shared radical Islamist ideology still opposes liberal conservatism, deepening social divides. A key concern is how the Nigerian government and the international community will address this perceived threat to public safety and the sect's extremist messaging. Visually, Shekau appears in green military camouflage, holding an AK-47 upright in one hand and another slung across his back, wearing a blue hat with a black scarf (V. 30). Nearby, two fighters in brown uniforms, faces covered with black scarves, hold AK-47s in their right hands while crossing their left arms over their chests (V. 30). The scene shows Shekau delivering a speech in the style of a press briefing, speaking in both English and Arabic. Camera work blends close-up and surveillance shots. His goal is declared - fight against Nigeria and the world. Ideologically (van Dijk, 2015), he projects strength and self-glorification, while his legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) underscores a show of force meant to challenge the MNJTF. The message sidesteps morality, instead highlighting the logic of violence—waging war against Nigeria and the world—while myths of glory and victory

aim to influence MNJTF forces, the Nigerian government, fellow Muslims, and global audiences.

The analysis of five videos reveals the strategic use of languages and their impact: Video V.30 features Hausa and English; V.19 includes Hausa and Arabic; V. 22 showcases Hausa and English segments. V.14 and V.13 combine Hausa, English, and Arabic. With 8 videos, WG achieved the highest prominence, indicating a strong warning to the government between 2012 and 2018. This development suggests a significant shift in the political landscape, as the group seeks to replace Nigeria's civil democracy with an Islamic caliphate governed by strict Sharia law. BH members often send messages to towns before the massacres, indicating a shift toward rebel-style governance communications originating from ungoverned areas (Karr, 2026). The second pattern, DV/MJ, with 7 videos, reveals a significant connection between politics and religion in Islam.

Jihadists effectively use religious rhetoric to further their political ambitions. Following this, the pattern of AC/WR has 5 videos. Islamists' disdain for Western education enables them to leverage anti-Christian and anti-Western narratives effectively. The fourth pattern, which includes IUP and DWE, each with 4 videos, highlights the group's efforts to elevate their ideology while undermining Western learning. Lastly, the pattern on the SDSL has only 2 videos, likely due to its complex relationship with the concept of jihad.

6.2 Conclusion

The chapter explored a compelling analysis of StratCom within the group's messaging framework. The researcher harnessed the power of VVVA to systematically categorise the data into six key multimodal patterns. Coding facilitated critical insights, refining the dataset. SDSL had less prominence compared with WG, which had the most dominant message. This revelation underscores a significant trend: that the terrorists' messaging consistently focused on delivering stark warnings to the government. This data not only reveals what is being communicated but also emphasises the urgent nature of these threats, making it essential to understand the underlying dynamics.

7. ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT'S COUNTER- MESSAGING

This section utilises the principles of CDA to critically examine the Nigerian government's counter-messaging against BH, especially speeches of its officials, based on 5 coded patterns. The researcher describes, presents and analyses primary data on the Nigerian government's counter-messaging and StratCom in response to the terrorists. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the thesis examines data from 30 YouTube videos published by local and international media outlets. Accordingly, the patterns were reviewed and critically examined to ensure that they accurately represent each dataset, thereby revealing the government's counter-messaging against the insurgents.

7.1 Themes in Government's Counter-Messaging

Using CDA, the researcher coded the data into five refined themes that align with the research variables: Regional and International Coalition (RIC), Domestic Framework, Policing and Funding, Kinetic Approaches (DFPF), Non-Kinetic Approaches (NKA), and a Blend of Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Approaches (BKNK). Additionally, eight common patterns in BH messaging and the government's response were identified for critical analysis. While Table 7.1 highlights themes and renamed Theme-Variant, Table 7.2 indicates details that show the link between the themes and their assigned codes. This delineation distinguishes these codes from the ones in Chapter 6.

Table 7. 1 Themes and Renamed Theme-Variant

S/N	Theme	Renamed Theme
1	Nigerian state canvasses support from LCB regional and global leaders	Regional and International Coalition (RIC)
2	Speeches framed around local solutions, ensuring effective policing mechanisms and securing funding	Domestic Framework, Policing and Funding DFPF
3	Videos amplify messages of combining carrot and stick approach	Blend of Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Approaches BKNKA
4	Speeches indicate heavy reliance on armaments and asymmetric warfare	Kinetic Approaches (KA)
5	Discourse emphasizes implementing the soft approach to countering the insurgents	Non-Kinetic Approaches (NKA)

Table 7. 2 Themes and Assigned Codes

S/N	Theme	Assigned Code
1	Regional and International Coalition	RIC
2	Domestic Framework, Policing and Funding	DFPF
3	Blend of Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Approaches	BKNKA
4	Kinetic Approaches	KA
5	Non-Kinetic Approaches	NKA

7.1.1 Regional and International Coalition (RIC)

On May 29, 2015, during his inauguration as Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari thanked the governments and people of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger for their dedication to fighting BH. He highlighted Nigeria's willingness to work with the

international community to tackle cross-border terrorism. Calling insecurity one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century, he declared, “We are going to tackle them head-on. Nigerians will not regret that they have entrusted national responsibility to us. We can fix our problems” (TVC, 2015). Buhari also spoke about efforts to rescue the Chibok schoolgirls abducted in April 2014, noting that progress had been made. He announced that “command centre will be relocated to Maiduguri and will remain until Boko Haram is completely subdued” (TVC, 2015), assuring that “This government will do everything possible to rescue them [Chibok girls] alive” (TVC, 2015). The speech touched on the guerrilla tactics of hit-and-run deployed by the terrorists, stressing that:

> Boko Haram is a prime example of how small fires can ignite large ones. An eccentric and unorthodox preacher with a tiny following was given posthumous fame and a following by his extrajudicial murder at the hands of the police… [and] became a terrifying force, taking tens of thousands of lives and capturing several towns and villages covering swathes of Nigerian sovereign territory (TVC, 2015).

President Buhari expressed serious concern about the growing influence of militants on both the government and international institutions. He reaffirmed the government’s resolve to confront the “mindless, godless group” (TVC, 2015), he said, which has no connection to Islamic values. He laid out plans for a sociological study to understand the roots of the movement, identify its backers, and prevent similar threats in the future (TVC, 2015). Buhari assured the public that the military would lead the fight against BH, promising to update the rules of engagement to protect human rights and hold military personnel accountable (TVC, 2015). He also pointed out that BH is not the only security challenge facing the country, citing kidnappings, armed robberies, and herdsmen-farmer clashes as other major threats. He emphasized the goal of building a capable, disciplined, and well-compensated security force as part of a broader strategy for national security (TVC, 2015).

Using the VVVA’s *stage one* analysis template, the video labelled S.1 was released by TVC on May 29, 2015, with a runtime of 20 minutes and 25 seconds. Titled "Inauguration Ceremony: Swearing in of President Muhammadu Buhari," it features high-quality visuals and audio. In *stage two*, the event takes place at Eagle Square in the FCT, Abuja, with President Muhammadu Buhari as the central figure. He is seen wearing a grey hat and a *Baban riga*. The video captures moments like the oath-taking,

his inaugural speech, a press release, and the formal handover of the instruments of office. Dialogue is presented with English subtitles, making the content clear and accessible to a wide audience.

The video uses close-up shots and standard professional filming techniques, centring on the President's inaugural speech. In it, he thanked the governments of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, announced the move of the military command-and-control centre to Maiduguri, and pledged action against "the mindless" (S.1) group. As noted by van Dijk (2015), the government plans to commission a socio-political study to understand the group's origins and prevent human rights abuses. According to van Leeuwen (2015), President Buhari's legitimation strategy stresses the safety of Nigerians, especially in rescuing the Chibok girls. He described BH as "this evil," a "tarrying force," and "godless," affirming they would be "completely subdued" (S.1). His remarks on recent progress and preventive measures present a victory-focused narrative, aimed at a global audience with the assurance that, with regional and international backing, his administration will defeat terrorism.

Using the three-dimensional framework (Fairclough, 1992), the data shows that at the micro-level, the President sets BH apart from the abducted Chibok girls and other innocent captives. This highlights the government's "us" versus "them" narrative. While avoiding the term "terrorists," he still undermines the insurgents' credibility. Grammatically, the President is the actor, with the global audience as the receivers. He refers to the militants as "insurgents" and a "terrifying force," and uses the metaphor, "Boko Haram is a prime example of how a small fire can ignite large ones" (S.1) to show their influence. He also depicts the group's leader as "an eccentric and unorthodox preacher with a tiny following" who only gained fame after death (S.1). These strategies portray BH as a threat to the state and public safety, while casting the government's actions in a heroic light.

At the *meso level*, the clip was produced and broadcast by TVC, a local channel aimed at both local and international audiences. This reflects the local media's dedication to reporting on peace and national development, alongside the government's use of traditional and social media to shape public opinion. The speech draws on intertextuality with global war on terror narratives, contrasting with BH's reliance on religious texts. Tactically, the government calls for support from the governments and people of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger against insurgents; suggests relocating the theatre command to Maiduguri; and vows to rescue the abducted

Chibok schoolgirls. This push for regional backing highlights the importance of multi-sectoral cooperation and global commitment to peace and security in the LCB (Shulika & Shafiei, 2024). The LCB appears in several YouTube videos (S.7) – (Al Jazeera, 2016a); (S.25) – (Al Jazeera, 2016b); (S.29) – (GRV Global, 2021); (S.28) – (Channels TV, 2020b). The speech (S.1) likely mirrors the security threats posed by insurgents in the LCB (Muhammad & Salleh, 2024) and points to the need for cross-border surveillance and a regional security framework (Abada et al., 2020). Notably, the President's 2015 remark, "We can fix our problems" (TVC, 2015), after thirteen years of insurgency, may reflect his military background and past success against the Maitasine sect. In December 2014, Buhari reaffirmed his determination to end the insurgency, citing earlier efforts in Kano and Adamawa states (Abdallah, 2014).

The analysis shows how the government frames its communication with both insurgents and the public, highlighting its victories and setbacks in the war on terror (Williamson, Given, and Scifleet, 2018). Moving the command centre to Borno (TVC, 2015) drew mixed reactions—officially to strengthen the fight, but as the BBC (2015a) pointed out, also to bring operations closer to the frontlines, cut through bureaucracy, and speed up decisions. Some feared it could complicate ongoing efforts (BBC, 2015a). Political analyst Olalekan Waheed Adigun said the move "makes some sense" (BBC, 2015a) but warned that if BH gains ground, it might force a rethink of the military's effectiveness. President Buhari brought up the abducted schoolgirls while countering criticism of the Jonathan administration's perceived inaction (Pulse Nigeria, 2017). UNICEF expressed concern over the lack of progress in rescuing the girls, fuelling global outrage (Muanya & Onyedika-Ugoeze, 2023; McKelvey, 2016). The speech adopted a formal, institutional tone to push back against insurgent messaging, and while it didn't directly address BH's claims about filling the vacuum left by their digital propaganda, it aimed to project confidence in the government's control and determination to win.

At the *macro level*, this analysis examines the ideological struggle reflected in the speech, highlighting the power dynamics between the government and BH, a group seeking to replace democracy with a Caliphate by undermining national and international institutions, as noted by the President (S.1). Phrases like "Our security forces," "We cannot," and "taking thousands of lives" frame the conflict as "Us" versus "Them" (S.1). The speech underscores the government's determination to use military action to defend democratic values and restore unity, addressing questions of power and legitimacy while rejecting BH's extremist interpretation of Islam. Politically, it

emphasizes a commitment to national unity and heightened security awareness in the face of violent extremism. President Buhari stressed that BH is "far away from Islam" (S.1), supported by Power (2014), citing Sheik Abdulaziz Al al-Sheikh, who warned against generalizing Islam and condemned the group's distortion of its image. BH's attacks on schools and false claims of jihad go against the Prophet Muhammad's teachings and Quranic principles about respecting the "People of the Book." Obeidallah (2014) confirms these actions are not rooted in true Islamic doctrine. As both a Muslim and political leader, Buhari advocates inclusivity among Nigerians while denouncing the group as outlaws.

On Nigeria's 55th independence anniversary, President Buhari spoke to the nation in a televised address about insecurity. He shared that he had worked with neighbouring countries, bringing together the armed forces of five nations to tackle and defeat terrorists, and met with G-7 leaders and other allies to form an international coalition against BH (Channels TV, 2015). Highlighting the readiness of security agencies, he noted that the armed forces, now under new leadership, had taken the fight to insurgents, greatly weakening their logistical and infrastructural strength (Channels TV, 2015). He added that BH was being scattered and forced to flee. Warning that insurgents were targeting civilians, he assured that measures were in place to counter the threat. Condemning attacks on vulnerable targets like IDP camps as cowardly and desperate, he said he had directed security and local authorities to step up vigilance in high-risk areas (Channels TV, 2015).

Using VVVA's *stage one* analysis template, the video labelled S.2 was released by Channels TV on October 1, 2015, running 12 minutes with crisp visuals and clear audio. *Stage two* shows an outdoor scene at the State House, Aso Rock Presidential Villa in Abuja. At the centre is President Muhammadu Buhari, former military head of state and democratically elected leader of Nigeria, holding the nation's highest honour, the Grand Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic. He appears composed, addressing the nation while seated between the Nigerian flag and the All Progressives Congress (APC) flag, in a white chair adorned with the national coat of arms. The Nigerian flag, designed in 1959 and first raised on October 1, 1960, represents independence, with green symbolizing wealth and natural resources and white representing peace and unity. Above him, the Coat of Arms reflects national unity and authority, featuring an eagle, horses, and symbols of Nigeria's heritage. The APC flag has three vertical stripes—green, white, and blue—with the party's broom

emblem in the centre, symbolizing a drive to fight corruption and promote unity. The President wears a light blue *Baban riga*, glasses, and a deep blue and white hat. This speech marks his last address commemorating Nigeria's 55th independence anniversary, delivered in English without subtitles or slogans, using a professional close-up shot for greater impact.

Stage three zeroes in on the main goal of the speech, with President Buhari addressing the pressing issue of insecurity in Nigeria on this important occasion. The government's stance (van Dijk, 2015) reflects a clear determination to contain insurgents and work with coalitions to weaken them. The legitimation approach (van Leeuwen, 2015) focuses on rallying regional powers and the G-7 to take strong action against terrorism (S.2). While morality isn't directly mentioned, the President firmly condemns the militants for their violent acts (S.2). By portraying the insurgents as cowardly, desperate, and on the run, he reinforces the government's message of resilience and determination to take them on (S.2). The speech speaks to insurgents, the armed forces, the Nigerian people, regional governments, and the global community, delivering a confident message of strength and resolve.

The researcher used the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) to study S.2. On the *micro level*, the government's speech leans heavily on an "Us vs. Them" narrative. As Commander-in-Chief, the President uses phrases like "I have engaged," "I met," "I have instructed," and "Our gallant armed forces" (S.2) to draw a clear line between the government and the terrorists, aiming to foster national unity. The speech mixes euphemism with blunt language to weaken the insurgents, describing BH as "dispersed" and "on the run" while showing determination to "confront" and "defeat the terrorists" (S.2). This choice of words signals the government's resolve to handle the security threat. Grammatically, the President is the central figure, addressing both the country and the world about the serious issue of insecurity. BH is called "terrorists" and "insurgents" committing "shameless assaults" (S.2), framing them as dangers to public safety and national integrity. The straightforward tone throughout reinforces the government's strong position on these challenges.

At the *meso level*, the government strategically produced and shared the video through local and international media, reaching a wide audience. This shows a clear effort to shape the insurgency narrative and inspire citizens to unite in response. The speech's intertextual references link the message to the broader global war on terror,

emphasizing the value of working together against extremism. Using Nigeria's 55th independence anniversary as a stage, the President addressed the BH insurgency and reaffirmed the commitment to dismantle the group, though there's still room to engage more directly with extremist narratives that take advantage of gaps in the story.

At the *macro level*, the language reflects a favourable view of the power dynamics between the government and BH. The government emphasizes its commitment to using military force to protect democratic values and restore national unity (S.2). The speech underlines the need to wield authority and legitimacy to justify measures that safeguard national sovereignty (S.2). By ordering the armed forces to heighten vigilance under new leadership, the government signals its dedication to defending liberal democracy from threats seeking to divide society. This balanced approach is central to addressing the challenges posed by a religiously motivated group with considerable regional and global sway.

During the 77th UN General Assembly, at the conclusion of his second and final four-year term as Nigeria's president, Buhari delivered a speech, stating that "much has changed in Nigeria, in Africa, and the world" (TVC, 2022b) since he assumed power. He identified insecurity as one of the lingering challenges:

> We are now more severely tested by these enduring and new global challenges, paramount among which are conflicts increasingly being driven by non-state actors, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, terrorism, violent extremism, malignant use of technology, climate change, irregular migration, and disparities in opportunities for improved standards of living (TVC, 2022b).

Speaking on the war in Ukraine and its impact on arms proliferation and insecurity across Africa, Buhari stressed that the conflict's escalation highlights Nigeria's consistent calls for a nuclear-free world and a Universal Arms Trade Treaty as key steps to prevent global humanitarian crises (TVC, 2022b). At the UN assembly in New York, he urged swift consensus on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, along with commitments from Nuclear Weapon States. He also acknowledged the UN's guiding principles in promoting peace, security, development, and human rights, praising its ongoing efforts in these areas. Interestingly, he used the word "security" (TVC, 2022b) three times.

Stage one of the VVVA template features the video labelled S.6, released by TVC on 21 September 2022. It runs for 17 minutes and 36 seconds, showcasing high-quality visuals and sound. *Stage two* sets the scene outside the UN General Assembly Hall in New York City, with the President as the central figure. Wearing a black kaftan, a hat in blue, white, and oxblood, and two pens in his left pocket, he speaks in English into two microphones, captured in a professional close-up. *Stage three* highlights key points from President Buhari's address, including the impact of non-state actors, the spread of small arms, terrorism and violent extremism, the misuse of technology, and challenges like climate change, irregular migration, and inequality in Nigeria (S.6). The ideological stance (van Dijk, 2015) shows the government's alignment with the UN in promoting peace and security, while its legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) supports a nuclear-free world and universal arms treaty (S.6). References to violent extremism and harmful uses of technology (S.6) add a moral layer, though without framing in terms of good or evil. Mentions of extremism and harmful tech use add a moral note, without casting them as good or evil. Steering clear of glorification, the President warns about ongoing extremist threats to global security while recognizing persistent local and international issues.

At the *meso level*, the speech was shared through local media aimed at three specific audience segments, showing the government's use of both traditional and social platforms to highlight the threats from BH while shaping the narrative. The message is likely to resonate with a wide audience, interpreted considering terrorism's global implications. Its intertextuality reflects the government's alignment with the broader war on terror. The strategic framing indicates that state institutions are in step with earlier goals—addressing non-state actors, Small Arms and Light Weapons, terrorism, and violent extremism (S.6). On non-state actors, the European Union Agency for Asylum lists BH, JAS, ISWAP, and Ansaru, along with militant groups in the Niger Delta, separatist movements, herder-farmer clashes, communal militias, student cults, trafficking networks, and other criminal organizations (EASO, 2021).

The *macro-level* reflects a constructive approach between the government, the African continent, the international community, and insurgents threatening global security. The government's legitimacy helps rally support to protect Nigerian territory and combat terrorism, showing its commitment to peace and security. The leader's references to "peace and security" and "development and human rights" highlight their role as interconnected pillars of the UN (United Nations, 2020). The repeated

focus on "security" reinforces this connection. While the speech isn't primarily about the government's StratCom, it pushes back against extremist propaganda.

President Buhari told Al Jazeera that corruption, impunity, and a lack of technical expertise are hindering the government's fight against terrorism. Asked about the $15 million allocated for security votes, often criticized as benefiting corrupt politicians, he said he supports investigating whether the funds are properly used or misappropriated, pointing to the $2.1 billion scandal from the previous administration (Al Jazeera, 2016a). Regarding the $2.9 billion allegedly embezzled by former National Security Adviser Sambo Dasuki, Buhari vowed that anyone involved in diverting money meant for military equipment would be arrested and questioned if Dasuki is in custody, warning that those who challenge his administration will face consequences (Al Jazeera, 2016a). He acknowledged convictions might take time but emphasized that identifying those who steal public funds is crucial to tackling insecurity. On troop deployment within the LCBC—which includes Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Benin—he said details need not be shared with the press. Speaking on Nigeria's role in an anti-terrorism coalition, Buhari argued that since BH pledged loyalty to the group, Nigeria should join efforts against treason, adding that those fighting in Nigeria may claim to be Muslim but act against Islamic teachings. Responding to concerns from Christians about the coalition, Buhari said, "Why can't those Christians who complain fight terrorism in Nigeria? Nigeria's interests come first" (Al Jazeera, 2016a). He concluded, "No religion advocates harming the innocent. Islam opposes injustice in any form" (Al Jazeera, 2016a).

When reminded of his failure to address the insurgency, despite his promise as a presidential candidate to defeat the terrorists by the end of 2015, Buhari responded thrice: "I have not failed" (Al Jazeera, 2016a). Buhari explained that the insurgents were in control of 14 LGA's where they hoisted their flags, named a caliphate and used IEDs to blow soft targets. He insisted:

> That is purely terrorism, which will be extremely difficult to eliminate because it is technology, but they are not holding any Local Government in Nigeria now. However, to organise attacks, and overrun police posts, [and] attack military institutions, they cannot do that now (Al Jazeera, 2016a).

He painted a grim picture of the country's security situation, saying, "We are facing Boko Haram in the northeast, militants in the south-south who keep sabotaging

our installations and affecting relations with investors. There's also insecurity from the Gulf of Guinea, stretching from Senegal to Angola, adding to Nigeria's security problems" (Al Jazeera, 2016a). Buhari noted that the Sahel, especially Burkina Faso and Mali, has seen an influx of people trained and armed in Libya. After Gaddafi's fall, many returned to poor economic prospects and turned to their military skills, making them vulnerable to recruitment by various groups and fuelling regional conflicts (Al Jazeera, 2016a). He added that Nigeria might consider sending troops to a joint force in Libya if requested. Speaking to Nigerians about the fight against terrorism, he admitted that despite the government's claim of technically defeating terrorists, it missed its deadline to end the insurgency. He pointed out that while 14 LGAs were once under siege, none are currently held (Al Jazeera, 2016a).

Using VVVA's *stage one* template, the interview is tagged (S.7). Released by Al Jazeera on March 5, 2016, the 26-minute video boasts clear visuals and crisp audio. *Stage two* notes it was filmed at the Al Jazeera English Broadcast Centre in Doha's Wadi Al Sail district. The President wears black shoes, an ash-coloured kaftan with matching trousers, and a white undershirt showing at the collar. He sits relaxed in a Victorian chair against a light brown studio backdrop, sporting his usual glasses and a multi-coloured hat, with a microphone clipped near his chest, ready to engage. The Nigerian flag stands to his right. He responds confidently in English, hands folded, with professional close-ups and a cinematic touch adding to the presentation.

In *stage three*, the focus turns to the key drivers of insecurity in Nigeria—mainly corruption and limited resources for combating it. From an ideological standpoint (van Dijk, 2015), the president asserts that BH can no longer seize any LGA, framing this to downplay their threat (S.7). To reinforce his legitimacy (van Leeuwen, 2015), he claims these groups are now weakened and the northwest is safer. The interview also addresses moral concerns, with the president attributing the struggle against terrorism to impunity, alleged misuse of military funds, and incompetence (S.7). While discussing plans to join the anti-terrorism coalition and labeling BH's actions as treason, he still admits there is ongoing violence and security trouble. His emphasis on reclaiming areas once under insurgent control paints a picture of progress and victories. Throughout, he speaks to a global audience about Nigeria's security challenges, which carry local, regional, and international consequences.

Using the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) to analyse the data, the President, on a micro-level, described the wider population as "we are

victims," while labeling some groups as "Christians" and "religious extremists," and portraying BH as "terrorists" and "those killing innocents" (S.7). He used euphemisms to downplay the insurgents, claiming, "Boko Haram has declared loyalty to us" (S.7). Through specific grammatical choices, he framed BH's actions as "anti-Islamic," cast citizens as "victims of Islamic terrorism," and asserted that "Islam opposes injustice" (S.7). While the interview lacked metaphorical language, he posed rhetorical questions about Nigeria's coalition role, BH's anti-Islamic behaviour, and his own Muslim identity (S.7).

A *meso-level* analysis indicates the Al Jazeera interview reached audiences around the globe. Since Qatar, where Al Jazeera is based, is part of the Saudi-led Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, the government taps both traditional and social media to shape its story. Nigeria, while secular, could leverage the communication power of this 43-member all-Muslim bloc. The government's message aligns with the global war on terror narrative, contrasting sharply with BH's extremist use of religion. The President's talking points hit key areas: tackling insecurity linked to corruption and past leadership; seeking partnerships with LCB nations; highlighting the challenges of guerrilla warfare; addressing IED threats; noting how insecurity scares off investors; flagging the impact of global instability on the Gulf of Guinea; and claiming better safety in the northeast (S.7). Overall, the exchange highlights the value of counter-narratives and shows how strategic messaging pushes back against extremist propaganda.

The *macro-level* analysis shows a power struggle between the government and BH, which seeks to replace democratic governance with a Caliphate. Against this backdrop, the government pushes for unity to uphold democratic values, promote regional peace, and maintain national cohesion. The speech's strong language emphasizes themes of power and legitimacy, portraying the government's actions as essential for protecting the nation. It also clearly contrasts the government's liberal conservatism with BH's radical Islamism. In the larger political arena, the focus is on raising public awareness of security threats, restoring order, and assuring both regional and global allies of its commitment to combating terrorism and stopping the spread of extremist ideologies.

In a related video, Goodluck Jonathan, sworn in as Nigeria's 14th President on May 29, 2011, highlighted the urgent need for improved security (Al Jazeera, 2011). He sought to connect with his audience and stress the political importance of security

measures. Jonathan laid out plans to combat crime, noting that insecurity hampers development, and pledged his administration's dedication to enhancing cooperation against cross-border crimes (Al Jazeera, 2011). He promised stronger action to curb the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, key drivers of conflict in Africa. He also urged Nigerian diplomatic missions abroad to uphold national dignity, called on political rivals to work together for a stronger nation, and presented an agenda focused on improving power supply, infrastructure, education, healthcare, and tackling corruption (Al Jazeera, 2011).

The video labelled S.16, released by Al Jazeera English on May 29, 2011, shows the President at Eagle Square in Abuja alongside government officials and a large crowd. The clear, high-quality footage captures him delivering his inaugural address in traditional Ijaw attire. Commentary highlights key moments in the speech, which centres on national security and COIN strategies (S.16). Themes of strength and self-praise stand out as the President vows to uphold human dignity and calls for political unity. He stresses the importance of bilateral and multilateral cooperation to combat trans-border crimes, taking a diplomatic rather than moralistic stance (S.16).

Looking at it through the three-dimensional framework of CDA (Fairclough, 1992), the speech avoids an "us" versus "them" tone and skips metaphorical language. The presence of both foreign and local media signals global interest in Nigeria's fight against terrorism. As an inaugural address, it shows the government's intent to influence the national security narrative. The President's comments match global war on terror themes, stressing stronger ties with international partners and the use of COIN strategies (S.16). He points to the roles of the UN, AU, ECOWAS, and Gulf of Guinea in maintaining security and welfare, and lays out a five-point plan to tackle crime, address insecurity, and protect human dignity. Overall, the speech seeks to shift views on Nigeria's security, encourage cooperation, and ensure diplomatic missions uphold respect and dignity.

The speech challenges the narrative of non-state actors, with the President acknowledging how insecurity affects "growth and development" (S.16). However, it offers little detail on how the state's Stratcom counters extremist narratives, aiming to fill the gap left by their digital propaganda. More broadly, it underscores the ongoing power struggle between the government and terrorist groups, showing efforts to defend democratic values, promote national unity, and reinforce power and legitimacy, supported by calls for both bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Infrastructure development is framed to "protect its sovereignty." The broader political backdrop reflects concerns about the spread of small and light weapons, described as a "catalyst for conflicts on the African continent" (S.16). Overall, the speech aims to highlight insecurity and its impact on safety at national, regional, and global scales.

In a related address, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of Nigeria spoke before a joint session of the South African Parliament, advocating for united efforts to enhance security and stability (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2013). He outlined key strategies to combat crime, criminality, and terrorism and observed that:

> Many African countries are faced with the challenges of terrorism and other acts of violence, which compound security problems across national and regional borders. African leaders and particularly our parliamentarians must commit to the plan to check the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as the production, circulation, and use of these arms and weapons pose a serious threat to political stability and the safety and welfare of our people (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2013).

Jonathan said the two countries are uniquely positioned to lead all of Africa to the promised land to tackle "poverty, inequality, disease, and communal and interstate conflicts" (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2013). The Nigerian President highlighted the fragility of democratic institutions in Africa and the need for accountability and respect for the rule of law to address insecurity, saying:

> Democratic institutions are still weak in many African countries. There are also conflicts and routine violations of the rule of law. These issues are being addressed by our sub-regional and regional organisations, based on protocols commonly agreed upon for peace and security [...] African legislations must see the need to insist on respect for the rule of law and accountability in the conduct of governmental affairs across Africa (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2013).

He proposed extending countering violent extremism efforts internationally and suggested Nigeria or South Africa be included as a permanent UN Security Council member, pledging commitment; adding that the two countries would tackle "the

challenges that face our continent in the international arena (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2013). The Nigerian leader added:

> I have in mind the underrepresentation of Africa in specific organs of the global governance architecture, notably the permanent membership category of the United Nations Security Council. We must work together to ensure that the reform of the United Nations system is accorded the priority it deserves and is resolved speedily. The commitment of all Africans should be to strengthen Africa's place in the United Nations (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2013).

Using VVVA's *stage one* template, the Parliament of South Africa released the 27-minute video labelled S.17 on May 7, 2013, featuring high-quality audio and visuals. *Stage two* shows an indoor scene at the Cape Town Parliament, with the President and South African parliamentarians. The President, wearing glasses and traditional black Ijaw attire, delivers a formal address in English through close-ups and a surveillance-style angle. Stage three focuses on four main themes: the global terrorism threat to South Africa and Nigeria, the spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the importance of counter-messaging and StratCom, and both countries' ambitions for permanent UN Security Council seats. Viewed through the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), the tone is confident and self-congratulatory, especially in the claim that "our countries are uniquely positioned to lead all of Africa" (S.17). It also highlights projecting national power abroad (van Leeuwen, 2015), with the President stressing regional conflict-resolution efforts and urging for Nigeria and South Africa's permanent membership on the Security Council, while emphasizing the rule of law.

Using the three-dimensional CDA approach (Fairclough, 1992), the *micro-level* analysis shows no "us versus them" framing. The President openly acknowledged the threat of global terrorism without using euphemisms or metaphors. Speaking to the public, the speech highlighted the dangers of terrorism and emphasized the role of both traditional and social media in countering extremist messages. While national security and counter-insurgency strategies were mentioned, specific state StratCom plans were not detailed. President Jonathan described global terrorism as a major national and regional challenge that crosses borders. He pointed out that the spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons undermines political stability and puts citizens in both countries at risk (S.17). The growing presence of such weapons adds urgency to

addressing transnational terrorism (Wright & D'Amato, 2023; Chelule, 2014; Udefuna & Osolafia, 2024; Alimba, 2017; Machakanja & Manuel, 2021; Saferworld, 2022).

Jonathan noted that Nigeria and South Africa, with their economic, political, and military influence and diverse ethnic makeup, are well-positioned to tackle poverty, inequality, disease, and interstate conflicts (S.17). Such efforts are key to building strong regional institutions and improving peace protocols, as gaps in legislation and dialogue often fuel violent extremism (Deane & Taylor, 2016). Within the BRICS framework, their push for UN reform to give developing countries a greater voice may help explain South Africa's success in gaining a UNSC seat (Kiku, 2024). On a *meso-level*, the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa published the video for African and global audiences, with the speech aligning to global war on terror narratives. He emphasized two non-kinetic counter-messaging and StratCom strategies: strengthening African legislation through the rule of law and ensuring accountability (S.17). These actions are crucial for building stronger regional bodies and better peace protocols, as weak laws and poor dialogue drive extremism (Deane & Taylor, 2016). Jonathan's vision of Nigeria and South Africa leading "Africa to the promised land" (S.17) underscores their potential as permanent UN Security Council members, supported by their strengths (Omoruyi et al., 2020) and their advocacy for UN reform within BRICS.

In a 10-minute interview with CNN, Nigeria's acting president, Goodluck Jonathan, criticised the insurgency threatening the nation and outlined plans to combat it, saying:

> We are in discussions with traditional rulers and religious leaders - and they are responding, of course. We are also providing security because, first of all, you must provide adequate security to make sure that people do not carry weapons and intimidate or kill others, so that is being done. Then, we are also appealing to their conscience using their leaders, opinion leaders, religious leaders, and traditional leaders, and it is paying off (CNN, 2010).

Highlighting Nigeria's commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, he strongly advocated for global peace and stability. The Nigerian leader stated that Africa is "suffering from the use of Small Arms and Light Weapons" (CNN, 2010) and asserted that:

> It is more devastating to us than even the issue of nuclear

> terrorism, because Africans have died from small arms and light weapons more than from nuclear terrorism. [This is] because most of these weapons used in the former Soviet Union are no longer relevant and have all been shipped to Africa. Most of the small arms and light weapons manufactured in America and other European countries are shipped down to Africa, and this is the cause of most of the crises we are having (CNN, 2010).

According to VVVA's *stage one* analysis, a 10-minute video labelled S.19 aired on CNN on April 15, 2010, featuring sharp visuals and clear audio. *Stage two* reveals it as a pre-recorded national address from the State House – Aso Villa in Abuja, Nigeria. At the centre is President Goodluck Jonathan, presented as the nation's protector, wearing a dark kaftan and black fedora instead of a military uniform during a wartime speech. This choice underscores his role as a civilian leader asserting constitutional authority against an extremist group, touching on themes of power, sovereignty, and military might. His serious look and steady gaze convey the urgency of the crisis, while the national and armed forces command flags emphasize the emergency declaration and his determination to protect citizens and reclaim territory. Speaking in English, he details his authority over troop deployment and law enforcement. The camera remains fixed in a tight, stable medium close-up, projecting calm control and keeping focus on the gravity of his message. The central goal is to counter "rebellion" through military action while upholding democratic governance.

Looking at the video through the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), the speech declares a state of emergency in the northeast, portraying the government as a legitimate protector and BH as a destructive, unlawful force. This builds a clear us-versus-them dynamic that justifies the emergency rule and strengthens the government's image as a responsible guardian, while depicting BH as chaotic and inhuman. It features the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) that mixes authorization, rationalization, moral judgment, and myth-making to defend military action in the name of national security. The speech also presents emergency measures as a moral duty to protect citizens and maintain law and order. Its main audience is domestic—the Nigerian public, residents of affected states, political leaders, and the armed forces—while also addressing BH, foreign allies, and the global community.

Using a three-dimensional method (Fairclough, 1992), the *micro-level* analysis shows no obvious "us" versus "them" framing or euphemistic language from the

government to discredit the insurgents. The grammar points to the Acting President as the speaker, addressing the public, with the video steering clear of metaphors or rhetorical flourishes. At the *meso-level*, CNN shares the message with a global audience, likely influenced by President Jonathan's meeting with the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations during the Nuclear Security Summit. This highlights how global media shape security narratives for varied audiences. Intertextually, the speech ties into the broader fight against global terrorism, emphasizing Nigeria's commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Strategically, the interview backs Nigeria's institutional approach, involving opinion leaders, religious and traditional figures, and non-kinetic methods aimed at appealing to insurgents' consciences, while also stressing the importance of strict firearm control (S.19).

Major security concerns and moral questions arise from intelligence gathering, espionage, and the use of digital technology. Countries like Russia and China have intensified the mix of Electronic Warfare (EW), Information Warfare (IW), and Cyber Warfare (CW) to create non-kinetic effects (Lehto & Henselmann, 2020). The spread of small arms has taken more lives than nuclear terrorism, with weapons from the US and Europe, once used in the former Soviet Union, now turning up in Africa (S.19). Despite the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the steady flow of ammunition into Nigeria suggests a troubling international scheme. Between 2016 and 2020, Russia, the US, France, Germany, and China accounted for 76% of Africa's major arms imports (Wezeman, Kuimova & Wezeman, 2022). It appears that only the UN has the means to address this sensitive issue (Dyikuk, 2022a).

The *macro-level* discourse highlights how language reflects an ongoing power struggle, with the government opting for non-violent approaches to safeguard democratic values and national unity rather than resorting to military action. Its authority and legitimacy are reinforced by its commitment to discouraging the possession and spread of weapons, helping to protect national sovereignty. In the wider political context, there's a conscious push to prevent further polarization in Nigerian society—already under pressure from insurgency—while increasing public awareness about the dangers of insecurity.

In a related YouTube video, a senior military officer expressed the government's resolve to wipe out BH. This came after the tragic Chibok schoolgirls' kidnapping and was paired with the Buhari administration's claims of major wins against insurgents. When questioned about evidence of the army's success, Ezugwu

replied:

> The Nigerian military, supported by our political leaders, has done everything needful to ensure that we wipe out Boko terrorist activities in the northeast of Nigeria - we have been conducting the final mop-up operations in Sambisa Forest- everything is going well. The military has successfully captured the BH headquarters. We have been able to take the battle to any other location and hideouts they have run to, and the operation is ongoing. It is not a finished business; it is a work in progress -we are seeing a very bright light at the end of the tunnel (Al Jazeera, 2016b).

A senior military officer shared updates on the abducted schoolgirls still separated from their families, saying the military is conducting air surveillance over the forest and has already freed more than 1,900 Nigerians once held by BH. He emphasized that "the prized possession is the Chibok schoolgirls, and we remain hopeful our operations will lead to their rescue" (Al Jazeera, 2016b). Highlighting major progress against the militants, he credited President Muhammadu Buhari's firm stance for boosting their efforts, claiming the situation in Sambisa Forest and the Northeast is under control: "President Muhammadu Buhari's clear declaration to defeat the militants has energized our efforts," he said, adding, "our actions show our advancement" (Al Jazeera, 2016b). General Ezugwu called for unity, urging all national resources and international support to join in the stabilization phase, noting that terrorism knows no borders. He also mentioned ongoing coordination with Cameroonian authorities due to the forest's proximity to the border. He insists:

> The operation we are having against the insurgents is an operation championed by the Lake Chad Basin Authority. We are working together with Cameroonians... We are working together with them to ensure that there is no infiltration of Boko Haram into their territory, so it is a well-coordinated operation by all of us…to ensure that this defeat is final, and it will not spread to other parts of West Africa (Al Jazeera, 2016b).

Using VVVA's *stage one* analysis, the video labelled S.25 was released by Al Jazeera on December 27, 2016. It runs for 5 minutes and 54 seconds and has high-quality audio and visuals. *Stage two* identifies the setting as Sambisa Forest in Northeastern Nigeria. The main figure is Brigadier General Victor Ezugwu, joined by

more than ten soldiers and several armoured tanks in the background. Both he and the soldiers wear desert camouflage suited for the dry, sparse terrain of Borno and the Sahel region, with the General also sporting dark sunglasses. The video shows him answering interview questions, flanked by soldiers carrying AK-47 rifles. The English dialogue is paired with camera work that includes close-up shots and a surveillance-style feel.

Stage three highlights a central theme of proclaimed victory over BH and moves to stabilize the Northeast. The Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015) shows the government projecting strength and self-praise while playing down its flaws and the insurgents' successes. The legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) comes through in the call for "all national resources and international support" (S.25), reinforcing authority in line with the president's mandate. Though morality is not directly mentioned, the logic of violence appears in the mention of capturing BH headquarters (S.25). Statements about BH retreating to "hideouts" and the president's "clear declaration to defeat the militants" (S.25) bolster a narrative of triumph aimed at local, regional, and international audiences.

The data was examined using three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992). At the *micro-level*, the textual analysis highlights an "Us" versus "Them" narrative, with the officer using "We" for the Nigerian military and "them" (S.25) for BH terrorists. Euphemisms like "operations championed" and "troops cleared" (S.25) work to delegitimize the insurgents, framing military actions as tactical successes and suggesting sustained dominance. Media watchdogs, security analysts, and the Nigerian public see these terms as the government's attempt to project total control over areas once held by terrorists. Grammatically, the officer is the main speaker, addressing local, regional, and global audiences. The government uses terms such as "terrorists," "Boko Haram," and "insurgents" (S.25) but avoids metaphorical or overly rhetorical language to vilify them.

At the *meso-level*, the discursive practice shows that Al Jazeera produced the message for the identified audiences. In the interview, insurgents are described as "crude," while the state is presented as "formal" (S.25), showing how traditional and social media help reinforce the government's narrative. The audience is ultimately presented with the state's position on the war on terror. Intertextually, the speech mirrors global war on terror narratives and is framed to support institutional goals, highlighting victories against insurgents, air surveillance in the Chibok schoolgirls'

rescue, and regional cooperation efforts.

Brigadier General Ezugwu summed up the government's stance on the war on terror, stressing that dealing with insurgents "is not a finished business," even after claims of capturing "the heart of Sambisa Forest" (S.25). The *Wailing Wailers* (Opejobi, 2016) called on President Buhari to be more transparent about such victories, pointing out the need for verifiable facts to build public trust. While officials insisted they had taken the group's last stronghold, a video from Shekau disputed this, saying the sect was still active there (Deutsche Welle, 2016). The situation underlines how crucial clear, credible communication is in the fight against terrorism. Opinions vary on Ezugwu's comments about military air surveillance in Sambisa and efforts to rescue the Chibok schoolgirls (S.25). The International Centre for Investigative Reporting (2015) noted U.S. drone surveillance in the area (Winsor, 2015). Despite help from seven foreign nations, rescue missions faced setbacks, including a tragic incident where a Nigerian airstrike, aided by U.S. drones, accidentally killed at least ten abducted girls, with videos later surfacing online. U.S. intelligence also intercepted calls in unknown languages and hesitated to share key information due to trust issues with Nigeria's government. This led the NSA to look for Americans fluent in Kanuri (Gbadamosi, 2021; Parkinson & Hinshaw, 2021).

The officer explained that the government's work with military leaders is meant to harness national power and gain backing from neighbouring authorities in Cameroon and other LCBC member states. This teamwork is key to stopping violence from spilling into other parts of West Africa (S.25). The statement highlights how vital regional cooperation, security reforms, and global support are as the government ramps up counter-insurgency efforts against militants in northeastern Nigeria and the wider LCB area (Fielding, 2016). After seven years of insurgency in the Sahel, the MNJTF, set up by the AU in N'Djamena, Chad, still struggles with limited funding and coordination issues among diverse troops (Bavier, 2016). The main aim is to keep the insurgency from spreading beyond the Sahel. While the interview doesn't directly challenge insurgent narratives, it points to the need for the state's StratCom to counter extremist claims exploiting gaps left by the group's digital propaganda. The ideological battle is clear, with language reflecting the power struggle between the Nigerian state and BH. Military actions are focused on defending democratic values, restoring territorial integrity, and raising public awareness about security and the importance of working with regional partners.

In a related YouTube video, Major General Abdul Khalifa Ibrahim, the first commander of the MNJTF, discussed the non-kinetic and kinetic strategies employed by the force (S.29). The MNJTF comprises troops from four countries organized into sectors: Cameroon (Mura), Chad (Baga Sola), Nigeria (Monguno), and Niger (Diffa), facilitating effective joint operations within national borders (S.29). Figure 7.1 prominently showcases MNJTF officers securing the region.

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Figure 7. 1 A General, right rear, who commands an element of the MNJTF, issues orders (The Washington Post, 2023: https://shorturl.fm/hmO5h)

He outlined that the force's non-kinetic operations are central to its four-phased plan, *Operation Yancin Tafki* (Lasting Freedom). This involves conducting clearance operations against identified threats along shared boundaries to prepare the battlefield for the main operation (S.29). General Ibrahim emphasised the importance of non-kinetic operations and counter-messaging against the insurgents, stating:

> We realise that no content insurgency operation can completely succeed without effective non-kinetic operations. Therefore, in recognition of this, the Multinational Joint Task Force also conducts influence public information operations within the Lake Chad Basin Area. In this regard, we adopted a multi-pronged support, supported by the Lake Chad Basin Commission and other partners, which involves the use of flyers, press releases, and radio broadcasts in key local languages across the countries of the Lake Chad Basin (GRV Global, 2021).

He pledged to use "local languages of the area, including Kanuri, Buduma, Kanembu, and Hausa" and other "several military cooperation activities - medical outreaches and quick-impact projects- to win the hearts and minds of the population

and foster greater cooperation with the troops (GRV Global, 2021). He acknowledged the UK's and EU's support for non-kinetic operations, noting encouraging feedback (S.29). On StratCom efforts, he said:

> In the aftermath of his [Shekau] death, and as a result of some of the strategic communication operations that we are carrying out, thousands of Boko Haram insurgents, including their family members, came out. Moreover, this has been quite welcome…We have had many surrenders by Boko Haram terrorists, especially those of the Boko Haram faction of Shekau (GRV Global, 2021).

He noted that while the young militants were pushed out of major population centres, they found refuge in the LCB area - Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. The military official highlighted the challenges troops face, including poor infrastructure and rugged, hostile terrain, noting that non-state actors operate across a vast region home to about 30 million people and spanning more than 2.4 million square kilometres (GRV Global, 2021). Due to ongoing insurgent attacks, in early 2015, the leaders of the LCB Commission countries, including the Republic of Benin, an observer, established the MNJTF (S.29) with a threefold mandate to:

> Carry out counterinsurgency operations and ultimately defeat Boko Haram in the operational area […] pave the way for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their ancestral homes […] create conditions for resettlements and humanitarian assistance to be carried out for people who need it (GRV Global, 2021).

The army personnel clarified that "the kinetic operations have been largely successful, resulting in the neutralization of several insurgent fighters, the destruction of their camps and logistical bases, and the recovery and seizure of various quantities of arms and equipment, as well as the liberation of towns and communities" (GRV Global, 2021). He asserted that the force is effectively fulfilling its mandate to facilitate the return of IDPs and refugees to their communities. He also claimed that "Life is returning to normal… normalcy is returning" (GRV Global, 2021). Figure 7. 2 shows MNJTF personnel patrolling the area.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 7. 2 Two MNJTF personnel patrolling Lake Chad (The Washington Post, 2023: https://shorturl.fm/hmO5h)

Using VVVA's *stage one* analysis template, the video titled S.29, published by GRV Global on August 6, 2021, offers key insights into the MNJTF's strategy for tackling BH threats. This polished audiovisual production highlights the significance of both national and regional security. *Stage two* sets the scene at MNJTF headquarters in N'Djamena, Chad, featuring Major General Abdul Khalifa Ibrahim as the central figure. Visuals show him with fellow military officers in uniform, LCB government officials, and politicians in civilian dress, underscoring the teamwork driving the MNJTF mission. Details like the MNJTF flag behind him and his NA desert camouflage add to the authority and gravity of the event. In his calm inaugural lecture at the seventh Africa Security Symposium, delivered in English, he emphasizes the MNJTF's mandate to reclaim the LCB region. A medium close-up shot strengthens the connection between speaker and audience. Stage three pinpoints the goal: to explain the MNJTF's formation and objectives—addressing the Islamic fundamentalist group opposing the government since 2009, recognizing religion and poverty in the predominantly Muslim northeast as key factors in the conflict, and outlining government efforts to end the violence (S.29).

The analysis uses Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015) to show how the narrative creates a polarized view, emphasizing the in-group's (MNJTF/LCBC) resilience and moral authority while depicting the out-group (insurgents) as criminal. It highlights the positive, cooperative traits of "Us" and the negative, violent traits of "Them," while

also touching on both groups' operational and tactical aspects. Applying legitimation strategies (van Leeuwen, 2015), it shows rationalization—framing military actions as justified through practical and theoretical arguments about stability. This is backed by Authorization via institutional mandates and by moral evaluation, presenting the intervention as a necessary act of protection. The MNJTF's focus on comprehensive COIN operations, repatriating IDPs, and offering humanitarian aid reinforces this approach. Overall, the discussion centres on a security-driven rationale, with organizations like the International Crisis Group (ICG) noting the MNJTF's emphasis on COIN, protecting civilians, and encouraging combatant surrenders, as reported by ACCORD.

Using three-dimensional framework (Fairclough, 1992) to analyse S.29, at the *micro level,* the narrative sets up a clear "Us" versus "Them" dynamic, portraying the government as "We" and labeling BH as "terrorists" and "fundamentalists." Major General Ibrahim uses euphemisms, like describing BH's restriction to enclaves, to delegitimize them and frame them as public enemies. His speech targets defence and military officials, strategic international partners, regional organizations, and professionals in security and development, highlighting the issue's wide importance. As the first commander of the MNJTF, he positions the identified groups as recipients and the insurgents as perpetrators, enemies of both the state and the public. While he uses "enclave" to describe BH's strongholds, other MNJTF briefings use terms like "arrowhead" and "cancer" to frame COIN and regional stability efforts in the LCB. The rhetoric also leans on regional unity and institutional credibility, evoking pathos through references to the humanitarian crisis.

At the *meso level*, a senior MNJTF official delivered an address on regional security operations against BH, hosted and shared by GRV Global for an audience of government officials, military leaders, and defence industry stakeholders. GRV produced and curated high-level defence briefings on its YouTube channel to highlight logistical priorities, while the audience – including military and diplomatic figures – engaged with the address to coordinate donor support, adjust operations, and review policies. In terms of intertextuality, the address connects LCB operations to global CT strategies, drawing on international terminology and legal frameworks.

By presenting the local BH and ISWAP insurgencies as part of the wider war on terror, the MNJTF secures legitimacy and backing from international donors. The keynote highlights strategic narratives that align with state priorities rather than the

insurgents' own framing, focusing on regional security, strong civil-military cooperation, and long-term stabilization across the LCB. These strategies aim to boost operational coordination among troop-contributing nations, uphold international humanitarian law, and support the return of displaced people. The overall message is designed to build public confidence in state institutions and shape perceptions of the insurgent threat in the Sahel.

Major General Ibrahim's comments emphasize the value of inclusive communication strategies. By using multimedia resources and engaging local communities in their native languages, the MNJTF takes a broad approach to COIN that goes beyond traditional military measures. S.29 clearly captures the MNJTF's goals and the challenges of communication in the wider context of security operations and COIN efforts in the LCB. General Ibrahim also pointed out key obstacles in counter-messaging and CT work, including the need for better armoured vehicles, stronger counter-IED capabilities, and improved surveillance and communication tools. Radio remains a vital tool for strengthening community resilience and fighting misinformation.

He highlighted the value of the UK and EU's partnership and backing for non-kinetic operations, pointing out that StratCom efforts are successfully prompting many militants and their families to surrender. He noted that religious extremism and poverty in northern Nigeria are major factors fuelling the problem, a view backed by expert studies (USAID, 2011). Ibrahim outlined the MNJTF's three main goals: defeating the insurgent group, helping resettle IDPs, and providing humanitarian aid (S.29). These align with the AU Peace and Security Council's objectives to eradicate BH and stabilize impacted regions (Multinational Joint Task Force, 2020). Focusing on resettlement and charitable work is key to tackling urgent counter-messaging challenges, while the emphasis on military action to support humanitarian efforts reflects the MNJTF's dual role in both kinetic and non-kinetic operations (Onuoha, Tchie, & Zabala, 2022).

Chad's brief pullout from the MNJTF after losing about 100 soldiers in a 2020 attack raised concerns about its operational strength, concerns deepened by another attack in October 2024 that killed over 40 soldiers (Onibiyo & Kefas, 2024). While the army general credited EU support for providing helicopters, he pointed to ongoing problems like limited funding, weak policing capacity, and intelligence gaps. Tackling these challenges could boost effectiveness. The pledge to share video proof of

returning individuals reflects a proactive stance in showing progress against terrorism. Closer cooperation between National Operations and the MNJTF could improve intelligence gathering, aid deradicalization, strengthen civil-military relations, and embed human rights in troop training alongside effective counterterrorism tactics, leading to stronger regional responses. Still, it is unclear if Nigeria has invested in and implemented EW, IW, and CW (Lehto & Henselmann, 2020) as practical counter-messaging tools, like how Russia and China have used them. The analysis emphasizes counter-narratives, showing how the MNJTF and state Stratcom work to fill the gap left by insurgent propaganda through multiple local languages and other non-kinetic strategies like radio, flyers, and press releases.

At the *macro level*, language use mirrors the ongoing power struggle between special forces and BH, with the MNJTF using military action to promote democratic values and restore unity at both national and regional levels. The government's rhetoric serves to justify its collaborative efforts, humanitarian missions, and strategic communications aimed at protecting sovereignty. Additionally, the societal polarization driven by larger political contexts, along with the focus on raising awareness of BH's propaganda, highlights the MNJTF's dedication to safeguarding the entire LCB region. In RIC videos, all communication is carried out in English.

7.1.2 Domestic Framework, Policing and Funding (DFPF)

On October 1, 2019, President Buhari gave a speech covering key topics like security, economic growth, fighting corruption, and promoting good governance (Channels TV, 2019). On security, he stressed that good governance and economic development rely on peace and stability (Channels TV, 2019). He highlighted the government's commitment to tackling insurgents by boosting military capacity through new equipment and better conditions for service members (Channels TV, 2019). He also mentioned revitalizing the Ministry of Police Affairs to improve internal security strategies and supporting the Nigerian Police Trust Fund Act to increase funding for law enforcement (Channels TV, 2019). Additionally, the recruitment of 10,000 new constables into the Nigeria Police Force was presented as part of the government's proactive efforts to combat violent crime (Channels TV, 2019).

According to VVVA's *stage one*, the video labelled S.3 was released by Channels TV on October 1, 2019. Lasting 25 minutes, it features high-quality video and audio. For *stage two*, the setting is the Aso Rock Presidential Villa in Abuja, the nation's capital. The speech aired on national television and radio from the Presidential Villa

instead of being delivered in person at Eagle Square during a public parade. The main figure is President Buhari, with visuals showing the Nigerian flag waving before the broadcast. He wears a green-white-green hat, glasses, and a white *Baban gira*, and calmly delivers the national broadcast. Verbally, he presents his first Independence Day address in English, while the camera work features a professional close-up shot.

Stage three focuses on the goal, highlighting security as a key driver of sustainable development, with public praise as motivation, acquisition of military equipment, improved conditions for military service, and increased police funding (S.3). The ideological stance (van Dijk, 5) reflects strength, self-promotion, downplaying mistakes, and dismissing insurgent achievements. The legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) underscores the government's authority to end the cycle of violence. While morality is not directly mentioned, the logic of violence emerges through the emphasis on acquiring hardware to defeat insurgents. The narrative of glorification and victory is evident in the armed fight against terrorists (S.3), aimed at both the Nigerian public and the international community.

The same data was used to examine the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992). On the *micro level*, the government emphasizes an "us" versus "them" narrative. This shows in phrases like "we have," "we owe," "our gallant," "we are," "our armed forces," and "our territorial integrity" for the government and military, contrasted with "terrorist" and "scourge of Boko Haram" for the insurgents. There's no use of euphemisms to delegitimize the insurgents. The grammatical analysis positions the President as the central figure, with the audience as recipients. The government portrays the insurgents as enemies of the state and region, without using metaphoric or rhetorical language to demonize their actions.

At the *meso-level*, this focuses on how messages are created, shared, and received. Channels TV produced and distributed the speech for the intended audience. Insurgents are portrayed as a "scourge" and the state as "good," with the government using traditional media to shape the narrative. The speech taps into the global war on terror to counter BH propaganda, framing improved security and good governance as key institutional strategies. It emphasizes breaking the cycle of violence for Nigeria's recovery, praising the bravery of armed forces personnel to boost morale and calling for regional cooperation (S.3). A British Forces Foundation report notes that high morale boosts confidence and psychological well-being in service members (Jones, 2020), with morale closely tied to mental health and its promotion helping to prevent

psychological disorders (Jones, 2020; Holmes, 2021). The call for regional unity mirrors initiatives by the Oslo Consultative Group, the LCB commission, and the AU Commission, all targeting strategic solutions to the insurgency (African Union, 2018; Brechenmacher, 2019).

Amid reports of corruption among top police officials (Iheukwumere, 2019), the speech stressed the urgent need to improve working conditions for service personnel and strengthen the police force through increased funding for the Ministry of Police Affairs and the Nigerian Police Trust Fund. A survey revealed that the police are seen as the most corrupt institution in Nigeria (SERAP Nigeria, 2025), weakening their core duty to protect the public and maintain order (Ibrahim, 2019). With his anti-corruption stance, the president likely referenced these issues, acknowledging the vital role of the police in counter-messaging and counter-insurgency. The discussion also touched on concerns over the ethnicisation of security matters, Buhari's compliance with court orders, and the economy (S.3). Buhari faced backlash for his handling of the northern insurgency and his hardline approach toward Biafran separatists in Southeastern Nigeria (Omokri, 2021), specifically the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), to whom he vowed to speak "in a language they would understand" (Thegenius Media, 2021). In 2019, Amnesty International lawyer Dr. Kolawole Olaniyan claimed Buhari defied 40 court orders (Sahara Reporters, 2019). The speech did not take a counter-narrative approach or reflect the state's strategic communication efforts to challenge extremist rhetoric.

At the *macro-level*, the clash of ideologies highlights a power struggle between the government and terrorists, driving the government's determination to pursue further military action to uphold democratic values and maintain regional stability. Regarding power and legitimacy, the government uses rhetoric to justify its stance against BH. In the larger political arena, the speech aims to counter BH's attempts to divide society by promoting awareness of public safety on both national and regional scales.

In 2020, Lt. Gen. Tukur Yusuf Buratai, then Chief of Army Staff (COAS), urged troops in a 3-minute video to intensify their efforts to eliminate terrorist remnants in Northeast Nigeria (TVC, 2020a). He insisted that:

> We want that commitment. We want that courage and determination. So, as we move to the serving point, I want you to have it at the back of your mind that Mr. President,

> Commander in Chief, is solidly behind you. We have already started getting the consignments of what we require to handle this insurgency and terrorism. It is just a matter of time, and a very short time, to be exact (TVC, 2020a).

The military chief who spoke to soldiers and senior officers in the Northeast during a special Easter lunch praised their successes and assured them that essential equipment is on its way to defeat the insurgents. Officers expressed that the event significantly boosted their spirits and reinforced their commitment to "eliminate the elements" (TVC, 2020a).

Following VVVA's *stage one* template, the video labelled S.8 was released by TVC on April 14, 2020. The 3-minute clip boasts high-quality visuals and sound. *Stage two* places the scene at Super Camp Ngamdu in the northeast, featuring the COAS alongside military officers and soldiers. Notable visual elements include the NA Desert Camouflage uniform, also called the desert combat uniform or desert fatigue. He is fully outfitted in tactical field gear: desert-patterned camouflage shirt and trousers, a matching desert-camo ballistic helmet, and tactical combat boots. The officers and soldiers wore the same standard-issue desert camouflage used in the northeast, suited for the arid, dusty terrain of areas like the Sambisa forest and the LCB region, where counter-insurgency operations are underway. Both Buratai and the troops wore light brown, tan, and grey camo tones. While the soldiers wore black berets, his represented the armoured corps, the specialized branch he served in before becoming the top army chief.

His rank insignia and name tag are displayed on his shoulder and chest, following military protocol. This was promoted as a strategic move to boost morale and show that high command was present on the ground alongside frontline troops. The setting includes armoury, weapons, a Koran, flags, and both aggressive and smiling soldiers. Visually, the officer and his men are seen receiving food, while others stand guard with AK-47 rifles. Verbally, details about the operational structure of the super camp are presented in English. Camera work features both close-up and standard shots.

Stage three focuses on Buratai's direct involvement in the Borno State theatre of operations, overseeing the final push against BH. From an ideological perspective (van Dijk, 2015), this shows a strong commitment to securing more resources to eliminate terrorists. The legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) comes through in

invoking the authority of "Mr. President, Commander-in-Chief" (S.8) as backing the troops. While there's no direct moral reference, the government's determination to "handle" the insurgents reflect a logic of violence. The COAS shared stories of triumph and praise from officers who said their morale was boosted. The message targets the armed forces, local and regional governments, and the international community.

Using three-dimensional mechanism (Fairclough, 1992), the *micro-level* of S.8 was analysed for vocabulary use. The phrases "We want" (twice), along with "We Require" and "President" (once each), create a clear separation between others and the terrorists, labelled as "elements" (S.8). Rather than using euphemisms, the military official chooses direct language to delegitimize the "insurgence" and "terrorism" (S.8). From a grammatical perspective, the speaker is the COAS, addressing the three previously identified audiences. The government views the insurgents as enemies of the state who must be eliminated. No metaphoric or rhetorical language is present in this data.

At the *meso level*, the data came from TVC, a local TV station, and was shared with its known audience. This highlights how local media report on insecurity and how the government uses both social and traditional media to shape the narrative. It shows immediate audiences what the government is doing to protect the nation. In terms of intertextuality, the government's speech ties into the global war on terror and its efforts to counter BH narratives. The message is carefully crafted to lift the morale of officers and soldiers while reinforcing the state's institutional stance.

He highlighted the strategic value of the Super Camps and their role in boosting armed forces' morale (S.8). The Coalition Against Terrorism and Extremism (CATE) praised the Super Camp strategy as a "masterstroke" (Goulding, 2019) and an effective tactic against insurgent groups, applauding the NA's bravery. However, some soldiers claim that superiors use these camps for personal financial gain rather than national benefit (Fabiyi, Onuba, Ajaja, Aluko, Alagbe, & Idowu, 2019). The COAS's choice of words like "commitment," "courage and determination," and "Mr. President stands firmly with you" (S.8) is aimed at lifting troop morale. This rhetorical style is a key COIN strategy and vital for strong counter-messaging. By focusing on achievements, the COAS works to inspire service members and enhance their performance. In modern conflict, solid counter-messaging is crucial—it boosts morale (Childs, 2016), supports mental well-being, and addresses moral injuries (Molendijk, 2024). Higher morale improves combat effectiveness, lowers operational stress, and

builds resilience among military personnel (Șerban, 2024). The army chief's messaging is therefore central to empowering security forces in the fight against terrorism. While not directly targeting BH narratives, the approach doesn't engage with extremist claims or state Stratcom but aims to outshine sects' digital propaganda by showcasing the Super Camp "masterstroke" (S.8) to the world.

At the *macro level*, language reveals the power struggle between the government and BH, highlighting the government's resolve to use military action to uphold democratic values and foster national unity. Power and legitimacy are framed through rhetoric that justifies the government's stance against BH as a means of protecting the nation. In the broader political scene, the army official positions the government's liberal conservatism above BH's radical Islamist ideology, challenging the group's efforts to divide society while emphasizing the military's role in safeguarding public security.

In another YouTube video, President Buhari told the BBC that his government has "technically won the war," stating there are no longer "conventional attacks" (BBC, 2015c) against security agencies and civilians. According to him:

> Technically, we have won the war because people are returning to their neighbourhoods. We have a committee on the ground liaising with local governments. Our major problem now is rehabilitation for the over 1.5 million internally displaced persons, including repairing the infrastructure — the schools, the health centres, and the number of bridges that have been blown… I assure you that we have dealt with them (BBC, 2015c).

Responding to accusations of playing the blame game, the president said, "These claims are unjust. Nigerians know that BH was active in 16 local governments, but they can no longer launch attacks as they did in Maiduguri. This is not just talk" (BBC, 2015c). He continued, "We have replaced service chiefs, reorganised the military, acquired new hardware, and initiated retraining with British, American, and French support. Significant progress is being made, and the people in those states recognise the positive changes" (BBC, 2015c). He also rejected claims that the government has failed to tackle the insurgents.

> I assure you, we have not failed. Adamawa State and Yobe State are free from Boko Haram. Borno is their base. I think they have two to three local governments…. They have now been reduced

> to nothing. However, conventional attacks on centres of communication and population in towns and cities are no longer capable of being executed effectively (BBC, 2015c).

He condemned BH's use of IEDs and the indoctrination of girls aged 15 and under to carry out attacks in churches, mosques, markets, and motor parks (BBC, 2015c).

Using VVVA's stage one analysis template, the data labelled S.9 was published by the BBC on 24 December 2015. The 3-minute-9-second clip had clear video and audio. For stage two, the setting is Abuja, Nigeria's capital, with President Buhari as the main figure. He is shown wearing a long-sleeved, light-brown/beige-patterned *Kaftan*, a traditional northern outfit with subtle vertical geometric embroidery along the front placket, paired with a matching brown-and-cream embroidered *Zanna cap*, commonly worn by the Kanuri political class. He also wore his trademark thick, black-framed glasses and the Armed Forces Remembrance Day lapel pin on his left chest to honour Nigerian veterans—a symbol traditionally worn between December and National Remembrance Day on January 15. The visuals show him calmly answering questions, with the verbal delivery in English and the camera focused in a close-up shot.

Stage three is the target. Buhari proclaimed that the government had "technically won the war" (S.9), assuring that BH no longer carries out conventional attacks in major population centres, which is why they've turned to using IEDs. Previously, Buhari had set the Nigerian military a firm deadline of December 31, 2015, to end the insurgency. The ideological perspectives outlined by van Dijk (2015) show in the expressions of strength and self-praise, like saying "we have won the war" and mentioning training in Britain, America, and France (S.9). The President downplays BH's achievements, stressing that the government hasn't failed in countering them (S.9). Legitimation strategy (Van Leeuwen, 2015) appears in the government's claims of authority through remarks such as "They have now been reduced to nothing" and "we have dealt with them" (S.9). The morality of the insurgency is framed by references to the humanitarian crisis, the use of IEDs, and attacks on vulnerable targets. The logic of violence is reflected in the acquisition of new military equipment and the use of force against the sect. Stories of victory are built around reclaiming 16 LGAs and the technical defeat of the group, aimed at audiences including local, regional, and international communities.

Using three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) to analyse the same data, at the *micro-level*, the repeated use of "We" and "Boko Haram" (S.9) three times each reflects an "us versus them" narrative. The government avoided euphemisms in delegitimizing the insurgents, instead opting for direct language. The grammatical analysis positions President Buhari as the main actor, with the previously identified audiences as recipients. The insurgents are described as "an organized fighting force" (S.9), and direct language is used to condemn BH's actions rather than relying on metaphor or rhetoric.

At the *meso-level*, the BBC produces and distributes the message to its intended audiences. The President's interview highlights foreign media's interest in reporting on global war on terror stories. It also shows how the state uses both traditional and social media to shape the insurgency narrative. The intertextuality reflects the government's alignment with the international war on terror, considering Nigeria's history as a former British colony. It condemns BH's radical exploitation of religion by indoctrinating girls as young as 15 to detonate IEDs in places of worship (S.9).

The strategic approach focuses on the state's institutional actions, such as rehabilitating over 1.5 million IDPs, restoring schools, health centres, and bridges, gaining international backing from the UK, US, and France, reorganizing military leadership, and tackling militants, including BH's use of IEDs and the indoctrination of young girls for attacks (S.9). Successful IDP rehabilitation depends on tackling corruption to ensure designated funds are used properly, improving camp conditions, and reducing malnutrition and suffering (Olawale, 2016). Creating specific legislation and institutions for IDP concerns can help establish a more organized and supportive rehabilitation process (Alobo & Obaji, 2016).

The UN has acknowledged that BH's actions in Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, and Niger have caused major infrastructure damage (Kindzeka, 2021). According to the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), terrorists destroyed 2,246 classrooms in 512 schools between 2009 and 2021 (Haruna, 2021). In 2017, insurgents damaged around 788 health facilities (Obi & Eboreime, 2017). By November 2018, the Federal Executive Council (FEC) announced a contract worth N813 million for Army Engineers to rebuild three bridges in the Northeast that terrorists had destroyed (Mudashir, 2018). The government has reiterated its commitment to rebuilding the region through the Northeast Development Commission (NEDC) and by creating a Center for

the Study of Violent Extremism at the University of Maiduguri (Obokoh, 2025).

The governments of the United Kingdom, United States, and France pledged to support Nigeria in fighting terrorism through military, intelligence, and development aid (Gov.UK, 2016; Corbet, 2015; Ojeme, 2021). The U.S. launched a $40 million Global Security Contingency Fund for Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria to tackle BH (USA.gov, 2014). On May 5, 2021, the G7 committed £276 million to help victims of BH (Ojeme, 2021). President Buhari described the dismissal of the service chiefs as a strategic military shake-up (S.9), likely influenced by his upcoming visit to the U.S., where President Barack Obama wanted clarity on the NA's effectiveness against terrorism, especially given the large amounts of foreign aid that had yet to produce major results (Ujah, 2015). The move also reflected growing public calls for change, as the army chiefs had served for over five years during a period of worsening insecurity (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2021).

Speaking on efforts to weaken the group (S.9), Lai Mohammed, former Minister of Communication and Culture under President Buhari, claimed that at the height of violence from 2014 to 2015, insurgents held 20 of Borno State's 27 LGAs. By late 2015, however, the military had reclaimed most of these areas after a strong offensive (Nwachukwu, 2025). His comments sparked major backlash, with critics calling them a gaffe, politically driven, and dangerously misleading (Aribisala, 2015). Many demanded his removal, branding him "an instrument of cheap propaganda and disinformation" and nicknaming him "Liar Mohammed" (Ijikanmi, 2019).
Regarding IEDs, in the past five years, over 7,200 civilians have been killed or injured by explosives planted by terrorists. The insurgents also deploy Person-Borne IEDs (PBIEDs) carried by women and children, which are especially hard to detect (Action on Armed Violence, 2017), as well as booby traps designed to hide explosives and lure victims (Matazu, 2024), carrying out suicide attacks to hinder military progress, fracture community unity, and spread fear (Eurafrica, 2024).

The President voiced concern about the sect's indoctrination of young girls to carry out attacks on churches, mosques, markets, and motor parks (S.9). Experts note that terrorists often use women and girls as "symbols" of their ideology, mobilizing and weaponizing them as "swords" for attacks (Bloom & Matfess, 2016). Amnesty International (2015) reports that these groups train women and girls to deploy explosives as suicide bombers. Women and girls are part of the sect's suicide squads targeting public institutions, a tactic described as "gendered victimhood" (Nnam, Arua

& Otu, 2018; Markovic, 2019; Campbell, 2020c; Al-Amin, 2017; Tijani, 2015; Okoli & Azom, 2019; Vanguard Media Limited Nigeria, 2015). The President also stated that insurgents can no longer launch "articulated conventional attacks on centres of communication and population in towns" (S.9), except in rare cases.

The discourse is framed to show how the state builds narratives to justify its actions and strengthen its authority. By focusing on government viewpoints, highlighting military wins, and aligning with global counterterrorism agendas, it shapes public opinion while also seeking support at home and abroad. This analysis shows that media portrayals of the conflict are heavily shaped by institutional interests, offering insight into how state power is used and communicated in national security contexts. The data didn't reveal any counter-narratives about how the state's strategic communications respond to extremist claims to fill the gap left by the group's online propaganda.

At the *macro-level*, the language highlights a power struggle between the government and BH over authority and legitimacy, focusing on rehabilitating over 1.5 million IDPs and containing BH. The government uses rhetoric to justify its actions against BH and ensure national security. In the larger political picture, it seeks to counter BH's efforts to divide the nation by promoting public awareness of security issues.

In a similar YouTube video, the past Theatre Commander of Operation Lafiya Dole, Major General Olusegun Adeniyi, revealed that although his men are obeying orders to keep fighting, the Nigerian troops are overwhelmed by the superior firepower of the militants (Punch, 2020). Holding one of the soldiers and shoving him by the chest on his bulletproof vest, he yelled, "This is not the time to cry, look at me" (Punch, 2020). He continued:

> I am standing here with the Sector 2 commander. The armed helicopter has just come over our heads. The instruction I gave them is that they should engage anything moving, because most of my gun trucks are not moving…we are equipped with the leading armrests, and the 3-battalion is deployed and fighting. Nobody is running, but I can provide some estimates to guide your decision, Sir. Boko Haram has fired more than 100 mortar bombs at us. They have fired more than 80 to 100 RPGs at us. In addition to more than 8- to 10-gun trucks from every side

(Punch, 2020).

He acknowledged that while the soldiers "are not misbehaving or disobeying orders," they are facing "casualties" (Punch, 2020). He highlighted the need for a personal visit to discuss next steps, pointing out that nearly 250 Hilux tires had been replaced due to the challenging terrain. On their tactics, he said:

> We are fighting as a system, and we are doing our best to contain the situation and achieve your mission- the soldiers are not retreating. The three battalions are standing and fighting, though we have casualties. The intelligence assessment concerning the Timbuktu triangle is very wrong, Sir. Since yesterday, we have encountered extreme resistance. More than pockets of Boko Haram. This morning, from every flank, not less than 15-gun trucks are facing us. These people have fired more than 100 RPGs at us and have fired several mortars at us. This is the actual situation, Sir (Punch, 2020).

He noted that while the soldiers "are not running away [nor] afraid, things are working against us" (Punch, 2020). In the clip, four wounded soldiers in khaki lie on the ground, while a colleague fans one who has passed out.

Using the *stage one* VVVA analysis template, the video labelled S.10, published by Punch on April 2, 2020, runs for 3 minutes and 26 seconds with high-quality visuals and audio. In *stage two*, the scene is set in a military camp in Banki, Bama LGA of Borno State, featuring Major General Olusegun Adeniyi, then Commander of Operation Lafiya Dole, alongside other officers and soldiers engaged in combat. The footage shows the commander in combat gear, pointing out damaged equipment and signalling growing concern over the situation. It captures him under clear pressure, reflecting a moment of vulnerability for the Nigerian military. He is seen encouraging a soldier by pressing on their bulletproof vest, a gesture of perseverance in tough conditions. Dirty uniforms, broken equipment, and a chaotic battlefield suggest a frontline unit struggling against BH. Speaking in English, the commander blames flawed intelligence and inadequate weaponry for the intense resistance, while close-up and surveillance-style shots underscore the urgency and seriousness of the moment.

Stage three makes it clear that the video's main point is to highlight the operational challenges—especially those tied to logistics and enemy firepower—facing the NA in its fight against BH, pushing back against dominant narratives of

military success and shining a light on serious systemic flaws. The aim is to give an honest picture of battlefield realities and protect troop integrity from accusations of cowardice, stressing that they were outgunned. From an ideological standpoint (van Dijk, 2015), Punch's report takes an anti-establishment, watchdog stance, framing the BH threat because of the military high command's failures. The coverage uses an "Us" versus "them" approach, casting frontline troops as brave victims while calling out the negligence of the military elite. In line with the legitimation framework (van Leeuwen, 2015), the report avoids a legitimation strategy altogether, instead questioning military authority and intelligence by defending the troops' actions rather than celebrating victory.

Using personal authority, facts, and moral framing, the story points to strategic failures at higher levels as the cause of the tactical situation. The video, showing a live ambush, serves as a warning about disconnected military leadership. While it doesn't directly discuss morality, it raises questions about whether truth and soldiers' welfare should outweigh military secrecy and protecting the institution's image. It reveals a moral tension between exposing mistakes to save lives and the duty to keep up strategic morale. From a practical standpoint, the situation suggests the troops were let down by bad tactics and faulty intelligence, not by a lack of courage. This points to the need to fix equipment shortages and wrong pre-deployment details that left them open to insurgent attacks. The video disputes official claims of success, highlighting major intelligence lapses and equipment problems. It is aimed at the Nigerian public, government leaders, the military, and both local and international security experts concerned with national security, troop well-being, and accountability in Nigeria and West Africa.

S.10 was examined through the three-dimensional framework (Fairclough, 1992). On the *micro-level*, the video strongly frames an "us" versus "them" narrative, showing Nigerian troops as outmatched by better-equipped BH insurgents. This comes through in shots of damaged armoured vehicles, stressed soldiers, and the commander holding up battered bulletproof vests. The footage highlights gaps in training and weaponry, with Major General Adeniyi gesturing toward destroyed equipment and commenting on the inadequacy of their arms in real time. A clear divide between frontline soldiers and higher leadership appears in scenes where the commander, surrounded by exhausted troops, addresses his superiors directly to report failures in supplies and intelligence. The video also sparks debate over the

government's use of soft language to downplay serious security issues, like when the commander rejects accusations of cowardice and blames setbacks on operational shortcomings. Grammatically, the then-Commander of Operation Lafiya Dole is the main actor, with the then-COAS, Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai, as the recipient. BH is shown as the aggressor, described as "enemies of the state" and "public enemy number one" (S.10), while Nigerian troops are cast as victims facing superior firepower.

At the *macro level*, this analysis challenges the state's official security narrative, pointing out the gap between the government's claims of military success and the actual experiences of soldiers on the front lines. By revealing these contrasts, it draws attention to the complicated realities surrounding COIN operations in Nigeria, placing the video within wider national and global conversations about transparency, governance, and the ethics of war. Scenes depict troops taking cover behind improvised barriers under heavy fire, their uniforms dirty and faces weary, emphasizing their vulnerability. The footage captures the serious obstacles and lack of equipment confronting frontline soldiers, with images of damaged weapons and troops holding their ground despite continuous attack. The video also uses metaphors and rhetoric to portray BH's actions as destructive, framing "overwhelmed" (S.10) as symbolic of collapse and flipping the Goliath story to present the army as a poorly equipped underdog. Together, these elements offer clear audiovisual evidence to back the analysis.

At the *meso level*, the video from The Punch Newspapers targets the previously identified audiences. By showing soldiers outgunned, pointing out tactical setbacks, and contrasting high morale with poor logistical support, Punch's coverage pushes back against official claims that the terrorists have been defeated. It lays bare operational flaws, intelligence gaps, and shortages in weapons and resources. Beyond meeting journalistic duties, it acts as a watchdog in the public interest, spotlighting the serious challenges, intelligence lapses, and equipment shortages facing the Nigerian government on the front lines. The insurgents are portrayed as "crude," while the military is depicted as "formal" (S.10). The footage underscores how both traditional and social media shape insurgency narratives. In terms of intertextuality, it captures the clash between gritty on-the-ground realities and the global war on terror narrative of military dominance. This shows how local media, even while adopting global counterterrorism rhetoric, can expose deep institutional weaknesses.

From a strategic framing angle, the message runs counter to the state's official narrative, directly pushing back against its "militaristic supremacy" (S.10) stance and exposing the gap between confident victory claims and the harsh realities of asymmetric warfare. The footage brought out four main points in the speech: boosting troop morale, tackling shortages of modern weapons, ensuring adherence to orders, and addressing the sense of helplessness among soldiers caught in crossfire (S.10). Major General Adeniyi's words to a soldier—"This is not the time to cry…" (S.10)—show a deliberate effort to keep spirits high, a vital element in counter-insurgency efforts (Manning, 1991). He also spoke frankly about operational hurdles like poor support and outdated artillery, stressing the urgent need for better military resources. Soldiers complain about using aging Shilka artillery and Soviet-era T-72 tanks (Fabiyi et al., 2019). Protests in Maiduguri back in August 2014 over inadequate arms (Idris et al., 2014) further show the need for swift action. And despite claims of over N3.9 trillion spent in the past decade, officers say this hasn't translated into critical equipment upgrades (Fabiyi et al., 2019). Confronting these issues could improve both combat readiness and soldier welfare. While acknowledging "casualties," the officer maintained that his men "are not misbehaving or disobeying orders" (S.10).

In similar situations, Nigerian soldiers have often been forced to either flee or make compromises. One soldier told Voice of America that "Some of the [Boko Haram] individuals we were fighting were members of the Nigerian military who had trained us – they were our instructors in counterterrorism" (Ahmed & Eckel, 2014). A mutineer revealed that some troops were reluctant to engage militants due to poor equipment, but the Nigerian Army responded by declaring 44 soldiers in Borno wanted and freezing their bank accounts for abandoning the fight against BH and ISWAP fighters (Wright-Ukwu, 2024). Back in May 2014, soldiers even opened fire on an army general's vehicle in protest over a decision that led to the deaths of their comrades at the hands of militants (Ahmed & Eckel, 2014). Phrases like "We are encountering significant resistance" and "they are engaging us from multiple angles" (S.10) highlight the seriousness of the situation. Scenes of soldiers motivating their tired comrades show the dedication needed for effective counter-messaging. To push back against counter-narratives, the Nigerian government responds to viral videos of struggling troops by penalizing dissenting commanders, downplaying the threat, and promoting a message of military strength. Facing public criticism, it often launches military reviews, sends more troops to troubled areas, and focuses on tackling modern threats

like drone warfare.

The *macro level* reveals an ongoing clash of ideas. The footage makes the power imbalance clear, with BH's heavy firepower on display through 15-gun-truck attacks and frequent RPG use. The tone suggests a shift in control, as government troops appear stuck in a defensive, survival-focused mode, highlighting a gap between those on the ground and top leadership. This challenges the state's hold on force and chips away at its legitimacy. The government's inability to properly protect its soldiers weakens its authority and gives insurgents room to present themselves as an alternative power in the area. Politically, the incident (S.10) exposes serious shortcomings in gear and intelligence, directly clashing with official claims that the insurgency had been technically defeated (The Nation, 2015). The commander's later court-martial laid bare deep problems in military procurement and fuelled public distrust in security leaders, leaving Nigerians more vulnerable to terrorist threats.

On May 14, 2013, President Jonathan announced a state of emergency in the insurgency-affected BAY states during a simulcast, delivering a clear warning to the insurgents (Nigerian Television Authority, 2013). Citing Section 305, sub-section 1 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, as amended, he emphasised the importance of the government's counter-messaging strategies in tackling the crisis. He acknowledged that:

> Previously, we adopted a multi-track approach to resolving this problem through actions that included persuasion, dialogue, and widespread consultation with political, religious, and community leaders in the affected states. We exercised restraint to allow for all efforts by both State Governors and well-meaning Nigerians to stop the repeated cases of mindless violence (Nigerian Television Authority, 2013).

He stated, "While we will continue our efforts at persuasion and dialogue, we must uphold the security and well-being of our citizens and the integrity of our nation" (Nigerian Television Authority, 2013). He emphasized that the decision is meant to restore public order and safety in the affected state, condemning insurgents and terrorists for trying to block the government from carrying out its constitutional responsibilities while pushing a dangerous agenda of violence, division, and separatism. Jonathan said their actions have spread fear and nearly brought law and order to collapse in some areas. The President pointed out that they pose a major

threat to national unity and integrity, having taken over parts of northern Borno state, showing allegiance to different flags and ideologies. According to him, they aim to dominate and weaken the nation by destroying state symbols and replacing them with flags that imply alternative sovereignty (Nigerian Television Authority, 2013). He asserted that his administration would take all necessary actions to protect lives and property, insisting that:

> We must stand firm against those who threaten the sovereign integrity of the Nigerian state. Our will is strong, because our faith lies in the indivisibility of Nigeria…We have taken robust steps to unravel and address the root causes of these crises (Nigerian Television Authority, 2013).

It seems there is a coordinated push by insurgents and terrorists to destabilize Nigeria and challenge our unity. Jonathan called on security agencies to tackle this head-on, urging actions like arresting suspects, securing locations used by terrorists, enforcing lockdowns, carrying out searches, and confiscating illegal weapons (Nigerian Television Authority, 2013).

In VVVA's *stage one*, the video labelled S.18, aired on 15 May 2013 by the Nigerian Television Authority, runs for 10 minutes and 4 seconds as a simulcast. Packed with rich visuals and audio, it stands out as an important piece for national discourse. *Stage two* takes place at The State House in Abuja, Nigeria, the traditional venue for presidential broadcasts and addresses. The focus is on President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR, seated in a high-backed black executive chair, wearing his signature black fedora and finely tailored traditional Niger Delta attire – a proud nod to his South-South roots. Behind him, the green-white-green national flag with the Nigerian Coat of Arms hangs on the wall, while to the right sits the standard emblem used for all televised national broadcasts. The President's visual cues, clothing choices, and body language work together to highlight his political identity and convey authority. His calm demeanour shows a steady, understated composure meant to signal stability in times of crisis. Keeping close eye contact with his notes or teleprompter reflects a preference for formal protocol over spontaneous flair. The speech is delivered in English, with the broadcast using a close-up shot from the waist up as he speaks directly and calmly into the camera, reading from a prepared script.

In *stage three*, the speech aimed to restore public order, safety, and national security in northeastern Nigeria by declaring a State of Emergency, responding to open

rebellion and escalating terrorist violence by BH. It announced emergency rule across the BAY states, directing the Chief of Defence Staff to deploy more troops, reclaim territories from terrorists, protect political institutions, and safeguard territorial integrity. Using the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), the government is framed as "us"—a patient and responsible protector—while insurgents are "them," depicted as faceless, irrational terrorists defiling national symbols. This contrast legitimizes military action and presents the emergency as vital for unity. The discourse downplays state flaws and minimizes terrorist gains. Drawing on legitimation strategies (van Leeuwen, 2015), it uses constitutional authority, rationalizes the need for order, morally judges adversaries, and warns of collapse through mythopoesis. Military intervention is justified as institutional duty, portraying the insurgency as evil, necessity of force as logical, and the threat as existential. The address reinforces leadership authority, casts insurgents as malevolent, validates force to secure the nation, and highlights state achievements, with the primary audience being all Nigerian citizens, including local leaders (S.18).

Using three-dimensional model (Fairclough, 1992) to examine S.18, at the *micro level*, the speech employs sharp rhetoric and a clear "us versus them" framing to justify military action against BH. It shifts from portraying them as criminals to crafting an ideological narrative of national war, asserting executive authority and absolute state power. Euphemisms strip the group of political, ideological, and religious legitimacy, recasting them from a self-proclaimed Jihadi sect to a localized criminal gang. By calling them "insurgents," "terrorists," "militants," and "criminals" (S.18) instead of their chosen Arabic name, the address makes a deliberate rhetorical move. Grammatically, the president and Nigerian state are cast as victims, with BH as the aggressor. Metaphors heighten the image of BH as the enemy and the government as heroic. Jonathan points out that they replace the Nigerian flag with "strange flags," avoiding the term "shahada flag" to downplay religious meaning for Islamic extremists. Their territorial takeovers are labelled "a grave threat to national unity," framing their actions as illegal, treasonous attacks by terrorists seeking to "threaten the sovereign integrity of the Nigerian state" (S.18).

At the *meso level*, the message was delivered through the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), and private print and digital outlets, reaching the intended audiences. The address marks a major institutional reaction to escalating BH violence, which the president describes as a

direct “declaration of war” (S.18) on Nigeria’s territorial integrity. Issued under the executive branch, it invokes constitutional provisions (Section 305 of the 1999 Constitution) to turn political panic into decisive legal measures. The mandatory live broadcast creates a top-down flow of communication, deliberately limiting immediate public questioning and requiring audiences to take in the message passively. This framing forces people to side either with the state or with terrorism, fostering public support while potentially silencing critics of the increased military role in domestic matters. Insurgents are painted as crude, while the state is portrayed as formal. BH turns to social media to spread fear, while the government uses traditional media to steer the narrative and shape how audiences interpret events. The speech draws heavily on institutional and historical references, blending constitutional and legal language with mentions of “state officials,” “sovereignty,” and “territorial integrity” (S.18) to rationalize the temporary curtailment of certain civil liberties.

The *macro-level* discourse indicates executive control, highlighted by talk of military and security crackdowns on the outlawed group, accused of causing “breakdown of law and murder,” “mayhem,” “mass murder,” “division,” and “separatism” (S.18). The government’s language mirrors global war on terror themes and condemns how BH videos misuse religious texts. The way the speech is framed reflects the state’s goal to meet specific institutional aims. The president’s address openly states Nigeria’s readiness to tackle an insurgency threatening its borders. It also emphasized the government’s multi-pronged approach, reasons for declaring a state of emergency in the northeast, the importance of national unity, the challenges of fighting insurgents, and the urgent need to stop terrorist efforts to destabilize the country (S.18).

The adoption of a “multi-track approach… including persuasion, dialogue, and broad consultation with political, religious, and community leaders in the affected states” (S.18) showcases the government’s strategic communication in tackling insurgency. It acknowledges that force alone can’t persuade insurgents or resolve deep-rooted ideological divides. The president embraced a public diplomacy model (Rafanelli, 2023) to address the challenge. Since insurgents operate at the grassroots, involving religious and community leaders is key to spotting early warning signs and preventing violence (Miller & Barnes, 2024). The focus on “persuasion and dialogue” (S.18) signals a real commitment to humanitarian peacebuilding. The statement, “We exercised restraint to allow for all efforts by both State Governors and well-meaning

Nigerians" (S.18), reflects a shift from a purely military-driven approach. Non-kinetic warfare relies on influencing opponents through indirect, non-violent means (Satish, 2024).

Jonathan cited several reasons for declaring a state of emergency in the BAY states: insurgents trying to divide the nation and block the government from meeting its constitutional duties; pushing their extremist goals; spreading fear among people; causing widespread chaos and breakdown of law and order; and attacking symbols of national authority like the Nigerian flag (S.18). Militants often set up alternative governance through guerrilla tactics, reshaping politics and seeking legitimacy by gaining control or loyalty from communities in contested areas (Abbah, 2024; Rupesinghe & Naghizadeh, 2021; Battle Zone, 2024; Military Saga, 2024).

The insurgents seek to undermine legitimate governance, divide communities, and exploit resources, pushing for a Salafi-Islamist state ruled by strict Sharia Law (National Counterterrorism Centre, 2022). Using violence to instil fear, disrupt order, and sway political and social dynamics, they go beyond causing mass casualties to drive political change through fear and intimidation (Bakker & De Roy Van Zuijdewijn, 2022). Generally, non-state actors: (a) pursue political, economic, religious, or social goals; (b) aim to intimidate or pressure audiences beyond direct victims; and (c) commit acts that breach International Humanitarian Law (Bakker & De Roy Van Zuijdewijn, 2022). BH often revel in destroying national symbols—burning the Nigerian flag, libraries, schools, and government buildings (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2016). They display black-and-white flags in places like Marte, Mubi, Pulka, Madagali, and Shiroro (Bashir & Omirin, 2021; Yahaya & Akhaine, 2021; Useni, 2014; Vanguard Media Limited Nigeria, 2014). This may explain why the army presented a captured BH flag to President Buhari (Oluwagbemi, 2016a), as shown in Figure 7.3.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 7. 3 Buhari receives captured BH Flag from the COAS, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai (Channels TV.com, 2016: https://shorturl.fm/TLO8D)

Article 2(4) of the UN Charter lays down the principles of territorial integrity and political independence, stating that all members must avoid threats or use of force against any state's sovereignty (Rozakis, 1987). Reflecting this, former Police Service Commission Chairman Solomon Arase cautioned against undermining "the sovereign integrity of the Nigerian State," stressing that "our will must be strong because our faith lies in the indivisibility of Nigeria" (Omokhunu, 2023). This idea is rooted in Section 2(1) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), which declares Nigeria "one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign State" known as the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter reinforces this by urging all states to respect each other's territorial integrity (Edokwe, 2021). The framework supports Nigeria's unity and identity as "one nation" (Okeke, 2024). Still, some argue this unity is not matched by equal rights and self-determination, pointing to the marginalization of groups like the Igbos and Middle Belt peoples (Vanguard Media Limited Nigeria, 2024; Sahara Reporters, 2017; Madukwe, 2018).

The government's ongoing battle with insurgency (S.18) is fuelled by a mix of deep-rooted issues. Key factors include the inability to cut off funding, illegal arms deals, poverty, recruitment networks, poor equipment, corruption, tough terrain, and the group's wide-reaching influence (Khalid, 2021). On top of that, COIN efforts face hurdles like unemployment, religious extremism, weak governance, and complex international politics (Adil, 2025; Sahara Reporters, 2025; Okeke-Uzodike & Onapajo, 2015). Tackling these problems head-on is essential to weakening the group's grip and countering its propaganda (Atta, 2024).

President Jonathan described the insurgents' campaign as a deliberate attempt to destabilize Nigeria, stressing the need for a united national response. In 2015, President Buhari echoed this view, vowing to rally the nation's collective will to defeat BH, declaring, "We shall spare no effort until we defeat terrorism." Likewise, in August 2014, then-Minister of Defence Gen. Aliyu Gusau urged national unity, stating, "Our country is under siege. This is our war, and we can only achieve victory through a united front." He also pointed out that military action alone cannot secure lasting peace, emphasizing the role of non-kinetic strategies in counter-messaging.

President Jonathan's speech described the growing violence and takeover of villages as a "declaration of war" (S.18) against the state. He called for swift troop deployment, broad security measures, protection of democratic institutions, restoration of national security, and upholding constitutional freedoms. The plan

mixed a firm “stick” approach to crush the uprising with a softer “carrot” approach to pave the way for potential amnesty and reconciliation. By framing the attackers in non-religious terms, the government aimed to block BH from gaining wider Muslim support. Phrases like “security challenge” and “criminal elements” (S.18) were used to rally Nigerians of all faiths against a common domestic enemy. The speech also cast the insurgency as a “rebellion” demanding “extraordinary measures” (S.18), strengthening the state’s position to counter the group’s online propaganda.

The *macro level* indicates the address framed the conflict as a battle of ideas between protecting state sovereignty and fighting violent anti-state extremism, using this to justify declaring emergency rule to counter BH. It portrayed military action as a way to uphold democratic values and keep the nation united, while also stressing the importance of constitutional authority and democratic unity. The speech also highlighted the push-and-pull between centralized security measures and regional demands for dialogue, all against the backdrop of the political climate before the 2015 elections.

7.1.3 Blend of Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Approaches (BKNKA)

In a long YouTube video, Major General Edward Buba, Director of Defence Media Operations, asserted that terrorists will be defeated if they are denied financial support and public sympathy from Nigerians (A Square TV, 2024). He highlighted the successes of the armed forces and called on citizens to actively contribute by providing credible and timely information. He presented a non-kinetic and kinetic approach to the insurgency, saying:

> Winning the war without the support of the people is close to impossible. The military cannot do it alone; we need citizens to partake in fishing out the terrorist collaborators. Nevertheless, we have boots on the ground across the various theatres of operation (A Square TV, 2024).

The official stated that current measures are in place across five active areas: Northeast, Northwest, North Central, South-South, and Southeast. He noted that the toughest challenges are in the Northeast and Northwest, where rough terrain, insurgents blending into civilian populations, informants aiding terrorist groups, and steady supplies of essentials like food and fuel make the fight more complicated (A Square TV, 2024). He admitted it is hard to engage terrorists who use women and

depend on civilian backing but remained confident in their determination to track down these collaborators (A Square TV, 2024). The Officer also underscored the need to address the cyber dimension of the conflict that extends beyond traditional battlefields, saying:

> You encounter a lot of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation…they are carefully orchestrated to achieve specific purposes and effects. The common denominator in all our operations across these theatres is the terrorists. The terrorists are the common enemy that we all must fight. The terrorists are responsible for keeping the nation in a state of almost constant counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations, which we have in the country. Citizens cannot leave safely as long as terrorists exist. The terrorists must be crushed for citizens to have peace and live in safety (A Square TV, 2024).

Buba gave a detailed update on the NA's recent successes in COIN and anti-crime operations. *In stage one*, based on VVVA's review, A Square TV released the 12-minute video tagged S.20 on 11 July 2024, with both visuals and audio clear. *Stage two* shows the setting at the DHQ in Abuja, featuring Major General Buba, Director of Defence Media Operations. He stands behind a microphone with the Nigerian Defence Headquarters insignia as the backdrop, symbolizing the military's resolve to protect the nation. His stern yet calm expression underscores the gravity of security issues and the importance of public cooperation in identifying terrorist sponsors and informants. Speaking in English, he warns that terrorists and their collaborators are plotting attacks on critical infrastructure. Filmed in a medium close-up, the shot heightens the impact and seriousness of his message.

Stage three focuses on uncovering the terror group's plans to target critical infrastructure and calls on citizens to help identify its financial backers. He stressed military preparedness, noted key successes, and encouraged greater civic cooperation to cut off funding for terrorists. The ideological framework (van Dijk, 2015) reflects an institutional mindset built on a clear "us" versus "them" divide. By stressing military defence against terrorist threats and tying terrorism to illegal economic activities, the narrative reinforces state authority while portraying opponents as criminal saboteurs. The legitimation of strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015) frames the Nigerian military's heightened efforts to disrupt terrorist funding as justified.

The speech delivers a firm message, urging public cooperation as key to counter-insurgency efforts. It condemns funding terrorism and leaking troop movements as acts of treason and moral failure, calling out internal collaborators for undermining national stability. These actions, linked to economic crimes like oil theft, make sponsors responsible for terrorist atrocities. Framing violence as a necessity, it justifies military action to dismantle the mercenary networks sustained by oil theft, ransom kidnappings, and local collaboration, targeting their finances and informants. It dismisses any glorification of criminals, highlights the state's successes against crime, and calls on Nigerians to share intelligence with the armed forces and for communities to stop sheltering combatants.

S.20 was examined through the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992). On the *micro-level*, the text uses sanitizing terms like "neutralized" to frame the economic realities of terror financing as a moral state battle against saboteurs, reinforcing an "Us" versus "Them" narrative. Euphemisms downplay the harsh realities of counter-insurgency and terrorist financing, a common tactic in official discourse to reframe serious security threats as routine administrative tasks. The speaker, a DHQ spokesman, addresses previously noted target audiences, labeling the group as an "enemy of the state" (S.20) and identifying terrorists as armed insurgents, foreign mercenaries, and complicit financial or logistical supporters. He uses strong metaphors and military imagery, such as "financial lifelines" and "bloodstream," to illustrate how illicit funds sustain and equip terror networks—like blood giving life to a body. Terror financing is portrayed as the hidden counterpart to kinetic warfare, or "guerrilla funding" (S.20), operating beyond regulated banking and security oversight. This depiction presents terrorist groups as interconnected webs, where cutting off the financial "head" (S.20) cripples their operations. Using combative, forceful language, he frames the insurgents as an "enemy" to "crush" (S.20) and calls for collective action against terrorism.

At the *meso-level*, the message draws on intelligence from suspect interrogations and surveillance, shared through official briefings and social media platforms like YouTube's A Square TV. The goal is to encourage public vigilance and participation in countering terror networks, spotlighting how local media can raise awareness, strengthen security efforts, challenge insurgent propaganda, deter collaborators, and showcase proactive military moves against illicit financial systems. For the intended audience, it shifts attention from insurgents to the public, aiming to

build trust in security measures while warning against sabotage and ties to criminal groups. Through intertextuality, the speech connects with the global fight against terrorism by framing terror financing via crude oil theft and economic sabotage as direct threats to national security, echoing international anti-terrorism strategies that target financial networks and cut off resources fuelling insurgent activity.

The footage highlights key strategic points, especially the state's institutional view that sees internal collaborators and outside financiers as the main drivers of terrorism in Nigeria. This understanding has led the military to focus on breaking apart financial and logistical networks. They see these threats as serious risks to national sovereignty and call for a united effort to tackle illicit oil theft and ransom kidnappings that fund insurgents. The material also shows how the State's Stratcom works to counter extremist propaganda online. In his speech, the army official stressed the need for coordinated protection of the nation and economy, adapting to tough terrains, dealing with insurgents hiding among civilians, stopping informants from leaking troop movements, cutting off collaborator support, and addressing widespread misinformation and disinformation.

It underscores the importance of civilian cooperation in a dual-government strategy blending both kinetic and non-kinetic measures. The mention of armed forces operating on land, in the air, and at sea (S.20) points to a broad counter-insurgency effort that relies on civilians to report insurgent activities. Successful COIN combines lethal and non-lethal tactics, using intelligence and information operations while protecting non-combatants (Gjørv, 2014). Buba's description of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation as "well-orchestrated to achieve certain purposes and effects" (S.20) suggests acknowledgment of the group's sophisticated strategic and political messaging. The Jihadi group pushes coordinated narratives to convince followers that waging jihad to form an exclusive IS is divinely sanctioned and a just cause demanding full commitment (Amao, 2020). BH employs two main strategies: offensive, aimed at undermining the Nigerian state's authority, and defensive, using avoidance, protection, and decoys to keep operations running and advance their campaign (Omenma, Onyishi & Okolie, 2020).

Calling the terror group "the common enemy" that keeps the country "in a state of almost constant counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations" (S.20) is a clear push for collective action against terrorism, highlighting the complexity of the conflict. After the deadly attack on a grand mosque in the north that left over 100

people dead, President Jonathan used the same term (Hanna, 2014). The label is intentional, considering the group's assaults on churches, schools, security posts, and government facilities. His vow to wipe out the group so citizens can live peacefully reflects the armed forces' dedication to ending the threat and aligns with the government's core duty to ensure the security and welfare of its people (Hanna, 2014). This stance is backed by reported wins against crime in the South-South and Borno regions through Operation Hadin Kai, and against kidnappers and insurgents via Operation Safe Haven in the north-central area. Still, insurgents continue spreading propaganda about their supposed victories in strongholds, raising doubts about the effectiveness of government communications. The heavily military-focused approach often comes across as political messaging.

At the *macro level,* the address frames terrorism in Nigeria as a network of transactional, decentralized groups backed by both local and foreign collaborators, rather than purely an ideological cause. The military's recognition of a "war economy" (S.20), where financiers and enablers profit by providing logistical support, has led to a zero-tolerance approach and a strategic focus on dismantling these networks. From a power perspective, the military strengthens its legitimacy by actively disrupting financial systems to uphold stability and protect citizens. Politically, the address portrays Nigerian terrorism as a well-funded, hybrid operation fuelled by illicit economies. The overlap between organized crime and terrorism poses a serious threat to national sovereignty, calling for sophisticated tracking technology and stronger global cooperation.

In a broadcast to the nation (Channels TV, 2020b), the Minister of Information and Culture of Nigeria from November 2015 to May 2023, Lai Mohammed, observed that:

> Boko Haram and the ISWAP have recently changed their strategy in the wake of this ceaseless pounding by the military. At its peak, Boko Haram was a fighting force that conquered and kept territories, installing and opposing Emirs, and also collecting taxes. It then had the capability and capacity to take the battle to many states, mainly in the north, as well as the federal capital territory, where it clashed with the police headquarters, the UN complex, shopping complexes, and even motor parks in Abuja (Channels TV, 2020b).

When Muhammadu Buhari became president on 29 May 2015, he ordered the command-and-control centre to move from Abuja to Maiduguri, the heart of the insurgency. This move aimed to tackle BH head-on and was backed by efforts to win support from nearby countries and the global community (Channels TV, 2020b). Reports say these actions had quick results: BH was greatly weakened, all captured areas were taken back, and the group could no longer carry out large-scale attacks. In response, BH changed tactics, targeting softer spots like churches, mosques, and schools (Channels TV, 2020b). The minister noted that BH's attacks never singled out Christians or Muslims, instead hitting places of worship and people at random. These attacks hurt people regardless of religion, gender, ethnicity, or politics, with the main goal being to cause as much harm as possible (Channels TV, 2020b). However, the government's spokesman pointed out that:

> The insurgents have changed their strategy; they have started targeting Christians and Christian villages for a specific reason, which is to trigger a religious war and throw the nation into chaos. They have realised how emotive and divisive religion can be when exploited by unscrupulous persons- the insurgents who delude themselves as Muslims. In contrast, they are nothing more than bloodthirsty, rapacious killers who subscribe to no religion, have recently started targeting Christians to sow the seed of confusion and discord between the two good religions. This is not to say that they have stopped attacking Muslims, but they seem to have now a deliberate policy of attacking Christians (Channels TV, 2020b).

He denounced the attack on a Christian village near Chibok, the assassination of Lawan Andimi, the killing of Christian student Ropvil Daciya, and the murder of 11 Christians on Christmas Eve (Channels TV, 2020b). He stressed the need for communities to work together to improve security and understanding. He pointed out that claims of a deliberate campaign against Christians in Nigeria have been misunderstood and weaken the shared efforts of Christians and Muslims against insurgent threats (Channels TV, 2020b). Lai explained that insurgents, running out of options, turn to desperate measures, including targeting certain religious groups to attract media attention. He called on religious leaders to stay alert to these divisive tactics and to encourage unity, highlighting that strong collective determination is key

to tackling these challenges (Channels TV, 2020b).

He called for "unalloyed support for the military, which has also intensified efforts against the insurgents" (Channels TV, 2020b). He revealed that the insurgents have turned to guerrilla tactics (S.28), describing this as "a sign of weakness on their part." Mohammed emphasized that "the insurgents are getting weaker by the day. Often, they are hungry and resort to looting food stores and stalls. Thanks to the bravery of our men and women in uniform, the renewed vigour of the military in their fight against insurgents is yielding great results" (Channels TV, 2020b). He stated that the army had eliminated top ISWAP leaders in Marte LGA, driven terrorists from Alafa Yagayaga, and killed the group's Chief Judge in LCB. Lai also pointed out that the military is running development programmes in the northeast to win local support, stressing the importance of both military and community involvement (Channels TV, 2020b). He noted the military's role in non-kinetic efforts, such as building and repairing infrastructure, supplying clean water, detecting IEDs, addressing teacher shortages, offering medical outreach, and working with civilians to restore peace and trust in communities. Addressing religious leaders, stakeholders, and all Nigerians, he urged everyone not to be swayed by the antics of BH and ISWAP, who are:

> Trying to divide us along religious lines by targeting Christians for attacks. This is the last desperate move by a decimated and disillusioned band of killers and psychopaths to stay relevant amid constant decimation by our gallant troops. We have what it takes to come together and fight this divisive and satanic strategy. We appeal to Nigerians to support the military as it moves to decapitate the insurgents (Channels TV, 2020b).

According to VVVA's *stage one*, the video labelled S.28, aired by Channels TV on 28 February 2020, is a clear 10-minute-27-second simulcast in both video and audio. *Stage two* places the scene in Abuja, featuring Nigeria's Minister of Information and Culture at a press briefing. Mohammed is dressed in traditional polished Nigerian attire, a high-collared *Baban riga* with a matching cap, symbolizing official state representation rather than aggression. His outfit carries no militant or violent symbols. The visuals focus on a ministerial desk, microphones, and the Nigerian government insignia. His demeanour is serious, with a stern expression reflecting the national security theme, using measured gestures — steady hands on the podium, turning pages of his printed brief, and occasionally lifting a hand to highlight military progress.

He maintains eye contact with the camera, addressing journalists in slow, deliberate English to avoid ambiguity. The footage employs standard journalistic methods, including multi-camera close-ups, lapel microphones, and directional lighting.

Stage three focuses on the main goal, bringing out key themes like inciting a religious war, rejecting ideological ties, a shift in the government's stance that terrorists are deliberately attacking Christians and Christian villages, and a push for unity. Using the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), the speech comes across as a calculated move by the Nigerian government to depict BH as extremists trying to stir up a religious war, undermining their credibility and promoting national unity. It reflects a narrative change from denying the targeting of Christians to blaming the insurgents for creating deliberate, localized chaos to spark wider conflict. The speech also carries self-praise, noting the militants have faced "ceaseless pounding by the military" and are "decimated" (S.28). To downplay mistakes, he repeats that while the insurgents are "desperate," they can't "hold any territory or carry out any spectacular attacks" (S.28), discrediting BH's cause. Using legitimation strategies (van Leeuwen, 2015), the government frames BH's targeting of Christians as a desperate "satanic strategy" (S.28) rather than pure religious motivation. By portraying these actions as signs of weakness, the government seeks to unite the nation against a common threat.

The minister used civil authority to declare that terrorists stir up chaos to divide the nation, describing their actions as a "satanic strategy" (S.28) meant to spark a religious war alongside the atrocities committed by BH. The speech suggested that, after failing to achieve their goals through warfare, the insurgents have turned to identity-based violence to fracture the country. It pointed out that both BH and ISWAP intentionally target Christians to incite religious conflict and hide their losses. Addressing the logic of violence and security, the minister noted that BH uses tales of glorification, martyrdom, and victories not from true religious belief, but to attract global attention, fuel sectarian divides, and exploit these narratives. Still, the government's spokesman insisted, "we are winning the war," urging, "please do not fall for the antics of Boko Haram and ISWAP" (S.28). Directed at both citizens and international observers worried about rising violence, the speech aimed to reassure and maintain unity.

S.28 was also examined using the three-dimensional analysis tool (Fairclough, 1992). On the micro-level, the repeated use of "we" and "insurgents" plays into an "us versus them" narrative, separating the terrorists from the armed forces and broader

society. By calling them "insurgents," the government avoids using their Arabic name, which holds significance for the sect. While the government claimed that both BH and ISWAP are targeting Christians to spark a religious war, critics, including the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), saw this as a euphemistic attempt to mask ongoing security failures. The speaker, the Minister of Information, addresses the earlier-identified audience, casting BH as the perpetrators and civilians (Christians), security forces, and the government as victims. His speech uses metaphors to demonize BH as enemies of the state, describes a "shift in strategy" to depict them as adaptable, and frames the attacks as a "trigger" (S.28) meant to destabilize the nation. He uses urgent rhetoric to present the situation as a "national challenge" (S.28) intended to sow chaos, while urging national unity against the insurgents' divide-and-rule tactics.

At the *meso-level*, the speech is shared widely through major media and social media platforms like Channels TV to rally support against insurgents' attempts to spark a religious war. From an intertextual perspective, the government's message aligns with the broader global fight against terrorism rather than an internal religious dispute, portraying the insurgents as a weakened, desperate group. The strategic framing highlights clear goals – depicting their actions as a "divisive" and "satanic strategy" (S.28) aimed at provoking conflict and chaos. The minister described these acts as cowardly moves by a decimated group, urging national unity to reject their narrative.

He highlighted issues such as the terrorists' territorial expansion, the appointment and removal of emirs, tax collection, destruction of public infrastructure, indiscriminate violence against civilians, targeted attacks on Christians aimed at stirring community tensions, efforts to gain media attention, calls for collective action, and the use of both hard tactics like military force and soft tactics like intelligence gathering and mass mobilization (S.28). In the past, BH extended its control over large areas in the North-East. Buratai revealed that before 2015, the group occupied about 120,000 square kilometres (Tauna, 2025), installing and removing emirs, levying taxes, and damaging public infrastructure—burning the Emir's palace in Bama (BBC, 2014c) and killing the Emir of Gwoza in 2014 (Marama & Mosadomi, 2014). Their governance included patrolling villages and enforcing corporal punishment (Ogundipe, 2018; Sahara Reporter, 2025). Attacks on infrastructure, including UN buildings and shopping centres, caused damages exceeding $1 billion in 2015 (Tayimlong, 2021; Jooji, 2020; Ibukun & Olukayode, 2015).

Early on, terrorists carried out indiscriminate killings, targeting both Muslims

and Christians (Torres, 2017). Over time, there's been a clear shift toward Christians being more frequently targeted, though many victims are still Muslims due to the region's demographics. BH has also executed Muslims accused of apostasy. As the group pulled back, church attacks dropped while assaults on mosques went up (McCaslin, 2019). Despite government reassurances, violence against Christians—especially in the Middle Belt—remains intense. Open Doors International (2025) reported 3,100 Christians killed and 2,830 kidnapped in Nigeria, with more than 16,000 murdered in four years (Tyrrell, 2020; Walker, 2017; Kumar, 2024). The deliberate targeting of Christians is well-documented (McCaslin, 2019). The government's portrayal of insurgents as trying to spark interfaith conflict appears to be political rhetoric unsupported by the data.

The insurgents focus heavily on controlling media and information, earning the label "digital terrorists" (Matusitz & Wesley, 2024, p. 23; Abubakar, 2017). The minister's call for broad cooperation highlights the importance of non-kinetic responses. Community leaders and organizations have stepped up to help curb violence (Lemmi & Simoncelli, 2025; Muhammad & Salleh, 2024; Zagga, Monday, & Doma, 2017). The address promotes a mix of lethal and non-lethal measures, showing the government's push to blend kinetic and non-kinetic tactics in counter-messaging (Adesote & Akande, 2023; Omenma, Onyishi & Okolie, 2020; Abdulrahman, Efebeh & Clark, 2024). Mohammed emphasized that "this war would be won not only by kinetic means but also by the soft approach" (S.28), underscoring the state's use of Stratcom to challenge extremist propaganda.

At the *macro level*, the speech's language reveals an ongoing struggle for power and legitimacy between the state and BH. The government portrays BH and ISWAP as deliberately targeting Christians to spark religious conflict, while critics argue these actions reflect a deeper, systematic threat rather than isolated incidents, underscoring a major divide over the state's security approach (Channels TV, 2023). The government's words aim to bolster its authority and legitimize military action to safeguard territorial integrity. Politically, the speech marks a shift in narrative, pointing to rising ethnic-religious tensions and greater scrutiny of Nigeria's security and human rights record at home and abroad.

7.1.4 Kinetic Approaches (KA)

In another national broadcast to mark Democracy Day 2020, President Buhari devoted a segment of his speech to security (Channels TV, 2020a). He claimed that "all

the Local Governments that were taken over by the BH insurgents in the BAY states have long been recovered and are now occupied by indigenes of these areas who were hitherto forced to seek a living in areas far from their ancestral homes" (Channels TV, 2020a). President Buhari emphasised that COIN:

> Is being accorded appropriate priorities, and the men and women of the Armed Forces of Nigeria have considerably downgraded such threats across all geopolitical zones. All the Local Governments that were taken over by the Boko Haram insurgents in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa have long been recovered and are now occupied by indigenes of these areas who were hitherto forced to seek a living in areas far from their ancestral homes (Channels TV, 2020a).

The government's approach to tackling insecurity shows a strong dedication to protecting key infrastructure, securing the nation's waters, and wiping out piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Core strategies focus on defeating insurgency, reclaiming lands for displaced people, and protecting vital economic resources. Using VVVA's stage-one analysis method, the S.4 video from Channels TV is a 38-minute, 6-second broadcast of President Buhari's Democracy Day speech from his office in Aso Villa, Abuja. The setting features the national flag, coat of arms, and APC party flag, highlighting themes of sovereignty and national pride. Buhari wears a traditional *Baban riga* and hat, reflecting his heritage and civilian role as commander-in-chief. Professional close-ups and his steady posture drive home the seriousness of his message for Nigeria's democratic growth.

Stage two highlights honouring Nigeria's democratic heroes as a key part of the government's security and economic plans. The speech reinforces the administration's dedication to protecting territorial integrity, counterinsurgency, and upholding liberal democracy. Using the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), it paints the administration as populist, nationalist, and legitimate through positive self-portrayal and criticism of opponents. Inclusive language and statistics help build consensus and strengthen authority. Instead of focusing on setbacks, it stresses resilience, plays down mistakes, and minimizes insurgent gains, with the claim that all BAY state territories are now recovered serving as an example (The Leader Nigeria, 2020). Through legitimation strategies—authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis (van Leeuwen, 2015)—the government defends its military actions by pointing to historical

events, pandemic policies, and economic data. Calling terrorism "criminality" (S.4) sends a message of moral disapproval and fits the state's victory narrative. The audience is all Nigerians, with messages aimed at promoting unity during the pandemic, responsible media, and investor trust.

At the *micro-level*, the speech uses an "us versus them" mindset, softened language, and bureaucratic spin to distance the administration from direct responsibility for ongoing crises. By framing systemic problems as technical issues and downplaying their seriousness, the government shapes public opinion and defends strong action against militants. The president is cast as the main actor, insurgents as criminals, and citizens as victims, reinforcing the legitimacy of state intervention. Metaphors and historical references tie into themes of survival, stability, and self-praise, while crisis-management rhetoric turns challenges into opportunities for resilience and recovery.

The *meso-level* shows the speech spread through national media, indicating how coverage helps shape policy narratives at home and abroad. Delivered during the pandemic and a time of heightened insecurity, it pledges to reclaim territory but avoids seeking public input on increased risks. References to global counterterrorism discourse frame BH as a universal danger, justifying international backing and military action. Overall, the address is a calculated piece of political messaging aimed at legitimizing government actions, fostering unity, and portraying the administration as resilient and proactive in tackling insecurity. It draws on established frames like crisis management and nation-building, underscoring security, public health, and economic strength. Buhari's speeches link protecting Nigeria's unity with honouring national heroes, promoting COVID-19 resilience, and driving economic diversification, all framed to back institutional goals, especially countering BH.

The *macro level* indicates that the Democracy Day speech was framed around the "Change mantra" as an ongoing battle of ideas against entrenched interests, spotlighting anti-corruption, national security, media regulation, and reclaiming the legacy of the June 12, 1993, election—a unifying symbol of democracy. It defends decisive action to safeguard sovereignty and highlights moves to bridge ethnic divides, such as honouring M.K.O. Abiola posthumously and the eventual transfer of power to the South with President Bola Tinubu's election. Overall, it works to strengthen government legitimacy and national unity amid ongoing political and security challenges.

In a France 24 English interview, former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, visiting Geneva as a special guest, discussed tackling extremist groups, Nigeria's economic struggles, and the importance of institutionalizing democracy. He noted progress since Buhari's 2015 election but declined to comment on his former security adviser, Sambo Dasuki, who faces trial over alleged fraud tied to misused arms procurement funds. According to Jonathan:

> For us to have conducted elections across the country, encompassing all parts of the country, means that we have made significant progress in the war against Boko Haram. Otherwise, we could not have been in a position to conduct elections across the country. We could not have fought Boko Haram with bare hands, but these issues of corruption and misuse of funds have been investigated before the court, and I would not want to compromise our laws (France 24, 2016).

He explained that as President, he ensured the independence of the Judiciary and maximum separation of powers between all arms of government. He insisted that he does not want to "say things that will be detrimental to the judicial processes outside of the case itself" (France 24, 2016). On the progress made in the battle against the group, Jonathan, who served Nigeria as a Vice President for 3 years and President for 5 years from 2010 to 2015, said:

> I have done my best, and I encourage the government to continue doing so. When Boko Haram started in Nigeria, we had no terror experience. We had never experienced terror before…. We had armed robbery and other common crimes, but terrorists are not afraid to die. So, you need a different mechanism to confront terrorists. You need superior technology to stop them even before they attack. We never had the equipment, but when we were confronted, we began acquiring it before I left our office. We have built a reasonable capacity, and I believe that, with what we have left behind and, of course, with what the new government will also acquire, they will be able to prosecute this terror war to a reasonable conclusion (France 24, 2016).

He asserted that he established the foundation for the progress seen since Buhari took office, confident that his administration's efforts against terrorism paved

the way for current successes. Jonathan noted that democracy in Nigeria is evolving. He declared that full institutionalisation and stability are imminent, stating that the West African nation is on the verge of achieving lasting stability.

Using the *first stage* of the VVVA template, the footage titled S.26, published by France 24 on January 27, 2016, runs 11 minutes and 25 seconds with clear audio and visuals. The *second stage* places the scene in Geneva, Switzerland, where President Jonathan is interviewed. He's dressed in a black South-South Etibo and fedora, with a gold chain-link clasp, signalling regional rather than national ties. The visuals highlight military capacity-building and equipment procurement instead of the disruption caused by BH. Jonathan's move from vulnerability to a defensive posture is emphasized as he works to defend his administration's legacy. Steady eye contact and purposeful gestures underscore the complexity of the BH threat and his readiness to address the Chibok kidnapping. The English dialogue aims at a global audience, with polished broadcast features—multi-camera shots, close-ups, and B-roll military footage—adding to the serious tone.

Stage three marks a move from local to regional security strategies, focusing on multinational summits and modernization in response to the BH crisis. The interview underscores the pressure of the Chibok schoolgirl crisis during the power transition. Jonathan crafts a defensive, self-validating narrative that highlights his administration's role in laying the groundwork for counter-insurgency efforts while downplaying perceptions of security failures. This underlines the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015. He defends his actions by referencing military advice, procurement decisions, and the foundation set for later progress. This underlines legitimation strategies - authorization, rationalization, and mythopoesis (van Leeuwen, 2015). He admits to challenges such as technological gaps and international infiltration but frames his tenure as crucial for building military capacity. Critics contend these claims mask procurement scandals and major territorial losses. The interview targets policymakers, researchers, and counter-insurgency specialists.

At the *micro* level, there is a clear "in-group" versus "out-group" divide, with Jonathan presenting his time in office as groundbreaking despite criticism. The former president, whose administration dealt with the Chibok kidnapping and procurement scandals, is the central figure. BH is named as the main culprit, while Nigerian citizens, the government, and the military—initially unready for asymmetric warfare—are cast as victims. Jonathan leans on defensive metaphors like laying the "groundwork"

against terrorism and frames setbacks as lasting marks on his legacy.

The meso level reveals that the France 24 interview is aimed at a global audience focused on West African security. Jonathan's goal is to protect his legacy and respond to corruption allegations, using the platform to reframe how his government handled the insurgency for both regional and international viewers. Key CDA points include the success of anti-insurgency efforts, his avoidance of discussing ongoing corruption cases, the continuation of his policies under Buhari, and the push for advanced military technology. The insurgency also put the 2015 elections at risk, leading to a six-week delay over security issues—implying progress before the vote and an emphasis on kinetic tactics.

Jonathan consistently expressed his commitment to counterterrorism, a stance backed by several cabinet members (Bello, 2015). While studies indicate his administration didn't achieve a decisive win over terrorist groups, he's often credited with preserving national unity and averting a potential crisis (Okeke, 2017). Okeke (2017) also notes that ethnic dynamics constrained Jonathan's use of force, as a Christian president taking harsh measures in the predominantly Islamic north risked fuelling unrest. Politics, religion, and ethnicity still sharply divide Nigeria. Despite having little experience in counterinsurgency, the government confronted militants in an asymmetric conflict that demanded strategic patience (Bello, 2015). There remains a call for operational reforms and the use of advanced tools like drones, night-vision gear, and MRAP vehicles to boost intelligence-driven security efforts (Kalu, Omokhunu, & Bologi, 2025; Fabiyi et al., 2019).

Amid ongoing legal disputes over missing defence funds, Jonathan claimed his administration had provided much of the equipment now used by the Buhari government, insisting these resources were enough to address the conflict. However, officials like Lai Mohammed questioned the quality of these procurements (Gaffey, 2016; Nwabufo, 2016; Ipaye, 2016). Jonathan countered by highlighting the deployment of major military assets during his tenure (Alechenu et al., 2016; The Capital News, 2016). Nigeria's COIN narrative mirrors Western war-on-terror rhetoric, portraying BH as a global threat and stressing technological progress, intelligence, and international cooperation in line with post-9/11 security trends. Jonathan positioned his administration's efforts as laying the groundwork for later military successes, focusing on building institutional intelligence and capacity rather than direct tactical operations.

At the *macro level*, the speech reflects a clash of ideologies. The interview points to a sharp divide over Jonathan's handling of the insurgency, pitting debates about military strength against claims of political inaction. It highlights the gap between official statements of progress and criticisms of how quickly and effectively the crisis was addressed. Defending his record, the former leader stressed efforts to boost counterterrorism capacity and blamed the BH insurgency on complex outside influences. He argued that security operations made the 2015 elections possible and placed the blame for the Chibok abductions squarely on the perpetrators. Framing the insurgency as a layered problem tied to historical neglect, foreign backing, and global extremism, Jonathan called for regional cooperation to tackle cross-border challenges while admitting early weaknesses in military readiness. Critics, however, argue he fell short due to a lack of political will, corruption, and attempts to appease the northern region ahead of his bid for a second term.

Army officials remain hopeful about tackling the challenges hindering development in the Northeast. This was highlighted during the annual West African Social Activities, which marked the 2023 operations of the 28th Task Force Brigade of the NA (Channels TV, 2024). In a video, Brigadier General Bede Amakor, the brigade's Commander in Chibok, spoke about the notable progress achieved in combating terrorists. According to him:

> Operationally, the brigade made tremendous achievements in neutralising the Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorist groups within its area of responsibility. This includes Ali Gana, a notorious and major logistics supplier and second in command of the banned terrorist leadership in the Mandara Mountains. This results in the relative peace and tranquillity we are enjoying in the northern Adamawa and southern Borno states, which has continued to boost socio-economic activities in these areas (Channels TV, 2024).

At the event, Adamawa State Commissioner of Education, Garba Pella, shared that peace is steadily returning to the region. He acknowledged the hardships caused by the displacement of residents and the destruction of infrastructure due to insurgency (Channels TV, 2024). Pella noted that, working with the military and state agencies, his administration has greatly reduced the terrorists' influence and believes total peace will soon be restored to the Northeast (Channels TV, 2024). He commended the COAS for consistently tackling security challenges, highlighting the

Chibok area operation, which targeted the Chibok LGA in Borno State and extended into Madagali and Michika in northern Adamawa (Channels TV, 2024). The ceremony honoured outstanding officers and showcased Nigeria's cultural heritage, giving soldiers and their families a chance to connect and unwind (Channels TV, 2024).

Using VVVA's *stage one* analysis template, the footage titled S.27 was aired by Channels TV on 6 March 2024. The 2-minute, 25-second clip features clear video and audio. *Stage two* shows the setting as the Headquarters of the 28th Task Force Brigade in Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria, with Brigadier General Bede Amakor, the brigade's commander, as the main figure. Visual elements include the NA flag, Nigerian national flag, an official lectern, his camouflage uniform, rank insignia, and medals, underscoring his authority to issue an ultimatum to insurgents. Alongside his motivational speech, silver ward platters, certificates, and prizes were presented to lift troop morale during a formal ceremony celebrating operational success in the Mandara Mountains and Adamawa/Borno sectors. The speech, delivered in English, is accompanied by the Channels TV logo and a news ticker providing immediate context. The camera work uses medium close-ups and static shots with cutaways to attendees, reinforcing the significance of the event.

Stage three focuses on the speech's main goal: the NA delivers a final ultimatum to remaining BH and ISWAP terrorists to surrender or face destruction, highlighting recent military successes in the northeast. The address praises COAS, Lt. Gen. Taoreed Lagbaja, for his role in weakening terrorist networks and paving the way for the expected return of peace in the region. An ideological analysis (van Dijk, 2015) shows a socio-cognitive framework shaped by hegemonic ideology, state dominance, institutional legitimacy, and the reinforcement of military authority. The discourse employs a polarized "ideological Square" to cast the military as benevolent, capable protectors, while the call for "surrender" asserts total, unequal power over the insurgents. Mentions of "neutralizing" terrorists and "relative peace and tranquillity" (S.27) in Adamawa and Borno project the armed forces' strength and self-praise, while discrediting the terrorists. The speech also uses legitimation strategies (van Leeuwen, 2015) to bolster state power and urge BH and ISWAP terrorists to surrender.

Using rationalization, moral judgment, and myth-making (Van Dijk, 2015), the speech defends military actions by highlighting leadership, operational wins, moral high ground, and a sense of inevitable victory. Phrases like "tremendous achievements" convey authority, while "banned terrorist leadership" (S.27)

underscores the moral weight of the group's actions. By pointing to "operational" successes, the army both justifies its force against insurgents "within its area of responsibility" (S.27) and celebrates gains in the Mandara Mountains. This framing spotlights accomplishments and encourages remaining insurgents to surrender. The intended audience includes youth, women, local and regional leaders, and the international community.

Using the three-dimensional framework (Fairclough, 1992), at the *micro level*, S.27 uses an "us" versus "them" narrative to separate the state from insurgents, using phrases like "significant challenges" and "disseminated" as tools of state power to undermine them. The main figures are the Brigade commander in Chibok and the Adamawa State commissioner of education, highlighting the importance of military-civilian cooperation in counterinsurgency efforts. While the speech is given to military personnel at an award ceremony, it targets a wider audience—including the public and insurgents—sending a message of coming peace and improved security. BH and ISWAP, called "terrorist groups" (S.27), are cast as aggressors against the state, while the army, people in the northeast, and the public are framed as victims. Delivered without metaphor or flourish, the speech opts for clear, direct language to reach insurgents and their supporters effectively.

At the *meso-level*, the Channels TV broadcast shows a clear, multi-platform communication plan, blending polished video production with digital sharing on YouTube. Reactions range from supportive to sceptical, partly because the full speech isn't shown, leaving room for agenda-setting, bias, or selective takes. Still, the message moves through both traditional TV and online channels to reach local and global audiences, with interpretations shaped by people's sociopolitical backgrounds. The government's speech is part of a two-pronged approach mixing military action with amnesty offers, echoing past "final clearing" narratives and aligning with local counter-insurgency efforts and the larger global war on terror. The framing highlights official claims of tactical wins in the northeast, like taking out key insurgent leaders. Delivered by a military spokesperson, it doubles as psychological warfare, pairing promises of safety for those who surrender with claims that terrorist capabilities are shrinking.

Brigadier General Bede Amakor's remarks highlighted the operational defeat of high-profile insurgent commanders, relative peace in Adamawa and Borno States, improved economic activity, the challenges of population displacement and property destruction, and the recognition of deserving officers (S.27). Operationally, planning

and executing campaigns to achieve strategic aims is crucial (Kiszely, 2013). Yet, the link between strategy and tactics at the operational level is often misunderstood because of historical misperceptions (Owen, 2012). The operational level is an abstraction that separates campaign planning from strategy (Kelly, 2012), as measures of success account for the complexities of insurgencies.

While reports highlight relative peace in Adamawa and Borno, guerrilla tactics persist, with insurgents ambushing troops and civilians (Matazu, 2025; Ojo, 2025). Recognizing deserving troops through awards is vital for morale and performance, fostering camaraderie, service and sacrifice (Wingfield, 2024; Lester et al., 2022). News about unveiling Nigeria's first indigenous attack drones and bombs in Abuja signals a strengthening of the fight against insurgency (Channels TV, 2025) and the state's Stratcom to fill the vacuum left by digital propaganda.

Brigadier General Bede Amakor's remarks touched on the defeat of key insurgent leaders, the relative calm in Adamawa and Borno States, a boost in economic activity, ongoing issues of displacement and property loss, and honouring deserving officers (S.27). He emphasized that planning and executing campaigns to meet strategic goals (Kiszely, 2013) is crucial, though the link between strategy and tactics at the operational level is often clouded by historical misunderstandings (Owen, 2012). This level acts as a bridge between strategy and campaign planning, with success measured against the complex nature of insurgencies. Despite reports of peace, guerrilla attacks still occur, with insurgents targeting troops and civilians. Recognizing troops with awards helps morale, performance, and camaraderie. The unveiling of Nigeria's first homegrown attack drones and bombs in Abuja signals a stronger fight against insurgency and a push to counter digital propaganda (Kelly, 2012).

At a *macro level*, the language used reflects an ongoing power struggle between the military and BH, which seeks to replace democracy with a Caliphate. Following operations that took out key leaders near the Mandara Mountains, the army called on insurgents to surrender. The current strategy mixes direct military action with wider stability efforts in Adamawa and Borno. Official statements highlight the government's dependence on military force to uphold democratic values and bring the country together, grounded in constitutional authority. At the same time, non-military measures—like promoting surrenders, raising public awareness, and educating people about the divisive effects of insurgency—are increasingly seen as vital to restoring peace.

In another video, the immediate past Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa, along with other officials, highlighted the importance of reducing reliance on foreign support (Channels TV, 2025). He noted that local production of uncrewed aerial vehicles is a proactive step, emphasising their critical role in intelligence gathering and decisive action against threats. On the need to manufacture uncrewed aerial vehicles, Gen. Musa observed that:

> In a world where global politics surrounding the procurement of advanced military hardware, particularly combat drones, have become more intricate, countries that do not produce such solutions often face bureaucratic bottlenecks and diplomatic hurdles in acquiring these critical platforms. We are facing such challenges directly… If you do not produce what you need, you will be held accountable whenever you need it, even if you have the money at hand. The Nigerian armed forces welcome it, as it enhances our ability to acquire the much-needed assets without the delays associated with the international procurement system (Channels TV, 2025).

At the launch of the new initiative, the defence chief stated, “We are committed to integrating drones across all our operational theatres to dominate the airspace” (Channels TV, 2025). Plateau State Governor Mufwang noted, “We have erred in allowing non-state actors to gain capabilities rivalling state actors. It is crucial we address this immediately and pursue technology acquisitions without strings attached” (Channels TV, 2025). He stressed that leaders must ensure no one in Nigeria operates with competitive capabilities. The Chief of Defence Staff, along with other security officials, inspected the drones and supervised bomb testing (Channels TV, 2025). Figure 7.4 shows a combat drone on display in Abuja as part of efforts to combat terrorism.



Figure 7. 4 Exhibition of a combat drone in Abuja, manufactured locally in a partnership between the Nigerian military and Briech UAS Military Africa (Military Africa, 2025: https://shorturl.at/sNPnw)

Using VVVA's *stage one* template, the video labelled S.30, released by Channels TV on April 3, 2025, runs for 2 minutes and 55 seconds with crisp audio and visuals. *Stage two* places the scene at Briéch UAS headquarters in Abuja, featuring then-COAS General Christopher Musa, Plateau State Governor Caleb Mufwang, and Dr. Bright Echefu, head of a manufacturing firm. The footage showcases collaboration between military and civilian leaders as they examine locally made drones, with close-ups of defence tech and live bomb demonstrations underscoring readiness for emerging terrorist threats. English statements highlight the boost to national security from Africa's first homegrown attack drones—the "Damisa" series—and their munitions.
The filming includes polished close-ups of VIPs, smooth panning over new equipment, and low-angle hero shots showing off technical details.

The video aims to showcase national sovereignty, cut reliance on foreign arms, and boost military strength against BH and ISWAP, who also use drones for tracking and ambushes. It presents drone innovation as a patriotic, state-driven achievement, emphasizing the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), and highlighting the use of state technology against insurgent threats. Through legitimation strategies (van Leeuwen, 2015), it contributes to discourses on Reconnaissance, Intelligence, and Surveillance (RIS), framing the development as key to independence and security. The story backs drone use against non-state actors while touching on ethical concerns about precision strikes and collateral damage. The audience includes Nigerians, policymakers, and global security experts.

From a CDA perspective (Fairclough, 1992), a *micro-level* look shows "us versus them" language and euphemisms shaping public views of conflict. Leaders are shown as active problem-solvers, unveiling drones to reassure victims that insurgent defeat is near. At the *meso level*, Channels TV spreads the story nationally and online, tying it to global war-on-terror themes. Key frames focus on debuting indigenous drones, removing procurement hurdles, collaborating internationally, and putting drone tech into action.

The Defence Chief's critique of Western double standards (Asadu, 2024), Nigeria's bilateral engagements, and expert insights on insurgent drone use highlight the urgency of this technological shift (Dyikuk, 2022b). Drone militarization is viewed as a game-changer for Nigeria's security sector, with history showing the country's early embrace of armed UAVs (Saballa, 2025; Okoli & Chidi, 2024; Oliver, 2024). While homegrown drone development tackles external procurement hurdles, experts emphasize the importance of ethical safeguards to avoid civilian harm (Walsh & Schulzke, 2018; Rogers, 2014; Wargaski, 2022; Ibeh, 2025; Ugunushe, 2025). The state's Stratcom counters extremist propaganda by showcasing technological successes and filling the gaps left by insurgent narratives.

At the *macro level*, the symbolic display at the drone exhibition points to a strategic shift toward self-reliance and stronger counter-insurgency capabilities. The push to curb security vulnerabilities and reduce dependence on foreign arms reflects a move toward sovereign, local defence production—marking a step away from Africa's reliance on imported military hardware (S.30). Military actions are framed as reinforcing democratic values and national unity, with officials using rhetoric to justify measures against insurgents (S.30). These new tactics are defended as essential to protecting national sovereignty (S.30). In a continent heavily reliant on Western military supplies, this broader political message signals the embrace of real-time surveillance, reduced foreign dependence, and the pursuit of technological independence in defence operations.

7.1.5 Non-Kinetic Approach (NKA)

In a New Year's Day chat with Channels Television, Nigeria's President and Commander-in-Chief, Muhammadu Buhari, addressed various challenges facing the nation, emphasizing the importance of non-kinetic approaches to tackling insecurity. Speaking on policy reforms, he stressed that traditional rulers should not be

overlooked, as they know their communities inside out, right down to individual families. He added, "We have to rewrite that system." As regards other non-kinetic means like restructuring the country to ensure true federalism and achieve security, President Buhari offered a challenge: "Those who talk of restructuring, I want them to define what they mean in their own concept of restructuring. Do they want more states? If they want, look at the map of Nigeria. At whose expense?" He further narrated that:

> When I was campaigning right in 2015, there were three fundamental issues: security, economy, and fighting corruption and for Nigerians… from the time we won the election in 2015 to now, in the three promises we made …from Borno and Adamawa states, about 18 were in the hands of Boko Haram. None of the local governments is strictly in the hands of Boko Haram or ISWAP. So, in that respect, we have done something for the economy (Channels Television, 2022).

When asked if he fully understands the problems created by BH in the northeast and banditry in the northwest, Buhari assured that the law enforcement agencies will "go after the terrorists," stressing, "We label them terrorists, and we are going to deal with them as such" (Channels Television, 2022). He said there have been improvements in security in the northwest and the central regions. On attributing the resurgence of the conflict to seasons or the weather, he maintained that "we cannot do much about the weather, but about the security, we have taken steps, and we are seeing the results, and we thank God for that. For the weather, we can only pray and hope that the weather [becomes better]. We are very susceptible to such issues because of our population and the size of the country. The focus for us was to highlight the solutions on how to bring an end to the killings" (Channels Television, 2022).

When asked if he fully grasps the challenges posed by BH in the northeast and banditry in the northwest, Buhari affirmed that law enforcement agencies will "go after the terrorists," adding, "We label them terrorists, and we're going to deal with them as such" (Channels Television, 2022). He noted there have been security improvements in the northwest and central regions. Regarding the resurgence of conflict being tied to seasons or weather, he said, "we cannot do much about the weather, but about the security, we have taken steps, and we are seeing the results, and we thank God for that. For the weather, we can only pray and hope that the weather [becomes better]. We are very susceptible to such issues because of our

population and the size of the country. The focus for us was to highlight the solutions on how to bring an end to the killings" (Channels Television, 2022). On whether the government would try a full military assault on terrorists, the President said:

> I have a military background from the civil war now - we try to secure and make it safe for the leadership at the community level because it's very important to get the best intelligence from the local leadership. After all, they know who is who in their areas of responsibilities you have to; you have to talk to them, but you must make sure they are safe (Channels Television, 2022).

He rejected the possibility of releasing the leader of the IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu, suggesting that the separatist leader would have his day in court.

Using VVVA's *stage one* template, the video labelled S.5, aired by Channels on 5 January 2022 and lasting 48 minutes and 4 seconds, has good video and audio quality. In *stage two*, the scene is a formal indoor reception hall at the Aso Villa Presidential Palace in Abuja, reflecting the interview's formality and importance in Nigeria's democratic setting. The focus is on President Buhari, giving an exclusive interview to the channel. Visually, it features two large, ornate golden armchairs placed opposite each other for the President and interviewers. Behind the President is a large, draped curtain and the prominently displayed Green-White-Green Nigerian flag. Bright, high-key studio lighting adds a polished broadcast look, while the dialogue is in English.

Stage three, as the goal, shows the president tackling key national issues like security, the economy, and politics, with promises to address them. He used the moment to speak on the socio-political crisis, defend his security record, explain the administration's stance against state police, and reject a political pardon for IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu. The interview reflects the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015) because it underscores a populist conservative stance, highlighting positive self-presentation on security and corruption to dominate political discourse. It frames the administration as "credible" versus opponents, backing claims with statistics, and shifting the call for change onto citizens. The tone mixes strength, victimhood, and self-praise, while downplaying government missteps.

The analysis relates to the legitimation framework (van Leeuwen, 2015) because it showcases a strong reliance on rationalization that frames infrastructure

development as key to national progress. The discourse blends moral judgment and personal authority to justify policies, deflect criticism, and craft a redemption narrative in the face of challenges. While drawing on authorization and leadership legitimacy, it also highlights a distinctive, often withdrawn leadership style that stirred debate over accountability. Moralization shifts the focus from administrative metrics to systemic ethics and personal integrity, casting anti-corruption as a moral mission. Buhari's policy approach followed a "logic of violence," stressing control over the use of force and firm military action against non-state actors. The broadcast worked to dismiss the "Jubril from Sudan" myth while exposing a gap between the administration and citizens' struggles with insecurity and economic hardship. It celebrates government achievements while downplaying terrorist actions, aiming its message at citizens, analysts, and international audiences.

Using the three-dimensional CDA (Fairclough, 1992) at the *micro level*, S.5. was analysed to show how Buhari employed an "us" versus "them" narrative, setting his administration against regional agitators, state governors, and youth to frame national challenges. This approach also revealed a tactic of shifting blame onto various groups. The president used terms like "bandits" and "terrorists" (S.5) to delegitimize insurgents and shape the security narrative. The interview was directed at pre-identified audiences, casting BH as the "perpetrator" and citizens as "victims," while labeling insurgents as enemies of the state. Metaphoric and rhetorical strategies included deflecting structural shortcomings with phrases such as "go back to the land" (S.5) and framing regional insecurity as local matters to influence public perception and reduce accountability. Metaphors were also used to portray the state as an enemy or to frame BH's actions as heroic.

At the *meso level*, the video is produced and distributed by TVC and consumed by the military, policy experts, and the public. The insurgents are portrayed as either "crude" or "state," and as "formal" (S.5). Drawing on intertextuality, the government's speeches align with global war on terror narratives. Strategically, Buhari reclassified armed groups from "bandits" to "terrorists" to strip them of local legitimacy and justify full-scale military action. This move aimed to eliminate rather than negotiate with the groups, while also reinforcing his opposition to state police and defending his economic policies. Framed to serve specific goals through state institutional narratives, the interview addressed national security, highlighted progress against BH, and reaffirmed opposition to state-controlled police. While not explicitly showcasing the

state's Stratcom against extremists, it worked to counter insurgency narratives and fill the void left by the group's digital propaganda.

At the *macro level*, the situation reflects an ideological struggle between the state and terror groups, highlighting a clash between Buhari's centralized governance style and public calls for economic liberalization and restructuring. The conversation touches on security strategies, including the role of community leaders and infrastructure improvements, supporting the use of both forceful and non-forceful methods to strengthen democracy and unity. On power and legitimacy, the interview shows a strong executive-centred approach, with Buhari rejecting state police as a solution to insecurity and dismissing the opposition as ineffective. While grounded in legal-rational authority and the rule of law, it also exposes a crisis of performance legitimacy fuelled by public frustration over insecurity and economic hardship. His rhetoric frames government action against BH (S.5) as necessary to protect sovereignty, even if it involves violence. In the wider political context, the interview addresses issues like restructuring, Kanu's release, and state policing, aiming less to divide society and more to raise awareness about security needs and the government's efforts to tackle them.

In a similar interview, Lai Mohammed unveiled three strategies for a successful StratCom and counter-messaging (Channels TV, 2014). Speaking in March 2014 during an interview with *Channels TV*, Mohammed said:

> First, the federal government must develop a holistic counterterrorism strategy that identifies the principles and objectives of combating this uprising. What we have today is, apart from just responding to them, uncoordinated. It is chaotic and a bit ad hoc… we believe that in this [type] of counter terrorism strategy, it is not just the military. You must align military options with economic, social, [and] political [objectives] (Channels TV, 2014).

On the following two approaches, the politician who spoke to the heart of intelligence gathering, acquisition of the requisite logistics, and the necessary element of effective human communication, said:

> Secondly, we also believe that there is a need to enhance intelligence gathering and improve force enablers. By intelligence gathering, we mean the collection and analysis of

information (Channels TV, 2014).

The data was analysed using VVVA's *stage one* template. The video, titled S.11, was published by Channels TV on March 3, 2014, and runs for 1 minute and 50 seconds with high-quality video and audio. *Stage two* identifies the setting as Channels Television's studio headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria, during a live Sunrise Daily segment. The main figure is Mohammed, APC interim National Publicity Secretary. Visuals feature weapons, the Koran, flags, aggressive fighters, and soldiers both in combat and at rest. The footage includes scenes of training, humanitarian aid, executions, press releases, and marching orders. Verbal and textual elements include Arabic text, Hausa dialogue, English subtitles, and propaganda slogans. The camera work blends close-ups, cinematic shots, standard angles, surveillance-style footage, and amateur recordings.

Stage three highlights the core argument: relying solely on military force wasn't enough to defeat BH. The analysis pushes for a holistic, multi-layered plan that blends hard power with softer tactics like socio-economic development, intelligence-led missions, community outreach, and rehabilitation. In the interview, the APC opposition backed this kind of approach, aligning with the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), which favours tackling root causes like poverty and unemployment through socio-economic programmes and de-radicalization over military action alone. This strategy challenges extremist narratives while addressing underlying issues. The interview presents the government as strong and justified, emphasizing the need to "align military options with economic, social [and] political [objectives]" (S.11). Using legitimation discourse (van Leeuwen, 2015), it frames a comprehensive CT plan as both sensible and necessary. The APC uses reasoned arguments and moral appeals to counter the military-only stance, pitching its alternative as morally and practically better. Instead of celebrating past victories, the party admits earlier efforts were "chaotic" and "ad hoc," seeking public support for a renewed, balanced strategy that mixes kinetic and non-kinetic measures. Key audiences include party supporters, the Nigerian public, counter-insurgency specialists, and international observers.

This study used three-dimensional CDA (Fairclough, 1992) to examine S.11. On the *micro-level*, the use of "we" and "them" highlights an "us versus them" mindset, with the government employing this language while claiming it aimed to move beyond division and adopt a holistic counter-terrorism strategy against the terrorists. The APC's phrase "holistic counter-terrorism strategy" (S.11) served as a euphemism for a broad, non-military response to the BH insurgency. This wording helped deflect criticism of the

government while pushing for policies focused on economic reform, community-based intelligence, and human rights to tackle the conflict's root causes. The main figure is Mohammed, APC interim secretary, addressing targeted audiences. Using metaphors and rhetoric, he described Nigeria's earlier, fragmented COIN efforts against BH as "chaotic" and "ad hoc" (S.11), calling for better inter-agency coordination and a move away from purely military tactics.

At the *meso-level*, Channels TV produced and aired the interview, sharing it widely on its digital platforms and YouTube. It reached the Nigerian public, political figures, and analysts following the BH conflict. Viewers are expected to interpret it considering major reforms aimed at boosting intelligence and regional cooperation. In terms of intertextuality, the party's stance mirrors global war-on-terror narratives that stress combining kinetic and non-kinetic methods. The interview with Mohammed was intentionally arranged to advance the state's institutional goals, presenting five key frameworks for effective CT: setting clear guiding principles and objectives, rejecting current disorganization, promoting a unified four-pronged strategy covering military, economic, social, and political aspects, improving intelligence gathering, and prioritizing the acquisition of advanced gear and logistics, including attack helicopters and medical staff (S.11).

COIN theory separates preventive and reactive strategies. The preventive approach focuses on professional training and quick responses to halt insurgent momentum with minimal military force, while the reactive approach calls for decisive action against insurgents and their support networks, paired with ongoing security training (Vick et al., 2006). Mohammed's remarks seemed to favour blending both methods, while also criticizing the government's efforts as improvised and poorly organized.

Comparative studies of insurgencies in Nigeria, Kenya, Iraq, and India suggest that Nigeria's counterinsurgency efforts are notably disorganized and ineffective (Nnamdi, 2019). Critics argue that the government downplays its shortcomings, as seen in President Bola Tinubu's description of attacks as "isolated cases," a stance that reflects limited strategic action amid bureaucratic hurdles (Obadare & Caloca, 2024). Key issues include overreliance on military responses, police corruption, security force misconduct, low public trust, and weak intelligence and investigative capabilities (Okunade, 2021). Mohammed stressed the need to align military, economic, social, and political goals to create a well-rounded non-kinetic COIN strategy. This view is echoed

by Kalu, Omokhunu, and Bologi (2025), who emphasize the importance of interagency cooperation in tackling fast-changing security threats. While effective coordination is crucial for staying ahead of emerging risks, putting it into practice remains a major challenge (Kalu, Omokhunu, & Bologi, 2025).

A key takeaway was the pressing need to boost intelligence-gathering capabilities. There's growing public pressure for strong government action to strengthen the military, improve intelligence operations, and stamp out corruption (Kudu, 2024). The absence of well-rounded COIN strategies—like intelligence gathering, community policing, negotiation, and advanced weaponry—has seriously slowed progress (Dyikuk & Maimako, 2019). Persistent corruption allegations, especially around senior officials and politicians acquiring substandard equipment (Sahara Reporters, 2021; Oluwagbemi, 2016b), continue to weaken these efforts. The interview also shifted the state's Stratcom toward focusing on intelligence collection and analysis to counter insurgents' digital propaganda.

At the *macro level*, the push to rethink CT tools in terms of "quality and quantity" (S.11) reflects an effort to outmanoeuvre and overpower BH using holistic CT principles. This strategy blends military, economic, social, and political goals to defeat insurgents, promote democratic values, and rebuild national unity. In terms of power and legitimacy, the APC's message backed both hard and soft measures to safeguard national sovereignty. In the wider political scene, especially around the 2015 elections, the APC government amplified public security concerns and pushed for a shift from a purely military strategy to a more well-rounded approach. The party emphasized the government's role in tackling the insurgency's root causes—like socio-economic inequality, corruption, and weak governance—through development programmes and community-based intelligence.

Following the attack on the Nigerian Defence Academy, former Navy Commodore Kunle Olawunmi criticized the government's failure to resolve the crisis, arguing that political and religious biases hinder effective action (Channels TV, 2021). In an interview, he called for a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy combining military operations, political solutions, and in-depth analysis of the insurgency at various levels. Olawunmi stressed that defeating the insurgency requires a strong strategic policy, identifying and dismantling its core support, particularly its sponsors, and improving coordination among major security and intelligence agencies such as the Defence Intelligence Agency, National Intelligence Agency, DSS, the Inspector

General of Police, and Interpol (Channels TV, 2021). Additionally, the head of Criminology and Security Studies at Chrisland University noted that insurgents seek to damage public morale and create moral panic to "send a message" (Channels TV, 2021), a hallmark of terrorist tactics. He urged the Buhari administration to officially label these actors as terrorists and emphasized the group's religious ideology:

> What they want to do is to create fear and show the military that we can come for you...Some hardliners in this administration are sponsoring this narrative. They want to show that they can Islamise this country. They talk about the Taliban, they think about the Mujahideen, and they want to replicate it in this country, and they do not care what happens as long as at the end of the day, there is Sharia. The intention is to Islamise Nigeria and practice Sharia. It does not matter if some people die; it does not matter if you are embarrassed; it does not matter if our economy has degenerated, with inflation and the country's debt profile, so long as in the end, the Quran is at sea. Some people in this country have this mindset (Channels TV, 2021).

Commodore Olawumi, who served as Deputy Director of Administration at the Defence Headquarters from 2015 to 2017, shared findings from a 2017 investigation ordered by the Minister of Defence on security at the Nigerian Defence Academy. He noted that every Friday at 1:00 pm, the academy's gate allowed free access to the mosque, even though there was another mosque outside the premises. Olawumi compared this to his time in 1994, when strict security meant he could only visit twice in two years. He added that similar practices were also found in other military locations, like the Naval Training Ground in Apapa and the division in Ibadan (Channels TV, 2021) Olawumi asserted, "That is the time the terrorists have the time to profile our security environment. [This] has always been the case for the past 35 years," and added, "Our problem is religious and socio-cultural" (Channels TV, 2021). As a member of the security and intelligence brief at the Defence Headquarters, he emphasized that addressing militancy requires more than military operations alone. He also noted that the strategy employed for the Niger Delta was not extended to terrorist groups (S.12). During an important intelligence security meeting he attended, he outlined three key arguments:

> To identify the centre of gravity […] the centre of gravity of Boko Haram and insurgency in Nigeria are the sponsors of that programme. It was beyond us because the job we needed to do was kinetic - fighting, destroying places, and resolving issues. However, we cannot resolve issues related to the sponsors of Boko Haram, who we know were in Buhari's government at the time. That was how we could not pursue that aspect that could have resolved the problem, because you need to arrest people (Channels TV, 2021).

He reminded Nigerians that in April 2021, the Buhari government told the world that it had arrested 400 bureau de change-related people who were sponsoring BH, querying why those suspects have not been brought to justice (S.12). He accused the government of partisanship and being "part of the charade that is going on" (Channels TV, 2021). He disclosed that since 2012, they started closing in on the insurgents, stressing:

> I was in the military intelligence at that time. We arrested those people - The boys who were arrested mentioned it. Some of them are governors now. Some of them are in the Senate. Some of them are in Aso Rock. Why should a government try to cause this kind of embarrassment and insecurity regarding what happened yesterday? The Department of State Services is listening. They know them (Channels TV, 2021).

He emphasised the need for the government to invest in CT equipment that provides real-time intelligence to track bandits or terrorists, as seen in Afghanistan and Kenya (S.12). On the absence of prosecution by the DH, the Deputy Director of Defence Administration from 2015 to 2017 stated that:

> When you examine the defence structure of Nigeria, it lies within the policy strategic level; however, they are essentially operational guides. So, when you have policy problems, they cannot go beyond their masters. They can write an intelligence report and state what is happening, and we have seen that the present government is aware of the situation. In real life, the defence headquarters cannot conduct any operations that are not sanctioned by the commander-in-chief of the armed forces

(Channels TV, 2021).

Using VVVA's *stage one* template, the video labelled S.12, published by Channels TV on 25 August 2021, runs for 1 hour and 2 minutes with clear, high-quality audio and visuals. At *stage two*, it is set in the Channels TV studios in Abuja, featuring an interview with Navy Commodore Oluwumni by Maupe Ogun and Chamberlin Osu. Oluwumni wears a dark suit, signalling professional authority and independence from the state. The formal studio setup and straightforward on-screen chyrons highlight transparency and public accountability. His non-verbal cues are intentional and meaningful—steady eye contact shows openness and courage, open-palm gestures and leaning toward the microphones suggest honesty and a willingness to be accountable. His calm demeanour contrasts with the defensive body language often seen in government officials. Camera work uses close-ups and extreme close-ups for emotional impact, medium-wide shots to show the dynamic between public questioning and expert authority, and low-angle shots to reinforce his credibility as a military intelligence professional.

Oluwumni, speaking in English, claimed the government has solid intelligence on high-profile BH sponsors, including some senators and governors, but lacks the political will to act against them. He called out the administration for not publishing or prosecuting the 400 Bureau De Change operators earlier named as BH financiers. He also estimated that around 60% of major security breaches and terrorist attacks succeed due to weak international cooperation and internal sabotage within Nigeria's security system.

Drawing on the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), the interview highlights a sharp divide between patriotic actors and a corrupt elite, exposing the self-serving nature of certain political rhetoric. While official discourse frames BH as the enemy, Oluwumni's revelations point to state complicity and internal contradictions. Based on the legitimation theory (van Leeuwen, 2015), both government officials and whistleblowers shape or challenge the perceived legitimacy of political and social actions. Authorities lean on legal systems, institutional authority, and moral arguments to justify CT measures, often shifting blame outward. Meanwhile, whistleblowers like Oluwumni disrupt these narratives by revealing gaps between stated policies and hidden realities. The message targets Nigerians, policymakers, security analysts, researchers, and global observers, urging them to scrutinize government transparency and the credibility of Nigeria's anti-terrorism approach.

S.12 was analysed using three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992). At the *micro level*, the military expert notes the use of "they" for terrorists and sympathizers, and "we" (S.12) for security agencies and society, framing an "Us versus Them" narrative that escalates the crisis. The expert points out that foreign authorities, including the UAE, have given Nigeria a list of financiers, but the government hasn't acted on it. While the government uses the euphemism "Boko Haram fighters" (S.12), which could downplay the insurgents, the military expert consistently calls them "Boko Haram" S.12). Olawunmi is placed as the main actor with already identified recipients. The expert describes the terrorists as perpetrators, others as victims, and accuses the government of complicity. The former intelligence officer highlights the group's religious identity, using terms like "Mujahideen" and "Taliban" (S.12), and claims that sponsors and sympathizers exist within the government.

By saying, "they do not care what happens as long as at the end of the day there is Sharia," the expert paints the insurgents as enemies of the state who thrive on divisive narratives. The "Aso Rock" (S.12) metaphor drives home the point that terrorism sponsors are deeply entrenched in the federal government. The expert claims the intelligence community knows about these subversive elements and accuses the government of partisanship and protecting criminals due to high-level political involvement, highlighting insider-driven subversion. The interviewee contrasts the presidency's public vow to release a "list of names" (S.12) with the reality of an empty shelf—symbolizing secrecy, broken promises, and a missing paper trail. The analysis also nods to modern warfare, where finances and cyber networks intertwine with traditional military counterterrorism efforts. Visual imagery depicts insiders in government and military circles aiding hostile acts, with the state acting as a shield for known terror financiers, hiding them from public accountability.

At the *meso-level*, Channels TV produced the interview, airing it live on its flagship morning show, *Sunrise Daily*, and later sharing it online, with the main digital version hosted on its YouTube channel. The interview reached a wide audience, including Nigerians, civic advocates, political analysts, and international observers, sparking intense debates nationwide about the government's role in the conflict. The discussion spread quickly across social media and digital news platforms. Using intertextuality, the interview highlighted how Nigeria's crisis is tied to broader global security networks. Analysts noted that the insurgency involves both foreign hostile intelligence and internal subversion. Research on the global war on terror points out

that local political complexity makes counterterrorism a deeply political process, allowing governments to define certain threats while ignoring corruption within. This failure to root out domestic sponsors undermines UK and US counterterrorism support, leading to ongoing struggles instead of resolution. The expert framed points around insider threats, arrests, stagnation, and government complicity, using diagnostic and motivational approaches, while challenging official narratives and pointing to strategic communication failures in countering extremist activities.

The analysis of Commodore Olawunmi's interview focuses on key issues that are central to political communication and strategic communication: diagnosing the insurgency at policy, strategic, professional, and tactical levels; fostering inter-agency collaboration among security and intelligence chiefs, including the Defence Intelligence Agency, National Intelligence Agency, DSS, IG, and Interpol; labeling the group as terrorists due to their intent to cause panic and send strong messages; acknowledging the Jihadi mindset of the sect and sympathizers in government aiming to Islamise Nigeria; the absence of strict security structures in military formations nationwide enabling BH to assess security environments; the role of religious and socio-cultural sentiments in fuelling insecurity; identifying and prosecuting the group's sponsors; and acquiring drones for real-time intelligence. COIN has advanced in policy, strategy, operations, and tactics (Kilcullen, 2006). The British COIN doctrine highlights that while military actions can be decisive at strategic and operational levels, they rarely are at the tactical level (Army Field Manual, 2007). Policymakers set war aims, while strategic leaders devise plans to achieve them, coordinating across government to tackle root causes and restore order. Diplomacy is vital for gaining public backing and undermining insurgents, with emergency measures taken when threats persist. Operationally, local security forces are integrated into military planning, aligning civil and military efforts and focusing on time, space, and resources to help lower-tier units shape messages and support negotiations (Elin & Weissmann, 2020). The tactical level involves planning and carrying out military engagements to achieve specific objectives.

Tensions between Nigeria's anti-graft agency, the EFCC, and the DSS highlight a serious breakdown in collaboration among the armed forces (Channels TV, 2023). Strong interagency or multiagency coordination between intelligence bodies and government institutions is crucial (Al Waroi, 2024). This kind of teamwork is key to protecting national security and handling both domestic and foreign threats. O'Neill (2022) argues that safeguarding the state depends on cooperation across different

levers of national power, from traditional ones like diplomacy, information, military, and economy, to modern ones involving non-security agencies in areas such as environment, health, education, and industry. Inter-agency intelligence gathering and sharing should focus on a unified security strategy, with full commitment from all security bodies to national and regional safety (Al Waroi, 2024). Terrorists often target unsuspecting civilians to send direct warnings to the government and stir public fear. They use violence, coercion, or intimidation to spread their message far beyond the immediate victims (Bakker & Zuijdewijn, 2022). Their goal is to instil fear and disrupt nonhuman targets (Gibbs, 1989). This reflects the idea of terrorism as anxiety-driven violence, carried out repeatedly by hidden individuals, groups, or state actors for political or criminal motives. Unlike assassination, the immediate victims are not the focus; instead, they're symbols meant to convey a wider message. Victims can be chosen at random or deliberately to fit a narrative, with threats used to influence a primary audience, whether specific or broad (Schmid & Jongman, 1988).

Some reports suggest that certain Nigerian officials display a Jihadi mindset, showing sympathy toward terrorists and fuelling the growth of Islamic extremism. In December 1980, Quranic teacher Muhammad Marwa launched the Maitatsine movement in Kano, sparking an uprising that claimed over 4,000 lives (Adamu, 2010; Isichei, 1987). In 1986, Head of State Ibrahim Babangida's decision to join the Organisation of the Islamic Conference drew backlash for allegedly violating the secular principles of the 1999 Constitution (Ukpe, 2021). Former CBN Deputy Governor Dr. Obadiah Mailafia accused President Buhari of pushing for the Islamisation and Fulanisation of Nigeria (Sylvester, 2021). Allegations of an Islamisation agenda under Buhari remain disputed, despite 2015 denials from the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs regarding rumours tied to the Sultan of Sokoto (Gabriel, 2025). The court's rejection of a lawsuit challenging Arabic text on naira notes continues to fuel debates about Nigeria's secular identity (Musa, 2024; Ali, 2020).

Military formations often ease security on Fridays for Muslims attending Juma'at prayers and on Sundays for Christians heading to church. This weekly practice may have given terrorists the opportunity to study the NDA's security setup before attacks (Foundation for Investigative Journalism, 2021). When the arrangement began to change, it drew criticism. In 2023, for instance, a Lagos-based Muslim community urged President Bola Tinubu to instruct Dodan Barracks authorities to allow them unrestricted access to the Obalende *Eid* prayer ground (Elumoye, 2023). The idea that

religious and socio-cultural sentiments can fuel insecurity in the country is valid. BH's extremism stems from religious beliefs, with the group's actions reflecting radical Islam (Tanveer, 2021; Voll, 2015). Its rise and persistence are widely described as religious extremism (Enweremadu & Njoku, 2017). Overall, religion is frequently cited as a potential source of security vulnerabilities in military setups (Foundation for Investigative Journalism, 2021).

Between 2020 and 2021, the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit uncovered 96 terrorism financiers, 424 associates, 123 companies, and 33 bureau de change linked to such activities (Ibenegbu, 2017; Adepoju, 2014; Oyeleke, 2022). Despite promises to prosecute BH sponsors and sympathizers (Adepegba, 2021), little decisive action has been taken—likely due to a lack of political will (Oyeleke, 2022). Operationally, aerospace expert David Oliver (2024) reported that in 2020 the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) purchased several UAVs from China, including CAIG Wing Loong IIs and CASC CH-4B MALE UAVs, now deployed against BH and ISWAP. This followed the acquisition of the Emirati Adcom Yabhon Flash-20 in 2016 and preceded the arrival of the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 in September 2022. In October 2023, NAF pilots trained in Turkey as six TB2s were delivered. Locally produced UAVs, such as the Amebo, developed with Cranfield University, and the Tsaigumi, designed by a Portuguese firm, further showcase Nigeria's capabilities (Oliver, 2024). Yet, despite this advanced arsenal, the pressing question remains: why have insurgents not been decisively defeated in the digital battlefield?

At the *macro level*, the language used reflects an ongoing struggle over accountability between the government and the Nigerian people, as well as questions about the state's readiness to tackle BH. The discussion points to internal sabotage as a cause of military setbacks and calls for applying COIN principles across policy, strategy, operations, and tactics to strengthen democratic values and preserve national unity. It also challenges the state's authority and legitimacy, stressing that rhetoric alone cannot defeat insurgency or protect sovereignty, and instead highlights the need for strong military intelligence. In the wider political context, the interview criticizes partisanship and sabotage, especially during a time when President Buhari was accused of exploiting religious and ethnic divisions. It further notes how insurgents work to polarize the country and emphasizes addressing insider collusion as key to rallying both local and international backing to end the insurgency.

In his first official engagement outside the presidential villa, one week after

taking office, President Tinubu visited the ONSA to inspect the National Counter Terrorism Centre and outline his administration's CT efforts. According to a Channels TV video, this visit comes amid recent tensions between the EFCC and the Department of State Services (DSS), highlighting the importance of collaboration for national security (Channels TV, 2023). Tinubu, who seized the occasion to diffuse the tension, stressed that:

> We must focus on one tunnel. Coordinate, share the information, share the intelligence, and work harder. Then, you cannot hoard those information. You cannot hoard the intelligence to succeed. We cannot have disharmony in an orchestra of the security plan. I am glad Nigeria is on the path to succeed. We will, I assure you. We will make it a priority. That is why I am here (Channels TV, 2023).

In response, NSA retired General Babagana Mungono stated, “Remember the commitments you made to the Nigerian people during your election. Your visit to the national counter-terrorism centre highlights our collective commitment to a unified approach, enabling you to receive timely reports without delay” (Channels TV, 2023). He urged the President to maintain his vital psychological support. He assured, “We are compelled to note that all the agencies have started working assiduously towards realising your objectives” (Channels TV, 2023). According to him:

> This [visit] reinforces your commitment, your dedication, your inflexible rigidity to ensuring that the security misfortunes of the federal republic of Nigeria and by extension the sub region are overcome within the shortest possible time…this illuminates the desire to ensure that we have a safer country for all other undertakings of government on behalf of the people of Nigeria run smoothly - I want to ensure the total commitment and dedication of the Office of the National Security Adviser to your excellency in ensuring that you realise the promises you made to the Nigerian people during your election (Channels TV, 2023).

Using VVVA’s stage one template, the video labelled S.13, published by Channels TV on June 5, 2023, runs for 3 minutes and 12 seconds with excellent video and audio quality. Stage two identifies the setting as the new ONSA and National Counterterrorism Centre (NCTC) in Abuja, featuring President Bola Tinubu and

National Security Adviser, Retired General Mungono. Visual cues show top officials in a united display, with the president in his signature black Kaftan and a light and dark blue broken shackle cap with white patches, symbolizing a tribute to insurgency victims and a pledge to national security. The contrast between his attire and the military uniforms highlights civilian leadership. The visuals capture his arrival, warm reception by senior security chiefs and intelligence commanders, and his tour with defence officials through high-tech briefing rooms, digital tracking hubs, and labs in the new NCTC. Spoken elements feature English-language briefings, with the president engaging with computer systems and digital setups while receiving updates on advanced technology and AI in military operations. He also addresses service chiefs from a podium in a conference setting, using lively hand gestures to emphasize unity and teamwork. Camera work includes wide shots showing the facility's scale, medium shots of his movement with the NSA and service chiefs, and close-ups revealing stern expressions, especially during his warning against institutional rivalry.

In stage three, the visit's main goal was a facility tour led by the NSA, where President Tinubu urged security agencies to work together and avoid conflict. He called for intelligence sharing and the end of inter-agency rivalry. The visit highlighted the need for organized, cooperative, and intelligence-based strategies to fight terrorism effectively. Using the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), the speech portrays the administration's proactive steps in a positive light while framing operational disharmony as a problem that supports centralized security management. It focuses on building unity among security forces and treats both internal discord and external threats as challenges to overcome. Through the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), the visit marked a push for inter-agency cooperation, using authority, moral reasoning, rationalization, and storytelling to encourage collaboration. The president promised full backing, provided agencies share timely and actionable intelligence.

In line with the moral and ethical tone of his speech, the president emphasizes collectivism over individualism, placing responsibility in the public sphere and calling for a shared sense of purpose. The message suggests that true national service means putting aside institutional pride to protect citizens' safety. A lack of cooperation between agencies is portrayed as breaking their moral duty to safeguard vulnerable groups. The president also argues that terrorism thrives when intelligence is fragmented and agencies act alone. This underpins the new administration's security approach: unshared intelligence gives power to non-state actors, while the NCTC and

ONSA work to remove bureaucratic obstacles and coordinate tactical efforts against terrorists. By saying, “I am glad Nigeria is on the path to succeed,” and “we will make it a priority” (S.13), he taps into themes of pride and victory. His audience includes security leaders, the Nigerian public, international allies, and neighbouring countries.

S.13 was also analysed using three-layer CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992). On the micro-level, while the president avoided creating an explicit “us” versus “them” divide among Nigerians or referencing political rifts, he used collective pronouns like “we” and “you” to stress unity in fighting terrorism and warn against internal divisions within Nigeria’s security system. The speech uses official euphemisms; for instance, his caution against “disharmony” subtly calls out ego clashes and turf wars between agencies like the military, police, and DSS, signalling an end to the kind of operational independence that weakens national defence. The phrase “work harder” (S.13), often a corporate euphemism for increased workload, is used to encourage synergy, with national security compared to an “orchestra” (S.13). The speech casts non-state actors as aggressors, while security agencies and the public are framed as victims. Tinubu’s orchestra metaphor reinforces the importance of shared intelligence and coordination among security forces, presenting information sharing as a top national responsibility crucial for economic growth.

At the *meso level*, Channels TV shared the interview on its YouTube channel, reaching both security and intelligence agencies as well as the wider Nigerian public. The president’s directive reflects global post-9/11 counterterrorism strategies, aiming to “connect the dots” between agencies and align with international cooperation in the Sahel. The message is crafted to align with institutional priorities, stress the need for a unified intelligence approach, and win the backing of the security apparatus. Four main points stand out: the value of coordination, harmonization, and information-sharing; the government’s resolve to succeed; the need for psychological support for security personnel; and the commitment of officers in the NSA’s office (S.13).

A CDA of President Tinubu’s message shows that strong coordination is key for successful COIN, boosting intelligence sharing, resource allocation, and skill development (Military.com, 2024). The US Army’s idea of unified action underscores the need to align government and NGO efforts with military operations for success in the War on Terror (Field Manual, 2014; Sahara Reporters, 2021). While the government’s commitment to tackling Islamist groups is clear (Duku, 2025), big challenges still stand in the way of delivering on promises to Nigerians. The NSA’s focus

on psychological support for security agents highlights the importance of both government and community backing, offering moral and material help (Nwokeoma, Okpara, & Osadebe, 2020) to build confidence and performance. Mr. Nuhu Ribadu, the new NSA, has praised the ongoing work of the Armed Forces and security agencies in handling security threats and preventing violence, commending the sacrifices of those on the front lines for their dedication to safeguarding Nigeria's security and sovereignty (The Sun, 2025). On counter-narratives, the video points out that full transparency and open communication are core values of effective governance and vital to the state's StratCom in countering extremist propaganda.

From a *macro level* perspective, the analysis shows a shift in power from separate agencies toward a unified front against terrorist threats to national unity. Both the president and the NSA project their authority and legitimacy through rhetoric that defends their actions and casts insurgent groups as threats to national security. In the wider political landscape, the visit and speech align with national security priorities by pushing for structural reforms to ease inter-agency competition. The president's directive aims to bolster economic stability, signal a firm change in leadership, raise public awareness of government security efforts, and build support for the administration's goals, including delivering the benefits of democracy.

On October 1, 2019, Nigeria launched a spiritual warfare approach to counter messaging and combat violent extremism (S.14). At an Abuja seminar titled "Countering insurgency and violent extremism in Nigeria through spiritual warfare," Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai, represented by Major General Sani Yusuf, emphasised the initiative's goal of developing narratives to challenge the ideologies of religiously motivated terrorist groups (S.14). In the 4-minute 32-second YouTube video, Buratai underlined that the need to defeat BH and ISWAP ideologies:

> Is based on the awareness that it is the ideologies that enhance their resource and help to recruit new fighters to their fold, and as such, killing their ideology and terrorist movement withers and dies. The importance of this seminar is premised on the key role clerics have to play in producing appropriate narratives required to counter the ideologies of these religious terror groups. Communities and the state must join forces with a common purpose of rejecting the ideologies of these groups and challenging those who espouse them. These can be better

achieved through the provision of appropriate counter-narratives targeted at the ideologies of the terror groups (TV360 Nigeria, 2019).

On the role of families and local communities, the Army Chief clarified that counter-messaging should start "at the grassroots, where families and local communities are at the forefront of the effort to protect the vulnerable people from succumbing to wrong ideologies" stressing "I see you, the religious leaders and clerics who regularly interface with members of the society, making valuable contributions to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism" (TV360 Nigeria, 2019). Figure 7.5 depicts the former Chief of Staff of Nigeria engaging with the army's officers and personnel, emphasising leadership and communication within the military.

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Figure 7. 5 Nigeria's former COAS, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai (PM News, 2019: https://shorturl.at/HpYKB)

In the transcript of his speech,[3] Buratai spoke about the notable progress the Nigerian Army has made in tackling the challenges posed by militants. He pointed out the army's success in disrupting insurgent networks and weakening their determination. Still, he admitted that the enduring belief in extremist ideologies remains a major hurdle. Buratai stressed the need for a multifaceted strategy to counter the threats from BH and other terrorist groups, noting that military action alone won't be enough (Inside Ojodu Media, 2019; S.14). He observed that such groups cannot be defeated through warfare alone (Inside Ojodu Media, 2019; S.14).

[3] For a longer transcript of the seminar, refer to: Inside Ojodu Media. (2019, September 30). Nigerian Army holds spiritual seminar to counter insurgency. https://www.insideojodu.com/nigerian- army-holds-spiritual-seminar-to-counter-insurgency/. Accessed 31 March 2025.

As such:

> Ideological battle can in many ways be more important than the kinetic battle… it is easier to kill members of a terrorist group than to eliminate their ideologies - Terrorism and terrorist groups cannot be totally eliminated by mainly military actions, which means focusing our efforts on the underlying narratives through ideologies that these terrorists employ to lure innocent citizens into their fold. In the case of Boko Haram, its ideology classifies Western education as sin - By its nature, ideology has the power to manipulate what people think, form their opinions, and direct their attitudes. This often results in controlling people's minds to the extent that they accept social contracts

This reflects the 2019 Chaplain's Annual Training Conference in Sokoto, where Buratai, represented by Brigadier General Timothy Olowomeye, spoke on the theme, "The Non-Kinetic Strength in the Face of Armed Banditry and Other Security Challenges: The Role of Military Chaplains" (News Agency of Nigeria, 2019). He highlighted the army's dedication to using strategic counter-messaging to challenge the group's propaganda (S.14). Figure 7.6, a screenshot of the Spiritual Warfare Programme, captures the events and discussions centred on leveraging spiritual and community-based methods to counter extremist ideologies.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 7. 6 Spiritual Warfare Programme of events (Inside Ojodu Media, 2019: https://shorturl.at/TIZbc)

Stressing that the counter-messaging mechanism would take the form of spiritual warfare, he emphasised that the seminar is:

> An effective means of combating insurgency and other forms of unrest. Boko Haram and the likes cannot be defeated by kinetic military warfare alone. Finding appropriate counter-narratives against these violent extremist sects will immensely be a big push towards eradicating their negative activities in Nigeria. We must refute in the strongest terms possible all forms of extreme religious fanaticism and its attendant security threat to the nation (News Agency of Nigeria, 2019).[4]

Pointing to the troubling surge in unrest and the reckless damage impacting innocent citizens who depend on government protection, he emphasized President Buhari's steadfast commitment "to offer support and restore hope through the relentless work of our Armed Forces and security agencies" (News Agency of Nigeria, 2019). He stressed that our main responsibility is to protect the nation's territorial integrity while working closely with civil authorities (S.14).

Using VVVA's *stage one* analysis template, the video tagged S.14, published by TV360 Nigeria on 1 October 2019, runs 4 minutes and 32 seconds with high-quality visuals and sound. *Stage two* places the scene at the Nigerian Army Resource Centre (NARC) in Abuja, featuring Major General Sani Yusuf standing in for COAS, Lieutenant General Buratai. The visuals show a podium flanked by high-ranking military officials, an audience, and banners and imagery symbolizing unity. Yusuf's attire alternates between full, decorated military camouflage and other styles to convey battlefield readiness. His messaging, paired with the army's motto "victory is from God alone," blends military strength with spiritual resilience, stressing unity, tolerance, and faith over extremist fanaticism. Visually, he maintains a disciplined stance at the podium, uses sharp hand gestures, and addresses an audience of senior officers and religious leaders. Verbally, he speaks in English about countering extremist ideology through a "battle of inner consciousness," applying "hearts and minds" tactics to dismantle terrorist propaganda and work with religious figures to promote peace. Camera shots

[4] The transcript of text contains the message of the Chief of Army Staff to religious, tribal, and community leaders as well as the Nigerian people that effective counter-messaging involves embracing the valid message of religion, tolerance, peace, and unity both in words and actions - News Agency of Nigeria. (2019, October 23). Why We Adopted Spiritual Warfare to Counter Boko Haram - Buratai. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/359136-why-we-adopted-spiritual-warfare-to- counter-boko-haram-buratai.html. Accessed 1 April 2025.

range from close-up and cinematic to normal, surveillance-style, and amateur angles.

Stage three focuses on getting military chaplains and Islamic Directorates to rally spiritual leaders to teach followers the true principles of their faith. The goal is to stop brainwashing and radicalization by winning hearts and minds, recognizing that insurgencies often hinge on ideological battles for people's inner beliefs. These seminars are used to shape public opinion, reduce violence, help civilians reintegrate, and build strong counter-narratives against insurgents. The Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015) shows a strategy that frames the NA as the rightful guardian of "true faith" and casts BH as a "devilish" outsider. The story highlights the military's first spiritual warfare seminar, aimed at challenging extremist ideas through religious leaders. Nigeria's "spiritual warfare" seminar serves as a legitimation tool (van Leeuwen, 2015), blending authority, moral reasoning, and practical logic to fight radical ideologies. By tapping into their mandate, authorities tackle the psychological roots of extremism, knowing force alone would not work. Morally, the military stresses spiritual engagement in battling insurgency. This sits alongside non-kinetic tactics like building "underlying narratives," creating "counter-narratives," and rejecting "religious fanaticism." The ideals of honour and victory shine through in the army's pledge to protect the nation and "restore hope" (S.14). The message is aimed at soldiers, religious leaders, scholars, and regional governments.

S.14 was analysed through three-part CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992). On the *micro level*, the government labels insurgents as "terrorist groups," "Boko Haram," and "Islamic State West Africa Province," while calling the public "innocent citizens" (S.14). This choice of words builds an "Us" versus "Them" narrative meant to rally public support. Instead of using softer language to undermine the insurgents, the government opts for direct terms to identify both BH and ISWAP. The main players and audiences are already clear. By casting terrorists as perpetrators and others as victims, the military frames them as enemies of the state. Authorities lean on plain, direct language rather than figurative or rhetorical devices, presenting their fight against these groups as a kind of spiritual battle.

At the *meso level*, the NA shared its message through platforms like TV360 Nigeria's YouTube channel, aiming to counter extremist ideologies with non-kinetic, theological approaches directed at religious leaders and the public. The message, framed within counter-insurgency discourse, aligns with the global war on terror by using theological counter-narratives to challenge BH beliefs. This "hearts and minds"

strategy focuses on engaging clerics and youth to resist indoctrination through soft power. Effective counter-messaging that challenges insurgent ideologies is vital for public education and national security (O'Farrell, 2019). General Buratai's speech calls for evolving strategies to dismantle BH's ideology, stressing the role of clerics in crafting strong counter-messages and encouraging community engagement to reject extremism. Effective counter-messaging is seen as vital for public awareness and national security, especially given the misuse of religious teachings by some clerics (Nigerian Army Resource Centre, 2019), and religious leaders are urged to take the lead in creating persuasive narratives against radicalism (S.14).

Terrorist groups twist religious beliefs to lure young people, posing a serious threat to Nigeria's stability (Nigerian Army Resource Centre, 2019). Tackling this problem means bringing religious leaders on board to craft positive messages. These leaders can spark interfaith conversations, educate communities, and highlight the dangers of ethno-religious violence (Nigerian Army Resource Centre, 2019). Working with trusted figures helps communities create lasting, culturally aware counter-terrorism strategies (Haji, 2024). Strengthening unity among different faith groups is key to resisting radical ideas (Ryan & Maura, 2019). Counter-messaging is crucial for calling out extremist lies, exposing contradictions in their words and actions, and offering better alternatives to their ideology (Neumann, 2013). The army chief stressed mobilizing communities and states to inform vulnerable groups about harmful beliefs (S.14). Lasting success in counterinsurgency depends on including diverse players—like women, schools, and CSOs—in fighting religiously driven violence (Nigerian Army Resource Centre, 2019). To push back against extremist propaganda, the state supports Stratcom projects to fill the gap online. While fans see this as winning hearts and minds, critics think it falls short by trying to solve military issues mainly through spiritual means.

At the *macro-level*, the analysis points to an ideological clash between the government and terrorist groups. The language reflects a struggle for power, with BH aiming to replace democracy with a Caliphate. The government's focus on "spiritual warfare" to counter BH and ISWAP's ideologies through a "soft approach," combined with traditional military action, highlights the need for both kinetic and non-kinetic methods to uphold democratic values and national unity. To strengthen legitimacy, the initiative involves religious leaders in spreading counter-narratives and shielding vulnerable youth from extremist recruitment, framing the conflict as a battle for hearts

and minds. The military uses rhetoric to justify its territorial defence. In the wider political landscape, this signals a shift toward tackling the ideological roots of insurgency, fostering better civil-military relations, and preventing youth radicalization. By "finding appropriate counter-narratives" (S.14), the military aims to curb societal division and boost public awareness of security. In a separate YouTube video, General Bamidele Shafa, Coordinator of OSC, outlined the government's initiative to rehabilitate repentant BH members as a critical measure for restoring peace in Northeast Nigeria (TVC News, 2020b). He highlighted the feasibility of deradicalizing individuals coerced into joining the sect, stating, "This category of persons within Boko Haram is the primary focus of Operation Safe Corridor" (TVC News, 2020b).

General Shafa revealed that many terrorists were compelled to join the sect against their will, noting, "These boys have been waiting for the opportunity that the federal government has given them. They are coming out in droves daily to lay down their arms and embrace peace to be deradicalized, rehabilitated, and transferred to the state and national authorities for reintegration by the dynamics in each of the states" (TVC News, 2020b). Regarding justice for victims' families, those who lost their lives, he explained, "The Government of Nigeria is very much concerned about justice. The hardened BH members who were arrested or captured by the Nigerian military during the COIN operations are investigated and prosecuted" (TVC News, 2020b). He said over 500 ardent fighters have been convicted by courts of competent jurisdiction and sentenced to various jail terms- 60 years' imprisonment by the extant CT law in Nigeria (S.15). General Shafa insisted that:

> At the Operation of Safe Corridor, we are also not oblivious to the fact that the clients who pass through a form of justice system […] There is a quasi-judicial panel constituted by the Attorney General of the Federation. This panel is aided by a judge of the Federal High Court with members drawn from the traditional and religious institutions, state government officials from the states where the clients are going to be reintegrated, a senior judicial officer from the Federal Ministry of Justice, and a lawyer from the Ministry of Defence- the Defence Headquarters (TVC News, 2020b).

Using VVVA's *stage one* analysis template, the video tagged S.15, published by TVC on March 3, 2020, runs for 5 minutes and 32 seconds with high-quality video and audio. For *stage two*, the setting is the TVC newsroom in Abuja, featuring Major General Bamidele Shafa, then Coordinator of OSC of the NA. Filmed in a studio to build public trust, Shafa wore his military uniform and rank insignia to project authority over rehabilitation efforts involving quasi-judicial oversight and vocational training. Visually, in his NA service dress, he calmly explained the programme's use of a semi-judicial panel and vocational training to reintegrate participants, reflecting the standard Nigerian military style. Speaking in English, he used authoritative, institutional language to emphasize national support for the initiative. The medium close-up camera shot kept the audience engaged and focused on security matters.

Stage three centres on OSC's goals, highlighting its safeguards, especially a quasi-judicial panel set up by the Attorney General of the Federation. Led by a Federal Court judge, the panel brings together traditional and religious leaders, state officials, and representatives from the Defence and Interior ministries. This diverse group handles screening, deradicalization, and the careful reintegration of former low-level jihadist recruits into their communities. Created in 2016, OSC takes a non-kinetic counterterrorism approach, offering voluntary exit, rehabilitation, and reintegration for low-risk, repentant BH and ISWAP defectors. Its programme includes vocational skills, literacy classes, therapy, and drug rehab. While experts credit OSC with processing thousands of people, weakening insurgent networks, and gathering useful intelligence, it has faced domestic pushback for allegedly granting amnesty to terrorists. Groups like the ICG also point out that some civilians are misidentified as terrorists, causing overcrowding in rehab centres. Though officials praise it as a success, CSOs and international observers tend to take a more mixed view.

The news interview portrays OSC as a clear success, using an "us" versus "them" framing aligned with the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015) to emphasize state goodwill and play down the insurgent threat. The focus is on positive in-group rehabilitation efforts, glossing over local doubts and systemic hurdles to build a story of progress. Government strengths are underscored through talk of "reintegration" and minimizing mistakes, as in the remark, "Nigeria is very much concerned about justice" (S.15). By underplaying insurgent wins, the coordinator stresses that "the hardened Boko Haram members who were arrested by the Nigerian military during COIN operations are investigated and prosecuted" (S.15). Based on the legitimation

strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), the General's claim of OSC's success fits into a narrative that validates the deradicalization and reintegration of former BH fighters.

The speech uses strategies like authority, reason, moral appeal, and storytelling to present the initiative as both effective and compassionate in dealing with national security. The government claims its political and legal power by declaring the Deradicalization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DRR) programme a success, backed by a structured quasi-judicial and inter-agency system. On moral grounds, General Shafa highlights the 54-week programme's ability to deliver justice for victims' families, encourage voluntary surrender, offer full rehabilitation, and reintegrate former BH members into society. The "arrest" and "capture" of "hardened Boko Haram members" (S.15) are used to justify the government's OSC program. Stories of triumph are clear in statements like repentant BH members "coming out in droves" (S.15) and in celebrating the programme's successes. The interview speaks to a wide audience—sceptical Nigerian citizens, community leaders, potential defectors, and international donors—to showcase the value of non-kinetic, soft-power approaches.

Using three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) at the *micro-level*, the then-OSC Coordinator claimed the initiative had broken down the "us" versus "them" mindset toward BH insurgents. Still, the ongoing use of labels like "boys" and "they" for terrorists and "we" and "state" (S.15) for the government keeps that divide alive. Military personnel often use euphemisms such as "boys" and "clients" (S.15) for former insurgents in rehabilitation. General Shafa is presented as the main actor, with the programme's recipients already selected. The government casts ex-combatants as "perpetrators" and communities or coerced individuals as "victims" of the insurgency. The interview draws on rhetorical tactics like the "client" (S.15) metaphor, medicalized language for de-radicalization, and appeals to authority to validate the reintegration programme.

At the *meso level*, TVC produced and shared the interview on its YouTube channel, highlighting how social media supports government counter-messaging and narrative control. Targeting both the public and key stakeholders, it aimed to showcase progress in counter-insurgency efforts. While praised for promoting peace and offering a non-kinetic approach, it still faces public doubt and concerns about reintegration and justice for victims. Shafa draws on legal, military, traditional, and religious perspectives to reinforce OSC's deradicalization achievements. The programme blends judicial panels, cultural authority, and vocational reintegration to

frame the rehabilitation of former combatants as a major success. The government's video also echoes global "War on Terror" themes by stressing soft-power strategies like de-radicalization and job training to address groups such as ISWAP. Operating within state frameworks, it emphasizes judicial legitimacy, community involvement, and portraying participants as victims rather than ideologues to counter criticism. The data were examined through CDA, focusing on whether Safe Corridor meets its goals of deradicalizing, rehabilitating, and reintegrating terrorists; delivering justice for victims' families; prosecuting hardened offenders; and gaining assurance from expert panels of attorneys, judges, traditional and religious leaders, and officials (S.15). Launched in September 2015, the OSC programme centres on DDR to reform repentant terrorists (Ugwueze, Ngwu & Onuoha, 2021).

Based at a former NYSC camp in Mallam Sidi, Gombe State, the programme supports reintegration, boosts community awareness, and carries out post-rehabilitation monitoring (Odita, 2025). Since 2016, it has helped rehabilitate 2,190 people, including foreign nationals from Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso (Odita, 2025). Participants gain vocational skills in areas like barbing, cosmetology, tailoring, and carpentry, while also learning to reject violent ideologies and heal from trauma (Bamas & Okafor, 2020; Bukarti, 2019). Figure 7.7 shows several former fighters eagerly anticipating their return home after years of rehabilitation.

This image has been removed from the public version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 7. 7 Some former fighters are excited about going home after several years of rehabilitation (International Centre for InvestigativeReporting, 2020: https://shorturl.at/d3aVw)

The insurgency is addressed using two main strategies: the tough, action-driven kinetic approach and the softer, non-kinetic approach (Bamas & Okafor, 2020). The kinetic side includes efforts like Operation Restore Order and Operation Lafiya

Dole at the national level, as well as the MNJTF at the regional level (Bamas & Okafor, 2020; Ugwueze, Ngwu & Onuoha, 2021). On the non-kinetic side, initiatives include NACTEST (2014), the National Security Strategy (2019), and the EU-funded prison de-radicalization programme (Ugwueze, Ngwu & Onuoha, 2021; Bamas & Okafor, 2020).

At the Joint Investigation Centre in Giwa Barracks, Maiduguri, ex-fighters are sorted into three groups: Category A for those found innocent, Category B for individuals open to rehabilitation, and Category C for hardliners deemed beyond help (Bamas & Okafor, 2020). While the programme has seen some wins, it falls short by ignoring local community concerns in its policies, which hurts both its success and the reintegration of former fighters (Ugwueze, Ngwu, & Onuoha, 2021b). Families affected by the group's violence, along with public commentators, have criticized the policy and demanded justice for victims. For instance, a recent Punch Nigeria (2025) editorial titled "Terrorists do not repent" called for comprehensive care and social welfare for victims of terrorist attacks, stressing the need to put their support first.

The editorial stresses that terrorists must face justice for crimes such as destroying public and private property, attacking military personnel and civilians—especially traditional and religious leaders—and committing atrocities like suicide bombings, mass abductions, torture, rape, forced marriages, and recruiting child soldiers. It argues that no country rehabilitates hardened criminals without first prosecuting them. Prosecuting and investigating such offenders remains a priority. Punch Nigeria (2025) criticizes the OSC programme as flawed, claiming that reintegrating so-called repentant terrorists weakens counterterrorism efforts. The piece insists that religious "repentance" should not be used to dodge accountability. Data from the National Counter Terrorism Centre, via the ONSA, shows over 325 terrorists have been prosecuted and convicted, with some sentenced to up to 70 years during Phase 5 and Phase 6 trials at Kainji detention facility (Odeniyi, 2024). A panel of 13 agencies and more than 100 experts—including religious leaders, psychologists, and de-radicalization specialists—supports OSC operations (Bukarti, 2019). Still, video evidence does not show how the state's Stratcom unit counters extremist propaganda. Critics say the "amnesty" approach mislabels civilians and fuels public resentment.

Macro-level analysis indicates that the initiative struggles with an ideological clash between the military's focus on rehabilitation through deradicalization and public worries about justice for victims. The government has set up a quasi-judicial panel to uphold democratic law and order, drawing on both traditional religious

institutions and federal authority to project power and legitimacy in the OSC programme. While it frames the rehabilitation of ex-combatants within a wider liberal-conservative political narrative, its claims of reducing enemy numbers have been met with scepticism due to public distrust and persistent issues with reintegration. Reports indicate that some former militants have returned to old behaviours or shared intelligence with past associates. In a climate of deep societal division over safety and security, the interview aimed to shed light on government measures regarding public protection and convicted BH members.

In a separate YouTube video, Channels TV reported that the then NPF's Public Relations Officer (PRO), Frank Mba, initiated a campaign involving the nationwide distribution of information, education, and communication materials. The police spokesperson, who reiterated the security agencies' commitment to winning the war against terror, disclosed that:

> The counterterrorism campaign, which will involve the production of various educational and enlightenment materials in different forms and in different languages, which are meant to be distributed to Nigerians from all walks of life free of charge, is designed to actually highlight the basic rules of the citizens in the ongoing battle against terror, insurgency and other forms of violent crimes across the nation (Channels TV, 2014).

He also mentioned a fact sheet, printed and containing key messages along with distress call numbers for the police across various commands and formations nationwide, as well as the DSS and ONSA (Channels TV, 2014). The campaign involved widespread distribution of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials to all segments of Nigerian society. The Inspector-General of Police, Muhammed Abubakar, launched the fact sheet (The Nation, 2014) as part of a counter-terrorism awareness effort. Chief Superintendent of Police Frank Mba, representing the IGP, stressed the importance of public education in combating terrorism. The initiative aims to protect citizens and improve community safety, reinforcing the police's commitment to counter-terrorism. A leaflet, available in English and five Nigerian languages, offers essential security tips and encourages vigilance in spotting and reporting suspicious activities (The Nation, 2014). The police promote active community involvement and ongoing awareness of potential threats. The fact sheets also provide contact numbers for the Police, DSS, and ONSA, empowering citizens with knowledge of criminal tactics and safety tips to boost community security (The Nation, 2014).

Using the VVVA *stage one* analysis template, the video titled S.21 was aired by Channels TV on June 2, 2014. The 2-minute clip had high-quality visuals and audio. In *stage two*, the scene shifts to Abuja, where the Police Public Relations Officer (PRO), Chief Superintendent Frank Mba of the NPF, held a news conference. Mba's uniform featured symbols like an eagle for strength, an elephant for resilience, crossed batons for authority, and green grass representing Nigeria's landscape. He kept a formal stance, steady eye contact, and controlled gestures to convey authority and emphasize policy points, speaking in English throughout. The camera used a medium close-up to highlight the gravity of announcing specific CT tactics against the BH insurgency. The broadcast featured a formal split-screen, with close-ups of the Inspector-General of Police during key security talks and B-roll of police operations.

Stage three centred on national security and tactical operations in preparation for major national transitions. Mba shared updates on the fight against terrorism, outlining NPF strategies to tackle BH insurgencies and local threats. He touched on election readiness by detailing deployment plans to maintain peace and prevent political violence during regional and upcoming general elections. He also addressed internal discipline, public concerns over police checkpoints, corruption, and reforms to boost accountability. Following a June 1, 2014 bomb blast near the Cameroonian border, the campaign sought to involve citizens in intelligence-led raids and tactical missions in high-risk areas like Kano and Bauchi. This effort is part of wider counter-terrorism measures involving the Counter-Terrorism Unit (CTU) and Bomb Disposal Squad, each marked by specific tactical insignia during operations.

Following the Ideological Square framework (van Dijk, 2015), the Nigerian Police Force launched a counter-terrorism campaign using an "us" versus "them" narrative to contrast state security measures with terrorist threats. Media coverage aimed at curbing terrorism highlighted the police in a positive light while casting insurgents negatively, shaping public perception and reinforcing police authority. The discourse promoted the police's positive self-image, portraying insurgents as a disruptive "other" to downplay institutional weaknesses and dismiss the strengths of opposing groups. Mba applied this approach by stressing the police's dedication to public safety and framing criminals as threats to order. The campaign drew on legitimation strategies (van Leeuwen, 2015) such as authorization, rationalization, and moral evaluation to defend state actions against insurgency. Using its constitutional mandate, the Force rolled out a nationwide awareness drive centred on coordinated

intelligence and institutional collaboration, encouraging public reporting and shared responsibility for national security. However, analysis showed that reliance on force and human rights abuses often eroded trust. The campaign also aimed to challenge the glorification of extremist groups by countering narratives that romanticize violence, while educating citizens, sharing emergency contacts, and building partnerships with local communities to bolster security.

S.21 was analysed using the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992). At the *micro-level*, the Nigeria Police used terms like "Nigerians" and "Citizens" in contrast to "terror" and "insurgency" networks, reinforcing an "us versus them" narrative that positioned the state and civilians against BH insurgents. The campaign adopted sanitized, militarized language to describe security efforts, with phrases like "counter-terrorism campaign" framing actions against BH, and euphemisms such as "violent crimes" and "ongoing battle" downplaying the severity of active insurgencies. The main voice was the police PRO, addressing the Nigerian public and affected communities. Insurgents were cast as perpetrators, while the public was portrayed as both victims and, at times, adversaries of the state. Metaphors depicted the "fact sheet" as a protective shield and security agencies as a close-knit family. This approach sought to rally public support, legitimize government action, and broaden the perceived theatre of war to a national scale.

At the *meso level*, Channels TV, an independent 24-hour Nigerian news broadcaster, aired and shared the programme through its national network and YouTube channel. Aimed at the general Nigerian public, including civil society groups, local communities, and security stakeholders, it sought to raise awareness about anti-terror efforts and emergency hotlines. Outlets like Channels Television have showcased security forces' work while echoing public worries about the government's ability to prevent terrorist attacks. Media coverage of the 2014 campaign leaned heavily on the Western "global war on terror" framework, using its language for the BH insurgency and often blending local grievances with wider jihadist movements. The story around the Nigerian Police Force's counter-terrorism response matches national security goals and uses terms shaped by international counter-terrorism norms.

The NPF's 2015 "Factsheet" highlights three main priorities: educating citizens on safety, ensuring security agencies stay committed to counter-terrorism, and delivering counter-messaging in English and five local languages (S.21). This focus on public education aligns with the NPF's core mission. In December 2023, the NPF

released a safety advisory suggesting meetings be held between 8:00 am and 2:00 pm, discouraging late-night outings, and recommending the removal of titles from phone contacts (Johnson, 2023). This mirrors the UK's RUN, HIDE, TELL campaign, launched in 2017 to prepare young people for possible terror attacks. The Nigerian police may have taken cues from the success of this UK model (Counter Terrorism Policing UK, 2025). Given the harm caused by inter-agency clashes (Obi, 2017), cooperation among the NPF, DSS, ONSA, NA, Customs Service, Immigration Service, and NIA is key to tackling national security challenges effectively (Kalu, Omokhunu, & Bologi, 2025; Mohammed, Yusuf, & Garba, 2019).

Sharing counter-messaging and safety tips in five languages – English, Hausa, Arabic, French, and Kanuri – could help local communities use "our language" instead of "their language" (Mellor & Seyfeddinipur, 2017), building a sense of identity and encouraging cooperation with security agencies to protect the nation. The document highlights the state's Stratcom response to extremist claims as an effort to "fill the vacuum" left by the group's digital propaganda. However, it doesn't show clear evidence that the government or security agencies identified an actual information gap, even though the police used state-backed messaging to challenge extremist ideas. There's also no unified report linking the NPF's CT broadcast to an established StratCom network.

Macro-level analysis points to a national counterterrorism awareness campaign that unfolded against a backdrop of institutional power struggles and pressure on how the media reported national security issues. The tone revealed an ideological clash between the state and insurgent groups, set in a complicated environment involving the police and State Security Service (SSS). The effort aimed to combat violent extremism, promote national unity, and protect democracy by fostering public-police cooperation, emphasizing community intelligence, and ensuring a safe space for democratic rights. The state used strong rhetoric to justify its coordinated actions against BH, leading to the mobilization of "various commands and formations across the nation" (S.21) to take on insurgent groups.

In the broader political scene, police used a "fact sheet" to raise awareness about public safety and the risks of a divided society. The campaign began during the height of BH violence in the northeast and aimed to protect democratic institutions, schools, and civilians. However, it quickly became politicized, as opposition parties accused the government of failing to handle the insurgency and portrayed it as a

weakness of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) ahead of the 2025 elections. Debates over counter-terrorism strategies emerged, with experts pushing for more civilian policing over purely military action, stressing the value of community intelligence and tactical precision. The tense political climate also put pressure on media outlets, leading to coverage that often reflected political agendas rather than objective facts. Meanwhile, global attention, especially from the #BringBackOurGirls movement, pushed authorities to show proactive security efforts to the international community.

In a YouTube video, TVC News shared that Nigerian military leaders are tackling BH with non-kinetic strategies (TVC News, 2023a). This effort is part of a countering violent extremism programme run by the Martin Luther Agwai International Leadership and Peacekeeping Centre (MLAILPKC) for military officers and allied officials in West Africa, supported by the Japanese Government and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) (TVC News, 2023a). The two-week training at the Army Resource Centre in Abuja focused on counter-messaging and provided military and paramilitary participants with key soft skills and counter-terrorism tactics (TVC News, 2023a). Facilitator Aishatu Sambo spoke about its benefits for building community resilience, while Brigadier General Obinna Onubogu stressed the value of working with both national and international partners. Japanese Ambassador Matsunga Kazuyoshi said the initiative aims to strengthen the capacities of West African security forces, even with the risk of civilian casualties from military actions. Participants highlighted how non-kinetic approaches are crucial for creating alternative dispute resolution systems and encouraging good governance.

The Countering Violent Extremism Course, held in five sessions on 26 October and 8 November 2024 at the Nigerian Army School of Finance and Administration (NASFA) in Lagos, brought together 32 participants from several West African nations dedicated to improving community safety (Onochie, 2024). Alao noted the serious challenges of insurgency and the need for flexible solutions through stakeholder cooperation, urging participants to take the lead in fostering resilience and to “be the architects of this justice” (Onochie, 2024) as they return home to drive positive change.

Major General Farouk Mijinyawa, General Officer Commanding (GOC) 81 Division, highlighted the importance of the training in boosting education, strengthening community ties, and opening up economic opportunities. He noted that the programme would prepare future peacekeepers with the key skills needed to

tackle violent extremism and successfully carry out their duties in complex peacekeeping missions (Onochie, 2024). Ghanaian army official Major Felix Adongo discussed the need to identify the root causes of the insurgency and the tough conditions that make it dangerous to confront the insurgents, saying:

> We ought to employ non-kinetic measures to counter the extremist agenda rather than constantly subjecting ourselves to kinetic means, which are always about gun battles. We must address this menace from this angle by tackling the root causes of these extremist ideas and agendas - people who are fighting for ideological causes are tough to fight if they are being radicalised; therefore, there is a need for us to tackle the root causes of violence and extremism (Onochie, 2024).

Adongo stressed the importance of moving away from kinetic combat methods, noting that such tactics often lead to unnecessary civilian and military casualties (S.22). He called for non-kinetic strategies focused on dialogue and peaceful solutions, saying, "This approach would be far more beneficial than depleting our resources and risking lives" (Onochie, 2024). Likewise, Lt. Col. Thomas Nimele of the Liberian Armed Forces proposed a unified counter-messaging strategy involving the government, CSOs, and the media to tackle these issues effectively (S.22). Nimele emphasized that this method could greatly help in addressing violent extremism by using media, civil society, and other groups to spread anti-extremism and anti-violence messages (Onochie, 2024). The NOA, Nigeria's agency for rebranding, promoting positive content, and counter-messaging, also took part in the event. Rhoda I. Sadus, a deputy director at NOA, affirmed that this approach goes beyond armed conflict, embracing alternative ways to counter violent extremism. According to her:

> Violent extremism is rooted in ideology, which resides in the minds of the people. You cannot use a kinetic approach to counter violent extremism. We have a strategy. We want to see how we can counter radicalisation that leads to extreme violence. You cannot do that by using force. You have to go into the fabric of society, which is the community.

The NOA official who insisted that they work in the communities with offices in all the 774 LGAs of the country and area councils of the FCT said:

> One of the things that we do is community engagement. We

> have been engaging with the community to explore ways to counter the process of radicalization. Therefore, if we can achieve that, I believe it will go a long way in helping us counter violent extremism in our society (Onochie, 2024).

She acknowledged that much work remains to change people's attitudes (S.22). In 2023, Sadus stated, “we engaged local media to educate the community about radicalisation, as many unknowingly fall victim. Those posing as social support often indoctrinate them” (Onochie, 2024).

According to VVVA’s *stage one* template, the video labelled S.22, published by TVC on 17 November 2023, runs for 2 minutes and 38 seconds and features high-quality visuals and audio. In *stage two*, the scene is set at the Army Resource Centre in Abuja, with key figures including facilitator Sambo; Japanese Ambassador Kazuyoshi Alo from UNDP; GOC Mijinyawa; Ghanaian military official Adongo; and a Liberian representative—showcasing a diverse mix of government officials, politicians, military leaders, and civilians. Attendees wore both formal suits and military fatigues, symbolizing the blend of civil diplomacy and armed defence in the pursuit of lasting peace. The mix of traditional attire and camouflage worn by speakers reinforced the message that tackling violent extremism requires a whole-of-society approach, merging kinetic military action with diplomatic, non-kinetic strategies. The uniforms of Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Liberian officers reflected a commitment to security, while the civilian clothing of facilitators signified community engagement, rehabilitation, and peacebuilding. Footage showed senior officials and international military participants emphasizing civil-military collaboration, deradicalization, and intelligence-led operations over a sole focus on combat. This imagery highlights a strategic shift toward community-focused training, civil-military projects, and managing terrorist surrenders. All dialogue in the video is in English, underscoring the call for national unity and the understanding that force alone cannot end insurgency. Medium close-up shots were used to boost visual impact and keep the audience engaged.

Stage three emphasizes the key role of non-kinetic methods such as deradicalization, addressing socio-economic issues, and encouraging community dialogue in achieving large-scale surrenders and lasting reintegration. The Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015) is evident, as speeches show that media coverage of the NA’s non-kinetic strategies frames an “Us” versus “them” narrative, highlighting military successes while casting insurgents in a negative light. This framing boosts state

legitimacy and public support by portraying the military as protectors and insurgents as threats. The strategy justifies non-kinetic actions and arrests as proactive, essential measures for national security. The video reflects this legitimation approach, using authorization, rationalization, and moral evaluation (van Leeuwen, 2015) to frame arrests as necessary for stability, trust, and safety. Terms like "gun battles," "military personnel," "violence," and "extremism" (S.22) reinforce military authority. The broadcast clears up misconceptions about military power by noting that soldiers must hand civilian suspects over to civil authorities. Mentioning individuals who "unknowingly fall victim" (S.22) adds a moral angle. While acknowledging that force-based operations in Nigeria can cause arbitrary arrests and alienation, the speeches push for more effective non-kinetic methods. Approaches like community engagement and economic growth are seen as vital for tackling conflict at its roots and building trust. The military now blends kinetic force with non-kinetic, intelligence-driven tactics to strengthen counter-insurgency efforts, targeting host communities, youth, and vulnerable groups in unstable regions.

Using the three-dimensional CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992) for S.22, the government's approach shows a shift from an "us" versus "them" mindset toward easing tensions, stressing that lasting peace means blending military action with community collaboration. The Nigerian military is moving toward non-kinetic, civil-military strategies that tackle deep-seated divisions in local communities. These efforts focus on intelligence-led arrests and encouraging insurgent surrenders, but their success relies on addressing root grievances and avoiding military overreach. The government uses softer language like "architects of positive change" for participants, "gun battles" for kinetic operations, and "ideology" (S.22) for violent extremism, reframing military terms and highlighting "soft" tactics like community outreach and PSYOP in counter-insurgency. Main actors include civilian, military, and political authorities, with targeted audiences as recipients. Speeches lean on metaphors such as a "war of ideas" and "winning hearts and minds," (S.22) reflecting inclusive language, psychological operations, and patriotic appeals.

At the *meso-level*, the unfolding of events revealed a clash of discourses, with Television Continental (TVC News) sharing the core message on both terrestrial and YouTube channels. The public heard from military leaders, security experts, and civil society advocates, whose speeches and strategies aimed to build trust and understanding between the military and Nigerian civilians. TVC and other media

outlets played a key role in promoting these non-kinetic strategies, fostering awareness, and presenting the military as committed to peace and stability. Reports point to the success of intelligence-led operations in disrupting criminal networks and reducing violence, alongside the government's savvy use of traditional and social media to shape counter-insurgency narratives. The speeches also show how localized prevention and counter-violent extremism (P/CVE) policies are being woven into the broader global fight against terrorism.

The messages align with the state's frameworks, stressing the importance of non-kinetic strategies as essential complements to military force in tackling insecurity. By focusing on community cooperation, historical context, and behavioural change, the aim is to address the root causes of conflict. Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) plays a key role in building trust, alongside intelligence-driven efforts to reduce reliance on purely kinetic measures (S.22). Partnerships between the Nigerian Army, the Japanese government, UNDP, and MLAILPKC work to train West African military and paramilitary officers in non-kinetic methods, boosting military effectiveness and supporting lasting peace. This collaboration reflects the 2006 UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, promoting a united front against terrorism. Despite ongoing insurgency challenges and mixed results from state-level actions (Lemmi & Simoncelli, 2025), there are opportunities to fine-tune military approaches (Khalid, 2021). Reports from April 2025 highlight concerns about weak security responses in Borno State (Kingimi, 2025), indicating reduced control over terrorist threats. The 16th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is vital for peace and development, pushing for justice, stronger institutions, and reduced violence through community collaboration for sustainable conflict resolution (Bamidele, 2021), while underscoring that lasting peace depends on public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms (United Nations, 2025).

Fostering dialogue, peace, and resilience while helping communities prepare for terrorist threats highlights the strong link between resilience and peacebuilding. Building resilience supports peace efforts and sets the stage for lasting stability (Juncos & Joseph, 2020). Local actors who grasp the importance of resilience are better positioned to achieve sustainable peace (Interpeace, 2025). Community media also plays a big role in pushing back against indoctrination and radicalization. Often called "we media," "grassroots journalism," or "citizen media" (Deuze, 2006), these participatory platforms offer vital alternatives to mainstream outlets, especially during

conflicts. They give communities the tools to voice security concerns, access trustworthy information, and engage in democratic conversations that improve well-being. They also promote counter-narratives, showing how the state's Stratcom responds to extremist claims to fill the gap left by the group's digital propaganda.

At the *macro level*, an ideological conflict is evident; the data reveals an ideological clash showing the power struggle between government and military forces on one side and insurgent groups on the other. In this setting, PSYOP, community outreach, and media partnerships play a big role in challenging extremist beliefs and tackling the roots of violent extremism, helping to validate government actions that promote democratic values and national unity. Using different media and civil society channels, spokespeople project authority and legitimacy while defending the government's stance against BH and outlining measures to protect national security. Still, the Nigerian Armed Forces' non-kinetic methods have been criticized for seeing civilian dissent as a security risk, which can stir political tension and hurt trust between civilians and the military. All of this reflects the push and pull between protecting the nation and safeguarding free expression, as ongoing efforts aim to bridge divisions and raise awareness about radicalization.

Another YouTube video by the Emirates News Agency highlighted an important meeting with five representatives from Nigeria's ONSA at the International Centre of Excellence for Countering Extremism in Abu Dhabi (Emirates News Agency, 2024). Held on 12 December 2024 and co-sponsored by the EU and the United Arab Emirates, the event focused on reviewing and implementing Nigeria's Policy Framework and National Action Plan for P/CVE. The video shows active participation, informative slides, background music, and an Arabic transcript. An English statement from Hedayah noted that the visit aimed to kickstart collaboration with Nigeria's ONSA to advance the National Strategy and Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Extremism (Emirates News Agency, 2024). Organizers said this strategic engagement builds on Hedayah's ongoing work to support rehabilitation and reintegration from extremism in Nigeria. Hedayah has boosted its efforts by helping families affected by radicalization, offering mentorship, and training national trainers to share key skills and knowledge. They thanked the EU and UAE for funding the initiative and confirmed that the visit reflects the Nigerian government's support for Hedayah's partnership with the ONSA (Emirates News Agency, 2024).

Using VVVA's *stage one* analysis, the video labelled S.23, released by TVC on 17

November 2023, runs for 46 minutes with sharp visuals and clear sound. *Stage two* shows it was filmed at Hedayah headquarters in Abu Dhabi, where officials and trainers welcomed a Nigerian delegation from ONSA. The footage features Hedayah's logo and a world map, symbolizing its global peace-building mission. Nigerian delegates wore traditional outfits, reflecting diversity and unity, while Arab participants appeared in both traditional dress and Western suits, blending Arabian and Anglo-Saxon influences in peace efforts. The video captures a round-table discussion during a two-day workshop, signalling equal opportunities for learning and exchange. All conversations were in English, honouring Nigeria's official language. Shots ranged from close-up and cinematic to standard, surveillance-style, and amateur angles.

Stage three analysis points to themes of deradicalization and peace-building through a partnership between the United Arab Emirates and Nigeria, aimed at reviewing, designing, and implementing Nigeria's Policy Framework and National Plan for P/CVE with tailored capacity-building and sharing of best practices (Hedayah, 2024). Using the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), the discourse highlights Nigerian security officials' proactive leadership and Hedayah's technical expertise in addressing evolving extremist tactics. The narrative favours positive state and international partner actions while challenging extremist ideologies, framing the discussion to support official security efforts. Training drew on Hedayah's earlier work with families affected by radicalization and the development of national trainers to spread programme knowledge and skills (Hedayah, 2024). The partnership showcases legitimation strategies—international expertise (Authorization), community-oriented values (Moralization), and strategic reasoning (Rationalization) (van Leeuwen, 2015)—to strengthen Nigeria's P/CVE approach. It reaffirms Nigeria's political and military authority to protect sovereignty and citizens. Discussions explored balancing security with ethical issues, such as community consent for reintegration and a justice-focused approach to former combatants. The initiative tackles the logic of violence by addressing ideological, socio-economic, and community-level drivers of radicalization, instead of relying solely on military action. It also counters extremist propaganda, like "myths of glorification, martyrdom, and victories," by promoting literacy and amplifying local voices. Target audiences include government security planners, CSOs, community leaders, and at-risk youth, to build national resilience against radicalization. However, some critics argue that relying on UAE experts, rather than sub-Saharan African specialists, to draft the P/CVE plan may undermine the

development of a culturally relevant, homegrown national action plan for West Africa, which faces persistent insurgent threats.

S.23 was analysed using a three-part CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992). On a micro level, Hedayah's capacity-building programmes tackle the "Us" versus "Them" mindset by confronting extremist propaganda that plays on social and religious divides. The initiative builds community resilience through a "Whole-of-Society" approach, replacing divisive language with messages of unity and local peacebuilding. Backed by the EU, it focuses on capacity-building and uses terms like "deradicalization," "reintegration," and "stabilization" (S.23) in its security and peace efforts. The narrative portrays BH and similar militant groups—responsible for violence and kidnappings—as aggressors, while casting civilians as victims. Phrases such as "Think and Do Tank," "Grip of insurgency" (S.23), and "building resilience" depict the effort as a broad societal response to ongoing security challenges.

At the *meso level*, the Emirates News Agency shared content on its YouTube channel highlighting the UAE's active leadership in global counterterrorism, as noted in Hedayah's reports. Targeting government officials and security experts, the initiative focuses on capacity building, rehabilitation, and sharing best practices. Analysis shows that Hedayah's partnership with Nigeria's ONSA strengthens national counter-extremism by emphasizing community-based education and rehabilitation. This aligns with global counterterrorism efforts through a whole-of-society approach, integrating international expertise to combat extremist threats and propaganda. The initiative supports Nigeria's shift toward resilience, rehabilitation, and inter-agency collaboration, prioritizing prevention over a purely military response. To address terrorism and violent extremism, Nigeria created a policy framework covering radicalization, de-radicalization, and strategic communications, grounded in international standards and drawing on key UN Security Council resolutions and the UN Secretary-General's 2015 report on preventing violent extremism.

The framework focuses on strong counter-radicalization and de-radicalization strategies, recognizing P/CVE as key to boosting security, economic growth, and community well-being, especially in the northeast. It promotes teamwork among government bodies, CSOs, NGOs, faith-based groups, families, and youth, while stressing the media's role in fighting terrorism and the influence of social media voices advocating peace (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017). Its main goals include building and coordinating programmes at all levels of government, ensuring fair and accessible

justice that upholds human rights, and empowering communities to resist violent extremism. It champions both a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, calling on diverse stakeholders to unite against extremism. Media and civil society are seen as crucial in limiting terrorist operations, with an emphasis on human rights standards, national ownership of security, local capacity building, and promoting positive narratives (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017). However, it lacks non-kinetic tactics like EW, IW, and CW used by nations such as Russia and China (Lehto & Henselmann, 2020), as well as local African counter-messaging efforts. Through targeted messaging to dismantle extremist ideas, the initiative seeks to achieve its StratCom goals and counter insurgent propaganda.

At the *macro level,* while the event focused on cooperation, Nigeria's security scene is still shaped by clashes between state authority and insurgent influence, along with debates over military versus civilian approaches and how security is funded. These tensions highlight a continuing battle of ideas. The government aimed to boost its P/CVE strategy through targeted capacity building that supports democratic values and national unity. By promoting inclusive, community-based policies and gaining international backing, the collaboration between the two countries not only strengthens operational effectiveness but also reinforces state power and legitimacy as outlined in Nigeria's national action plan. With insurgents trying to divide society, the initiative raised public awareness about security threats and radicalization, placing the issue in a wider political context. While scholars debate its impact, the partnership builds Nigeria's global credibility, shifts security tactics toward rehabilitation, and bolsters its role as a regional leader in counterterrorism.

A recent TV News report revealed that the Office of the ONSA has rolled out a national strategy to tackle violent extremism in Nigeria. This move is a key part of the government's Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) plan for ex-combatants, blending both military and non-military methods to handle security issues. The government has also set up the Operational Support Centre (OSC) to back DDR efforts, alongside amnesty programmes for former militants and bandits. According to the Counter-Terrorism Centre, the strategy focuses heavily on non-kinetic measures to improve coordination at all levels. Rear Admiral Yaminu Musa (retired), head of the National Counter Terrorism Centre, stressed that relying solely on force isn't enough to fight terrorism and extremism. The ongoing review of Nigeria's legal and strategic frameworks, including the 2022 Terrorism Prevention and

Prohibition Act, shows the government's commitment. Organizers highlighted the importance of a strong legal framework to engage, rehabilitate, and reintegrate extremist offenders, aiming to boost collaboration among stakeholders in the national action plan. Figure 7.8 illustrates the Policy Framework for P/CVE in Nigeria, showing the main strategies and initiatives tackling this urgent issue.

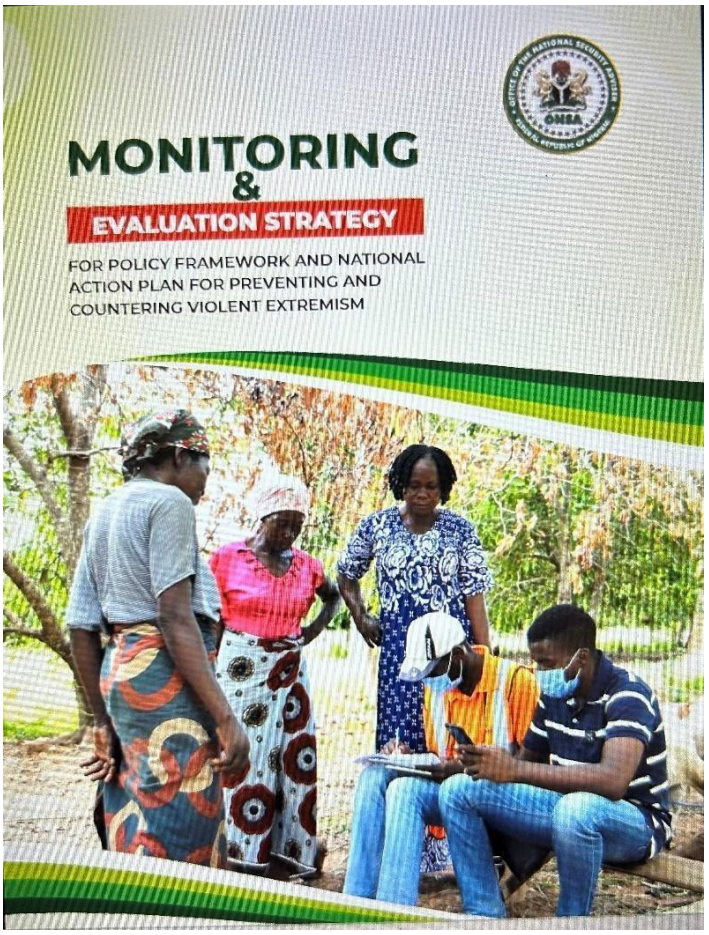


Figure 7. 8 Screenshot of the Policy Framework for P/CVE in Nigeria (ActionAid Nigeria, 2022: https://shorturl.at/JWV5o)

According to VVVA's *stage one* template, the video titled S. 24, published by TVC on 8 August 2023, runs for 2 minutes and 50 seconds and features crisp, high-quality video and audio. *Stage two* takes place at the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) in Abuja, with key figures including DDR programme officers, NCTC coordinator Rear Admiral Yaminu Musa (Retired), and Paul Nylaku, Country Director of International Alert. The initiative, overseen by the ONSA—formerly led by Major General Monguno (Rtd) and now by NSA Nuhu Ribadu for the 2025-2030 plan—uses visual cues like military Hilux vans to stress mobility in CT operations, while officers in anti-aircraft vehicles with AK-47s show combat readiness. The Niger Delta logo nods to the region's past Amnesty programme, and participants reciting the national pledge reflect patriotism. Scenes of handshakes and group photos highlight unity and mark

milestones in Nigeria's drive for peace and order. The dialogue is in English, with TVC subtitles underscoring non-kinetic strategies, while camera work mixes close-ups and long shots to capture participants and recovered weapons for greater impact.

In *stage three*, the main goal is deradicalization and peace-building through fast-tracking Nigeria's National Policy Framework for P/CVE.

This framework takes a whole-of-society approach, bringing together state actors, civil society, and community leaders to tackle the root causes of extremism through dialogue, education, and youth engagement. Using the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 2015), it contrasts proactive government efforts "us" with destructive terrorist groups "them", legitimizing official actions and victim support while rejecting extremist ideologies and framing insecurity as a systemic challenge. While aiming to rehabilitate offenders and encourage inter-agency cooperation, it faces hurdles like public scepticism, ongoing violence, and complex socio-economic issues. Drawing on the legitimation strategy (van Leeuwen, 2015), it blends authority, rational arguments, and moral appeals to build public support and strengthen national resilience. The plan boosts the Nigerian state's influence by coordinating law enforcement, civil society, and religious groups, while empowering women and youth to challenge extremist narratives. Key to the approach are rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for former extremists, alongside community-driven efforts to prevent radicalization. Recognizing violence as a layered problem tied to ideological, economic, and local grievances, it works to address these roots. ONSA focuses on breaking down myths that glorify extremism, countering false recruitment promises, and targeting vulnerable youths, community leaders, and sub-national governments.

S.24 was analysed through a three-part CDA framework (Fairclough, 1992). At the *micro level*, the refreshed, community-led P/CVE initiative tackles "Us" versus "them" narratives that fuel polarization by dismantling radical ideologies and focusing on rehabilitation rather than purely force-based measures to boost societal resilience. ONSA-related discussions show how extremist groups use euphemisms and false stories to hide their activities and radicalize people online. Experts note that sanitizing language to mask terrorism threatens national security, prompting calls for better digital monitoring and more community-driven counter-narratives. In grammatical terms, the framework labels perpetrators as those creating harmful content, with actors like ONSA tasked with countering these threats. Recipients are vulnerable viewers of extremist material, while victims are those harmed physically or

psychologically. Rather than naming a single "public enemy," authorities view the threat as decentralized, covering banditry, kidnapping, and radical factions. The strategy embraces a "whole-of-society" approach, using metaphors like "seeds of hope" and "starving the oxygen" (S.24) to frame national security as everyone's responsibility.

At the *meso-level*, ONSA crafted the policy message, which TVC News Nigeria shared via terrestrial and YouTube channels as part of a national action plan combining security measures with the disarmament and rehabilitation of ex-combatants. Targeting at-risk individuals, state governments, local communities, and the public, the goal is to reduce stigmatization. Intertextual analysis shows the policy aligns with global war on terror narratives, stressing community resilience, economic empowerment, and dismantling extremist recruitment networks. This marks a shift toward a softer approach to violent extremism in Nigeria, focusing on deradicalization and youth empowerment rather than relying solely on military tactics. The document is structured to showcase institutional frameworks and promote a "whole-of-society" strategy for tackling violent extremism. It highlights the need for community participation in intelligence gathering, preventive non-kinetic measures, and stronger inter-agency security collaboration. The researcher identified three key issues: the Federal Government's DDR programme for ex-combatants; combining combat and non-combat security strategies; and the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy for the National Action Plan on Violent Extremism (S.24). To aid ex-combatant rehabilitation, the government has launched programmes like the North East Development Commission (NEDC), which evolved from the Presidential Committee on the Northeast Initiative (PCNI), aimed at supporting both victims and former fighters of BH and ISWAP (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2021).

The DDR initiative, launched in 2016, began with a pilot programme involving six former combatants and led to the creation of the Malam-Sidi camp in Gombe State. By June 2017, 95 ex-combatants had graduated. The programme focuses on education to address the lack of formal schooling among participants, offering curricula in Hausa, Kanuri, and Fulfulde for up to 500 students. Community activities like football matches with local groups and security agencies help build relationships (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2021). Despite these efforts, challenges remain, including ethnic tensions among fighters and the presence of anti-BH militias. Stronger legal frameworks and clear sorting criteria could improve the handling of captured

individuals (Felbab-Brown, 2017). Encouraging dialogue between the Civilian Joint Task Force, military, and local communities is key to building trust, as is fostering acceptance of repentant militants for lasting peace. Aligning with United Nations DDR guidelines could strengthen Nigeria's programme and its role in Africa (Felbab-Brown, 2017). Tackling insurgency effectively requires combining military action with community support, blending tactical efforts with social and political engagement to address its root causes (United States Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, 2009).

The "Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy for Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism," released by the ONSA in Abuja, outlines a plan to tackle violent extremism in Nigeria (ActionAid Nigeria, 2022). It highlights the importance of a monitoring and evaluation approach to address security issues by boosting institutional capacity, upholding the rule of law, and involving communities through StratCom as part of the P/CVE programme. The methodology covers design, planning, implementation, and reporting to ensure quality and effective feedback (ActionAid Nigeria, 2022). The analysis focuses on StratCom, reviewing its messaging and counter-messaging efforts to support the Nigerian government's goal of improving national security. However, it leaves out key non-kinetic strategies, like the electronic and cyber warfare tactics used by global powers (Lehto & Henselmann, 2020) and does not include local African counter-messaging methods. StratCom is used to fight misinformation and disengage extremists through ideological deconstruction, encouraging collective responsibility in reporting suspicious activities.

At the *macro level*, the social practice highlights an ideological struggle, as the initiative faces challenges from power disputes over control and resources among different agencies and state bodies. The government's renewed push to counter violent extremism, led by the ONSA, seeks to strengthen democratic values while balancing security with fundamental freedoms. Key steps include promoting inclusive governance, supporting community-driven prevention, encouraging open dialogue, and partnering with CSOs. The plan requires all actions to be legally sanctioned within a unified national framework, using rhetoric to justify measures against insurgent groups and manage radicalized individuals for national stability. It tackles the root causes of radicalization and stresses international cooperation for border security and stronger judicial accountability. In the end, the strategy strives to shield society from

division by raising awareness about public safety and the dangers of youth radicalization by terrorist groups.

The research points to the government's strong counter-messaging push against insurgents, with NKA leading in speeches (ten), followed by RIC (nine), DFPF (five), KA (four), and BKNKA (two). NKA's large number of videos shows a focus on non-kinetic messaging, highlighting the need for more diplomatic efforts through political communication and StratCom. RIC stresses building regional coalitions and international partnerships, while DFPF focuses on boosting local networks for funding and policing. In contrast, BKNKA's emphasis on kinetic strategies suggests it plays a smaller role in the counter-messaging plan. While the government favours a non-kinetic approach, aligning these strategies in practice remains a challenge. The findings stress the value of strategic counter-messaging and the importance of unified efforts, including tapping into local resources, to directly address insurgent threats.

7.2 Conclusion

This chapter gave an overview of how government counter-messaging videos were categorized and interpreted. It broke down video, audiovisual, and textual content across different communication modes—filmic, visual, verbal, auditory, and symbolic. It also examined existing P/CVE mechanisms in Nigeria to propose a locally developed counter-messaging framework.

8. BH MESSAGING/GOVERNMENT'S COUNTER MESSAGING: THEMES, SYNTHESIS AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

This chapter section presents a synthesis and comparative analysis of key themes evident in the data. It examines various aspects, including content tone the level of violence depicted, intertextuality and the effectiveness of the messages conveyed. Additionally, it highlights how existing theoretical frameworks inform the application of these concepts within the Nigerian context.

8.1 Emerging Themes

8.1.1 Content Tone

This section critically examines the tone in both datasets, covering themes such as aggressive, persuasive, triumphant, apologetic, desperate, and exclamatory. In BH messaging, 11 videos (V.9; V.11; V.12; V.30; V.24; V.3; V.5; V.25; V.29; V.6; V.8) carried aggressive tones, showing the group's hostility aimed at sparking moral panic and embedding their rhetoric to push for a caliphate in Nigeria. In contrast, only one government counter-message (S.1) used an aggressive tone, which isn't surprising since the government tends to stick to a measured communication style in line with international best practices, likely to stay diplomatically correct.

The sect's leader comes across as fierce, claiming his group is invisible and unbeatable, with messages consistently lacking empathy or compassion (V.2; V.6; V.7). Aggressive body language (V.4) and props like a long chewing stick used by Shekau to intimidate add to this hostile vibe (V.5; V.18; V.19; V.3; V.6). Their messages often show no trace of empathy (V.5), with threatening videos targeting vulnerable groups, especially women and girls who are kidnapped or sold into slavery (V.6). Scenes resembling Gestapo-like tactics—military vans bursting from bush paths to overrun army barracks, burning flags or buildings, chaotic gunfire, war songs, and fleeing civilians—drive home not just the sense of terror and danger, but a steady pattern of aggressive rhetoric and behaviour (V.6; V.8).

The terrorists openly confronted local leaders, accusing them of dishonesty. Boasting about their claimed victories in Baga and Doro, they publicly called out President Goodluck Jonathan (V.18 & V.22) and all Nigerian governors while flaunting their war gear (V.8). Their leader accused the military of cowardice and lying, claiming

it was misleading the world by saying it couldn't fight due to a lack of ammunition (V.8). He also issued direct warnings to leaders in Cameroon, Niger, Chad, and Benin (V.19). Their rhetoric was extreme, with disturbing statements like "die of bitterness," "behead unbelievers," "I captured a girl going to school, and it is bothering you," and "Leave Western education, ladies go and get married… I am the one who captured your girls. I will sell them in the market […] I will sell women as commanded by Allah until the land is filled with the blood of unbelievers" (V.9 & V.16). According to AFP News Agency (2015c), they dismissed the government's alliances, bragging, "we never rose to fight Africa. We rose to fight the world" (V.13) and even claimed they could take on seven million troops in their Jihadi war (V.13), showing the confrontational nature of BH's messaging.

Shekau brought a strong religious element to the conflict, crediting their successes to Allah and their military skill (V.8). This fits into the framework of strategic violent communication (Anjide, 2018). The group uses simple, crude messaging to emphasize their brutality, unpredictability, and disregard for the Nigerian government and its forces. They also exploit social media to promote their interpretation of Islam and reinforce religious imagery and rhetoric. Their raw, unpolished visuals underscore the violence of their actions, including suicide bombings (Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018).

The government's videos take on a combative tone, showing how the Nigerian state uses KA (S4; S26; S27; S30) against insurgents. One speech points out how the terrorist threat was downplayed across all geopolitical zones (S.4). Its determination to acquire ammunition to defeat the terrorists (S.26), claim of neutralizing the group operationally (S.27), and waging war with advanced military gear like locally made combat drones, bombs, bullets, and armoured trucks (S.30), mirrors the insurgents' own aggressive rhetoric. The data also show that top officials often stick to politically correct, measured, and diplomatic language. This contrasts with their occasional bursts of incendiary remarks, unlike the terrorists, who usually rely on specific individuals to speak in a blunt, unruly way.

In the insurgents' videos analysed, only seven (V.4; V.16; V.17; V.18; V.21; V.23; V.14) had persuasive messaging, compared to eleven government counter-messaging videos (S.8; S.9; S.28; S.5; S.13; S.2; S.6; S.5; S.16; S.17; S.29). This suggests insurgent communications are generally basic and unsophisticated, while government messaging is more deliberate in addressing jihadi narratives. Additionally, seven BH

videos (V.1; V.2; V.15; V.26; V.7; V.13; V.27) showed a triumphant tone, compared to twelve government counter-messaging videos (S.25; S.3; S.20; S.26; S.27; S.13; S.14; S.15; S.21; S.22; S.23; S.24). This gap suggests the terrorists focus on showcasing their attacks, while the government prioritizes counter-narratives to uphold its reputation with the Nigerian public and the international community, especially given ongoing perceptions of poor conflict resolution.

Evaluating how apologetic the messaging was, only one BH video (V.1) showed any hint of apology, while the Nigerian state came across as apologetic in four videos (S.7; S.18; S.26; S.11). This difference suggests the terrorists project confidence and a lack of concern for offending, while the government takes a more careful approach, mindful of how its messages are perceived both locally and abroad. When it comes to desperation, two insurgent videos (V.10; V.22) and two government videos (S.10; S.30) showed a sense of urgency—BH wanting to spread its message quickly, and the government working to push back against it. As for exclamations, two BH videos (V.27; V.29) featured them, compared to just one government video (S.12), with terrorists using these outbursts to stir urgency, spread fear, and project certainty.

8.1.2 Scale of Violence Shown

The data was also analysed by themes such as scale of violence, classified as explicit, implied, or absent. Eleven BH videos (V.9; V.11; V.12; V.30; V.24; V.3; V.5; V.25; V.29; V.6; V.8) show explicit violence, while seven imply it through triumphant tones about their illegal activities (V.1; V.2; V.15; V.26; V.7; V.13; V.27). This reflects the main aims of violent messaging: to maximize psychological impact, project false strength, and pressure the government into compliance. It also fuels recruitment and radicalization by flaunting power, attracting thrill-seeking radicals, and competing with other terror groups for dominance or funding. While the government focuses on protecting citizens and territorial integrity, insurgents use mass violence to provoke and divide—baiting the state into military retaliation, using crackdowns to push locals toward radicalization, and removing peaceful political options to enforce an "Us" versus "them" mindset. In comparison, government videos show four instances of explicit violence (S.1; S.25; S.20; S.24) and five implied (S.2; S.7; S.29; S.8; S.9), avoiding large-scale violence to reduce the negative effect of graphic imagery. Insurgents exploit this restraint to display bravado and create the impression they are winning the war.

8.1.3 Intertextuality: Other Events, Global Jihadi Groups/Partners, and Historical Figures

The data was analysed using intertextuality to identify connections to other events, global jihadi groups, and historical figures. Insurgents frequently pointed to past successful attacks, highlighted in seven videos (V.3; V.24; V.8; V.11; V.23; V.12; V.20), using them to make their case. This tactic works to embed a sense of ongoing conflict in the Nigerian public's mind, framing the insurgency as an unending war dating back to 2002 with a "no retreat, no surrender" mindset. The message is clear: what they've done before, they're doing now, and will continue to do. It also floods the media to reinforce their impact and divert attention from government measures against the violence.

Similarly, in nine government videos (S.1; S.9; S.10; S.18; S.28; S.15; S.7; S.25; S.29), officials spotlighted past victories over insurgents in the northeast, particularly in the Sambisa Forest. This counter-narrative seeks to reassure the public of military achievements and sway audiences toward the government rather than the insurgents, who often target young recruits. It also aims to sap the terrorists' morale and push them toward surrender. Over time, showcasing these wins helps reassure regional governments and the international community that real progress is being made to challenge insurgent narratives.

For BH, alignment with global Jihadi groups—previously ISIS and ISWAP, and currently Al-Qaeda —as evidenced by three videos (V.15; V.29; V.20)—reflects a strategic effort to position itself within the broader context of international jihadism. By referencing international terror networks, BH seeks to project itself as a global Jihadi organization. This association introduces the concepts of both West African and global jihad. Such alignment with established terrorist organizations provides BH with organizational and logistical support, including training and funding for its operations. In parallel, the Nigerian government seeks assistance from regional governments, the U.S., the UK, and the broader international community to combat the terrorist threat. Thirteen government videos (S.3; S.28; S.4; S.27; S.12; S.15; S.1; S.2; S.7; S.17; S.19; S.25; S.22) document the state's efforts to engage regional and global partners under the framework of the international war on terror. Given the transnational nature of terrorism, these appeals underscore the government's commitment to national security and its assurance to citizens that peace will be restored.

BH's videos also draw on memory and historical narratives, demonstrating the

group's reliance on the enduring legacies of its leaders. Nine insurgent videos (V.15; V.27; V.16; V.7; V.29; V.24; V.9; V.22; V.19) emphasize the inspirational influence of figures such as Shekau, Abu Bakar Shaka, and Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. This approach is a deliberate strategy to invoke influential personalities who inspire the group and attract recruits. By referencing these leaders, BH asserts its authority and pledges unwavering allegiance to prominent Jihadi figures who provide guidance and mentorship. Conversely, in five videos (S.7; S.8; S.10; S.12; S.14), the government invokes the authority of the Nigerian president and appeals to both regional and international leaders for support.

8.1.4 Effectiveness: Compelling Nature of Messages

An analysis comparing BH's messaging with the government's counter-messaging found BH's narratives particularly persuasive in two areas: their blend of anti- and pro-education rhetoric, and jihadist religious propaganda. The anti-education stance stems from grievances over the colonial past and the country's Western-style education system. Many in the north view Western education as incompatible with Islam, blaming it for poor learning outcomes, linking it to unemployment, and seeing it as a symbol of corrupt elites (Afzal, 2020b). In January 2012, Shekau openly criticized the treatment of Islamic schools and students, issued threats, and acted on them—between January and early March, militants destroyed at least a dozen schools in Maiduguri, Borno State. Three were burned on February 20, four more between February 26 and 29, and another five on March 1, reportedly in retaliation for state raids on Islamic schools (Human Rights Watch, 2012a). Later, in a video delivered in Hausa and English, Shekau claimed responsibility for abducting the Chibok schoolgirls, denounced Western education, and threatened to sell them on the black market (Reuters, 2014). This reinforced deeply rooted anti-education views, especially opposition to girls' education, aligning with cultural and religious beliefs in northern Nigeria that limit women to domestic roles. The abduction remains a "notable attack." The Kanama, Dawah, and Radical Phases (Mohammed, 2014) outline how jihadi-religious messaging and proselytization feature in the group's communications. BH engages in leisure activities like role-play, nasheed singing, and producing media content (Pieri & Zenn, 2018). Despite Shekau's propaganda image, BH at times interacted with locals in dialogue rather than through violence.

In the Caliphate, justice is enforced by an unusual morality police force. Their ties to IS began in November 2014 and lasted until February 2015, when Shekau

agreed after a *Shura* (Council) meeting. The deal was finalized in March 2015. Younger members often spend their free time filming themselves joking or sparring, sometimes capturing street scenes to pair with IS templates as practice for real battle footage. They rehearse combining visual and audio templates for Islamic State's online channels before recording actual combat. For media work, they usually film attacks locally, edit them with IS templates, and likely email the footage for posting on the group's social media. These insurgents falsely see themselves as Muslims, using religion in an emotional and divisive way (S.28). In response, the military and government are now working with religious leaders on deradicalization programmes. Data shows the terrorists' Jihadi-religious messaging and proselytizing (S.12), aiming to Islamize the country by referencing the Taliban and Mujahideen, trying to replicate this in Nigeria through acts like dipping the Quran in the sea and enforcing Sharia Law (S.12). BH's so-called Jihad goes against Islamic teachings, which say jihad must be declared by a legitimate Muslim leader (Power, 2014). While a security expert suggested some officials might back militants to form an IS (S.12), the data does not support the government's claims about Jihadi-religious proselytization.

The data revealed clear contradictions between expected themes and reality when comparing BH messaging with government counter-messaging. BH videos often feature weapons, masked fighters, training scenes, gestures, and other aggressive non-verbal cues, while government videos show officials in *Agbada*, soldiers in uniform, and community outreach activities. Verbally, BH threatens the state, uses religious justifications, and launches verbal attacks, whereas government messages highlight military strength, share COIN successes, encourage surrender, promote patriotism, and discuss insurgent rehabilitation. Research indicates BH aims to delegitimize the state by rejecting Western education, while the government portrays the group as criminal and calls for unity. Over time, BH's focus has shifted from direct terror acts to using terror as propaganda, while the government has gone from denial to adopting non-kinetic strategies under the PCVE framework. Despite claims of relying on non-kinetic methods, most government counter-insurgency efforts have centred more on rehabilitating ex-combatants and providing humanitarian aid than on messaging (see P/CVE and DDR documents).

8.2 Application of Theoretical Frameworks

The Rational Model of Human Communication and the CMCT theory are applied to study BH's messaging alongside the government's counter-messaging.

These frameworks helped pinpoint the role of each in both BH's and the state's narratives. Drawing on the reviewed literature and research findings, these perspectives aim to bring greater clarity and coherence to the analysis, shedding light on how messaging and counter-messaging operate and on the media's influence on the insurgency within the broader political context of the BAY states. This approach also seeks to tackle the challenges faced by the government's counter-messaging efforts and explore ways to develop Afro-centric counter-messaging strategies.

8.2.1 Application of the Rational Model of Human Communication Theory

The chosen theoretical frameworks shape the study's analytical approach, and this section explains how they're applied to interpret and organize the findings in the empirical chapters. Together, the frameworks and data support the creation of the proposed Afro-multidimensional StratCom approach. Drawing from COIN tactics used during the communist insurgency and the Malayan Emergency, the Nigerian government uses this model to counter BH's messaging. The focus is on political and psychological strategies to build legitimacy, rather than depending solely on military force (Onuoha, Nwangwu & Ugwueze, 2023). Sir Robert Thompson's five basic principles of Counter-insurgency (COIN) provide an effective framework for dismantling BH's operational capabilities and ideological appeal through StratComs in the following ways:

8.2.1.1 Developing a Clear Political Goal

The first principle of the Relational Model focuses on setting a clear political goal to build constructive relationships among stakeholders, the government, and citizens in resolving conflicts. It advocates a goal that fosters a stable, united, and prosperous society, directly countering the insurgents' vision. In line with Thompson's thesis, the data mirrors the Nigerian government's clear political aims through remarks like: "We are sending you this message about the operations we have carried out" (V.2), "our strength and firepower surpass that of Nigeria. We are ready to confront the United States of America" (V.3), "Even US troops could not do anything to us, not even the troops of the world" (V.4), "these elections that you are planning will not happen" (V.5), and "Today, we have declared Baga part of our territory" (V.8). Their goal is to seize power and territory to establish a Caliphate. On the other hand, the government uses clear political goals to push back against terrorist narratives, as seen in statements like: "our readiness to cooperate and help to combat threats to cross-border

terrorism" (S.1), "I met with G-7 leaders and other allied presidents to establish an international coalition against Boko Haram" (V.2), commitment to "the guiding principles of the UN in the promotion of peace and security, development and human rights" (S.6), "we are facing Boko Haram in the northwest, militants in the south-south" (S.7), and "My administration will seek collaboration at bilateral and multilateral levels to enhance our capacities" (S.16).

Effectively countering BH necessitates messaging that extends beyond basic anti-terrorism rhetoric and presents a compelling vision for Northern Nigeria. Given that BH exploits governmental shortcomings and offers a deceptive religious utopia, official communications should emphasize a cohesive national identity that guarantees security, justice, and economic dignity for all citizens. Such a strategy would directly confront the group's ideological propaganda. By focusing on a brighter political future through regional growth, improved education, and the empowerment of local communities, the state shifts the narrative away from violence and toward rebuilding, rendering the insurgent ideology irrelevant.

Drawing from Communicative Action, the government should focus on fostering cooperative communication by making sure all its messaging is open to rational evaluation, grounded in truth and right, and consistent with social or moral norms (Philosophy Institute, 2025; Kelly, 2023). This approach can also guide social interactions and counter-messaging efforts by security agencies to help defeat insurgents. Building a clear plan backed by solid data can help shape an Afro-multidimensional StratCom approach that fits African contexts. This means government counter-messaging should focus on promoting a vision of a free, independent, and economically strong nation rather than merely reacting to insurgent narratives. Within the current P/CVE framework, the government can also use alternative counter-messaging to showcase successes in ongoing deradicalization programmes (Onuoha, Nwangwu & Ugwueze, 2023).

8.2.1.2 Upholding Legitimacy (Rule of Law)

While the rule of law is key to securing law and order, BH's actions reject legal norms. Drawing inspiration from the Taliban and the Mujahideen (V.12), the group's messaging pushes for an Islamic state and sharia law. For them, following the rule of law means obeying Allah's law (V.8; V.7) and using religious slogans such as "Allahu

Akbar" (V.12). On the other hand, as a liberal democracy, Nigeria relies on its legal systems and official documents—such as PC/CVE (S.23), the Police "Fact Sheet," (S.21) and OSC's national DDR plan (S.15; S.24) —as part of its counter-messaging efforts. The idea of upholding the rule of law, as articulated in the Theory of Human Communication, aligns well with the Nigerian government's approach. Calls for leaders to act as "architects of justice" (S.22) to ensure ex-combatants "pass through a form of justice system" (S.15) and to maintain "respect for the rule of law" (S.17) show the government's dedication to legality in counter-messaging and counter-insurgency.

Allegations of human rights abuses by the military threaten this credibility, so being transparent and honest is crucial in countering BH's claims that Nigeria is anti-Islamic and illegitimate (Onuoha, Nwangwu & Ugwueze, 2023). COIN efforts and communications should always stick to national and international laws, ensuring full accountability. When it comes to BH, messaging should focus on showing transparency, upholding justice, and treating defectors humanely. BH often capitalizes on claims or evidence of state abuses and extrajudicial killings to stir up anger and recruit locals. Staying consistent with lawful actions and clear, honest communication can effectively shut down this narrative. Making the legal trials of insurgents public while protecting civilian rights helps show the moral high ground of state authorities. These actions build stronger community trust in state institutions, especially when compared to the arbitrary and violent rule of insurgent groups.

8.2.1.3 Developing a Systematic Intelligence/Communication Plan

Systematic intelligence gathering and a solid communication plan are key to both insurgent and counterinsurgent strategies. BH carefully plans abductions and only engages with the media after creating fear and suspense, as seen in the Chibok girls' case (V.11). They sometimes explain the "meaning" of their "message" (V.12) and reference past attacks, like in Gombe (V.12), to strengthen their narrative. Phrases such as "Your alliance will not achieve anything" and "Amass all your weapons and face us" (V.13) show their use of psychological warfare to intimidate opponents. In turn, the government focuses on best practices like "coordinate, share the information, share intelligence, and work harder" (S.13), "killing their ideology" (S.14), and "finding appropriate counter-narratives against these violent extremist sects" (S.14). The P/CVE framework points to the media's role in fighting terrorism, noting how social media can promote peace (S.23) and how media and civil society can limit the space

for terrorist groups (S.23).

As part of this plan, Nigeria has urged African governments to “check the proliferation of small arms and light weapons” (S.17) and committed to “non-kinetic operations – multi-pronged support – use of flyers, press releases, and radio broadcasts in key local languages across the Lake Chad Basin” (S.29). This approach fits with the third principle of the theoretical framework, based on Thompson’s COIN principles, calling for a comprehensive intelligence and communication strategy. The government can also use modern PSYOP to disrupt BH’s online activities and, through targeted media campaigns, encourage defections and participation in peace efforts. Civil, military, and economic efforts should be integrated within a single, coherent national strategy rather than operating independently. The government’s communication plan should be a StratCom that builds awareness and manages image across a wide range of audiences. It should serve as a transformative force that tackles the root causes of the conflict - illiteracy, poverty, inequality, and ideological misconceptions. Through targeted advocacy initiatives, StratCom shapes policy direction in peacebuilding and fosters community resilience to extremist ideologies (Ridwanullah & Villar, 2026).

As part of its communication plan, the government can apply Strategic/Instrumental Action to pursue specific goals and influence people in the north-east, LCB, and across Nigeria (Schaefer, Heinze, Rotte & Denke, 2013). This aligns with the “rational model of human communication” that underpins this distinction. Counter-messaging against BH should demonstrate a coordinated, multi-sector approach that explicitly connects military successes to economic and social recovery. Consistent messaging from Islamic scholars, military leaders, and development agencies signals the state’s determination and effective coordination. Comprehensive, unified communication also reassures the public that the government is addressing both the military conflict and the underlying socio-economic challenges exploited by BH.

8.2.1.4. Defeating Subversion

The fourth COIN principle focuses on prioritizing the defeat of subversion. The primary target must be the insurgents' political infrastructure, intelligence networks, and psychological hold over the population rather than just their guerrilla fighters. For

BH, this means warning against disloyalty within their ranks, as seen in statements like, “Oh people of Cameroon, know that a man cannot become a Muslim without rebelling against democracy and polytheism” (S.4), threats of kidnapping for non-compliance (S.6), “Allah does not want anyone to be treacherous” (V.18), and “Anyone who doubts our resolve should attempt to challenge us and will face consequences” (V.21).

These declarations are intended to prevent internal betrayal. Therefore, information campaigns must actively challenge and undermine BH’s theological legitimacy and recruitment mechanisms. Given that insurgency is fundamentally a contest of ideas, engaging respected local Islamic scholars to refute BH’s theological claims can significantly diminish the group’s influence. Media initiatives should also disseminate testimonies from defectors and victims, emphasizing the group’s hypocrisy, corruption, and exploitation of women and children to undermine its romanticized image from within. Recognizing the dangers of ideological radicalization, the government works to dismantle the ideology BH uses to justify its war against Nigeria and its people. For example, it emphasizes that the conflict is “being driven by non-state actors” (S.6) and labels them as subversive groups, while noting that “Boko Haram itself has declared loyalty to us” (S.7). These remarks underscore both the group’s subversive nature and the government’s determination to eliminate it. Building on this principle, the ONSA, through the Institute of CT in Abuja, could use scientific tools, such as algorithms, to remove extremist content from social media. Likewise, agencies such as the NOA, the Federal Radio Corporation, the NTA, and other government media outlets should support the broader plan to counter insurgents by promoting alternative ideologies (Onuoha, Nwangwu & Ugwueze, 2023).

8.2.1.5 Securing a Base to Launch COIN Operations

Terrorist groups often rely on safe, secure areas to carry out their activities, and BH is no exception. The group has long operated from protected locations, with 18 of its 30 videos filmed in the Sambisa Forest in Nigeria’s northeast. Such secluded bases give them strategic cover. In contrast, Thompson’s fifth principle emphasizes creating a secure base to launch counter-messaging and COIN efforts (Onuoha, Nwangwu & Ugwueze, 2023; Mumford & Carlucci, 2023). While BH nearly overran Adamawa and Yobe states between 2012 and 2015, military action pushed them back to the fringes of the LCB and Cameroon. Notably, Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, has never fallen to BH. After former President Buhari moved the theatre command to

Maiduguri, the government could further strengthen its position by ensuring that counter-messaging focuses on improved peace, security, and the restoration of socio-economic life in the area. Sharing strong, positive messages from this region can help build grassroots trust and reduce the public's vulnerability to insurgent influence (Onuoha, Nwangwu & Ugwueze, 2023).

The government should prioritize clearing, holding, and fully securing stable areas before advancing into high-risk, contested zones. Communication strategies should emphasize reassurance, protection, and revitalization of liberated communities in Borno State and the LCB. Establishing safe and economically prosperous communities serves as a compelling counter-narrative to neighbouring regions that remain under threat or insurgent influence. When messaging highlights local security and demonstrates the state's capacity for sustained protection, civilians are more likely to feel secure, reject insurgent sanctuaries, and provide actionable intelligence to security forces. Next, we shall apply the second theoretical framework.

8.3 Application of CMCT Theory

Modern irregular conflicts are not unified ideological revolutions, but rather messy, fragmented systems driven by online mobilization, psychological tactics, and weaknesses in regional security. Applying the CMCT theory therefore requires a multi-layered approach to understanding Africa's conflict environment. The model emphasizes five main operational pillars for breaking down the group's narrative warfare, including:

8.3.1 Stripping the Narrative of Global Significance

Modern violent extremist groups frequently amplify local grievances into broader, transnational struggles (Metz, 2007). After its alignment with global jihadist networks, BH started targeting local actors in the LCB as a significant front in global Jihad (Metz, 2007; Nwankpa, 2025). Framing the conflict in this manner enhanced BH's recruitment drive, attracting foreign funding. From a CMCT perspective, counter-messaging should focus on localizing and de-radicalizing BH's image, depicting it as a regional criminal organization rather than a global ideological movement (Ikpelemoh, 2019). State media should eliminate references to global jihadism, while information campaigns should characterize BH's leaders as local warlords motivated by tribal power dynamics, extortion, and personal gain (Grobbelaar & Solomon, 2014).

8.3.2. Attacking the Internal Legitimacy of the Insurgent System

Since the model views the insurgency as a complex social system that needs structural support to survive (Metz, 2007), defeating BH should transcend physical force to breaking its internal trust (Ikpelemoh, 2019). Because messaging keeps the group united, enforces discipline, and stops the terrorists from splintering (Forbes, 2016; Metz, 2012), the CMCT approach should focus on exploiting structural and ethnic divisions in the network through targeted PSYOPs (Nwankpa, 2025). This means running strong information campaigns that expose internal rifts, hypocrisy, and discrimination—like the historical divide between the Kanuri leadership and other factions. Pushing these cracks through targeted digital content can weaken trust and trigger destructive paranoia among its leaders (Jilani & Mujaddid, 2020).

8.3.3. Neutralizing the "Alternative Governance" Propaganda

Metz (2007) points out that modern insurgents exploit ungoverned areas and state failures to present themselves as legitimate providers of security, justice, and social welfare. BH exploits deep-rooted poverty and corruption to promote its strict rule as a fair, moral alternative to an uncaring state (Metz & Millen, 2004; Daniya, 2021; Grobbelaar & Solomon, 2014). Nigeria, the most populous Black nation and a key player in Africa, holds an important place in global affairs (Ajayi, 2026; 2026; United Nations, 2026; Igwe, 2025). Yet, it is often seen internationally as struggling with multidimensional poverty, illiteracy, and terrorism (Njoku & Sidhu, 2021). Purely ideological arguments fall flat when people see the state as illegitimate or predatory (de Wijk, 2021). The CMCT approach, which focuses on a “governance-first” communication strategy linking military presence directly to human security and local transparency (Olasanmi, 2024), is essential. Communication should work hand in hand with local development—rather than pushing empty anti-terror slogans, flood local radio with clear, community-verified updates on infrastructure projects, farming aid, and the revival of local civil courts (Olasanmi, 2024; Daniya, 2021).

8.3.4. Directly Disrupting Digital Recruitment Pipeline

Insurgencies in the 21st century mainly utilise digital networks and social media to crowdsource logistics, radicalize at-risk youth, and coordinate low-cost asymmetric operations (Metz, 2012). If the digital space is not actively contested and disrupted, it becomes an open recruitment channel for adversaries. The CMCT approach calls for a bold, multi-layered digital interdiction plan to limit their online reach. Therefore, the state should take a structured approach to break apart its online networks through the

DMT and the IMT. Both techniques are essential components of strategic messaging within the CMCT Theory.

IUP video time frames highlight the use of DMT and IMT by BH, given the short nature of their messages —V.26 (1 minute), V.15 (1 minute and 14 seconds), V.2 (1 minute and 5 seconds), and V.1 (1 minute and 14 seconds)—demonstrates the use of direct short messaging. Similarly, videos categorized under WG, including V.29 (37 seconds), V.28 (48 seconds), V.27 (57 seconds), V.25 (1 minute and 16 seconds), V.24 (1 minute and 52 seconds), V.3 (2 minutes and 24 seconds), V.5 (1 minute and 21 seconds), and V.4 (41 seconds), also employ direct short messaging. Videos classified under DV/MJ—V.21 (7 minutes and 17 seconds), V.17 (2 minutes and 5 seconds), V.16 (4 minutes and 6 seconds), and V.6 (1 minute and 2 seconds)—as well as DWE videos such as V.23 (37 seconds), V.10 (1 minute), and V.9 (1 minute and 37 seconds), further illustrate this approach. Despite their brevity, BH messages are concise, forceful, and impactful. Within the SDSL category, two videos—V.12 (1 minute and 1 second) and V.20 (1 minute and 23 seconds)—are notable. The ACWR category includes V.30 (9 minutes and 36 seconds), V.19 (11 minutes and 27 seconds), V.22 (33 seconds), V.14 (1 minute and 1 second), and V.13 (1 minute and 59 seconds).

BH videos range from V.29 (37 seconds), the shortest, to V.19 (11 minutes and 27 seconds), the longest. Terrorist groups strategically employ short messaging systems to exploit the limited attention span of viewers. The length of time for each of the eight videos sheds light on the insurgents' dexterity with language and professionalism in terms of releasing short videos, considering the deficit of internet and data in Africa that would enable people to watch long videos, and the limited timeframe a human person has in focusing on elongated messages. The data shows that the quality of BH videos improved when the sect had an alliance with ISIS. The duration demonstrates that the insurgents are media-savvy and understand that the human mind has a limited capacity to retain information. As such, they exploit that psychological disposition and the fact that, in media and communication, the shorter the message/media content, the better it is for audiences to consume.

In contrast, the government videos are lengthy – 1 hour and 2 minutes (S.12); 48 minutes and 4 seconds (S.5); 46 minutes (S.23); 38 minutes (S.4); 27 minutes (S.17); 26 minutes (S.7); 25 minutes (S.3); and 20 minutes (S.1). This counter-messaging, lacking the DMT, ends up feeling too boring and unengaging for audiences, ultimately undermining the government’s efforts. Leveraging the CMCT Theory, the government

should also tap into indirect messaging to counter and weaken extremist narratives. The DMT helps create counter-narratives that challenge extremist views, discredit their sources, and disrupt violent groups. Similarly, the IMT can be used to spread positive messages that highlight unity, shared values, and cooperation between citizens, the military, and paramilitary agencies. Both approaches play a key role in tackling extremism. While DMT focuses on how insurgents challenge state authority, IMT fosters collaboration across agencies. Together, they are essential tools in confronting extremism, thus central to this research.

8.4 Research Findings

This research presents compelling evidence that addresses the RQs. These findings include BH's utilisation of multilingual communicative discourse, insurgents' strategic use of media, Salafist anti-Western/Christian ideological communication, visual and audio elements, and the insufficiency of advanced technology to combat Insurgents:

8.4.1 Multilingual Communicative Discourse

This study found that insurgents have intensified their multilingual communicative strategies. In 30 videos, BH exploit language to engage with domestic audiences, and English, Arabic, and French for international outreach, propaganda, recruitment, and proselytization. Although one government video (S.29) claimed to use local languages such as Kanuri, Buduma, Kanembu, and Hausa as part of a multi-pronged approach to produce flyers, issue press releases, and broadcast on radio, English was the sole language present in all 30-government videos examined. All BH videos featured English, Hausa, and Arabic as languages of communication. While these findings align with previous studies (Mahmoud, 2018; Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018) in certain respects, this research uniquely identifies that BH discourse is characterized by a deliberate focus on linguistic dexterity to achieve national, regional, and international relevance. WG reveals that the group actively challenges democracy and polytheism and frequently boasts about confrontations with Nigerian soldiers and international forces (V.4). Such displays of bravado emphasize their determination and perceived power. The recurrent imagery of military weaponry and armoured tanks in their videos further symbolizes their extensive arsenal, as corroborated by experts (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2024; Reinl, 2019). This underscores jihadi communication as a strategic tool for establishing connections, thereby addressing RQ2.

8.4.2 Strategic Use of Media

This research underscores the insurgents' strategic use of media and emphasizes the urgent need to reassess responses to this threat. The deployment of Hilux and rocket-launcher vehicles, along with videos filmed in the notorious Camp Zero in Sambisa Forest, delivers a stark warning to the government (V.5). Shekau's threatening messages to the UN and other entities undermine global efforts to combat the insurgency. While the military claims Shekau died from injuries during a raid in Taye village (Fick, 2016), evidence questions the government's narrative of progress in the war on terror. Shekau reportedly took his own life on 19 May 2021, when he detonated his suicide vest during a confrontation with ISWAP (Kurtzer, Moss & Devermont, 2021; BBC, 2021; Busari & Princewill, 2021). They craft messages using religious language to warn civil authorities about their disdain for secular power (V.19), plan attacks (V.1) and express superiority over the military (V.2). BH claims to defeat regional and international forces (V.13), weaken multilateral initiatives (V.4). The sect attacks education through the sale of abducted girls (V.9), talks about prisoner exchanges (V.11). The study demonstrates that terrorists employ a StratCom approach with considerable effectiveness to undermine the Nigerian state, which underlines RQ2

Nine government speeches (S1; S2; S6; S7; S16; S17; S19; S25; S29) emphasize the Regional and International Coalition (RIC), underscoring the significance of StratCom. These speeches advocate for strengthened alliances between the Nigerian armed forces and those of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger to address cross-border terrorism. They also propose relocating the theatre command from Abuja to Maiduguri, prioritizing the rescue of abducted Chibok schoolgirls, and ensuring accountability for human rights violations (S1). Additionally, the establishment of a coalition comprising armed forces from five nations, including the Republic of Benin (S7), and supported by G7 funding (AllAfrica, 2021), illustrates the government's commitment to dismantling the infrastructure supporting terrorism (S2).

The thesis also found that the Nigerian government's StratCom articulated in the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches introduces an unnecessary dichotomy between the state and its citizens. Despite the implementation of various StratCom measures, including multimedia strategies and counter-messaging campaigns, Nigeria continues to prioritize kinetic responses, as discussed in Chapter 4. The government's failure to address the push and pull factors of the insurgency (USAID,

2011) limits the effectiveness of counter-messaging. There are shortcomings in both the Nigerian government and military's media strategies against the insurgents (Onapajo & Ozden, 2020; Onuoha, Nwangwu & Ugwueze, 2023).

In addressing misinformation, the Nigerian government has sought assistance from Western nations. However, this dependence reveals a critical challenge: International media outlets, including BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, and France 2, frequently shape the narrative surrounding terrorism in Nigeria. Although these organizations inform global audiences, they often neglect or marginalize essential local voices that represent the lived experiences of Africans. This phenomenon results in "Parachute Journalism," where reporters cover stories without comprehensive understanding, and exemplifies "Afghanistanism," characterized by a focus on distant issues lacking immediate relevance (The International Journalism Handbook, 2023; Abati, 2021). The government has identified several critical factors undermining efforts to defeat insurgents, including the presence of non-state actors, proliferation of small arms, persistent violent extremism, malicious technology, climate change, irregular migration, and pronounced disparities in living conditions (S.6). These fundamental drivers of insurgency necessitate effective counter-messaging strategies.

The contrast between local and international media indicated that categories are not neutral or merely interchangeable. This gap is shaped by different editorial approaches, audience needs, and ideological leanings. Videos from "local media" often drew on international sources, while those from "international outlets" reflected a global appeal tied to the international war on terror. Local media tailored content to fit the socio-political context of Nigeria and West Africa, whereas international outlets reframed the same material for worldwide audiences—shifting tone, emphasis, or narrative. The difference in target audiences goes beyond demographics and is instead rooted in how the visuals and texts are produced and circulated, making it a deliberate and strategic part of Jihadi discourse rather than a coincidence. Overall, the data indicate that BH weaponizes messaging as a tool for offensive and lethal communication (IUP, WG, DV/JM, DWE, SDSL, and AC/WR).

8.4.3 Salafist Anti-Western/Christian Ideological Communication

The research highlighted four main themes central to Salafist ideological messaging: IUP, ACWR, DV/MJ, and SDSL. These differ from earlier studies on BH's

communication with the West and the Nigerian government, which focused on portraying BH as powerful, well-funded, operating like a professional army, seen as honest, led by the seemingly invincible Shekau, dismissive of Western leaders, viewing the Nigerian government as weak and corrupt, and seeing Nigerian soldiers as inept (Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018). By introducing these new themes, the study adds fresh insight into BH's Salafist messaging, enhancing a better understanding of how religious narratives shape BH's discourse in communication research. Also, jihadists frequently target Western nations, labeling the United States, France, and Germany as infidels to advance anti-Christian and anti-Western agendas. These groups publicly challenge Western powers through international media outlets (V.14), and target Christians to provoke religious conflict (S.11). This introduces a unique Salafist anti-Western and Christian ideological communication, characterising the type of messaging utilised by BH, which answers RQ1.

BH has boldly challenged the US, France, and Germany (V. 13 & V. 19) through 17 international media outlets in this thesis. This underscores the inadequacy of the Nigerian government's media strategy. While the armed forces have adopted some StratCom tactics, their heavy reliance on kinetic approaches, despite claims of engaging with non-kinetic methods, limits their effectiveness in COIN. A re-evaluation of strategies is urgently needed to address the sect's growing influence and restore stability in the region. BH videos highlight the group's strategic propaganda and the complex ties among religion, power, and politics. Networked leadership reinforces traditional power structures, empowering high-status individuals to become either targets or sources of emotion (Rathnayake & Sanders, 2023b). Insurgents skilfully exploit these dynamics to convey their narratives and express grievances against the government and military. The public associates representation with power (Higgins, 2008), and BH effectively leverages this in political communication by merging terror with aggressive messaging. With only two videos categorized under the SDSL theme, the thesis confirms that RQ1 has been answered – BH are adept at anti-Western and Christian ideological media warfare, conducting their campaigns with precision and impact.

8.4.4 Multimodal Elements

The data found multimodal elements such as weapons, masked fighters, training, gestures, music, sound, videos and aggressive non-verbal communication in BH videos. Conversely, the government videos prominently featured government officials

in *Agbada*, soldiers in military uniforms, and community outreach activities. BH videos emphasized verbal cues like threats to the state, religious justification, and verbal attacks. In contrast, government content highlights military strength, COIN successes, surrender, patriotism, and rehabilitation. On the other hand, CDA highlighted insurgents undermining the state and Western education and governments, whereas the government portrayed the terrorists as outlaws who undermine public peace, while calling for unity in its messaging. The research shows an evolution in BH's messaging and the government's counter-messaging – BH has shifted from committing acts of terror to framing terror and propaganda with an "Us" versus "them" narrative that has a religious colouration. In contrast, the government has moved from denial to the adoption of non-kinetic approaches through its PCVE initiatives.

8.4.5 Advanced Technology

While BH videos are independently broadcast and amateurish in nature, government videos are more qualitative in quality given that they are broadcast by traditional media outfits. A former President disclosed that the military's challenges in the conflict result from insufficient experience and a lack of advanced technology necessary to combat insurgents effectively (S.27). These deficiencies have likely undermined strategic planning and exposed a lack of political will, thereby impeding successful CT operations. By attributing delays in acquiring essential military equipment, such as combat drones, to global diplomatic challenges, the Nigerian government raises concerns regarding its commitment to the war on terror (S.30).

Troops deployed on the front lines report frustration over the absence of modern weaponry, expressing a sense of helplessness in the face of persistent terrorist attacks (S.10). These factors collectively underscore the shortcomings of counter-insurgency strategies and weaken the government's overall messaging. As a result, the current public relations strategy appears ineffective, thereby weakening both political communication and counter-messaging efforts. A government official acknowledged that the current arrangement is ad hoc while lamenting that the militants are seizing territory, installing their leaders, and damaging infrastructure. He pointed to enhancing intelligence capabilities and acquiring critical assets, including attack helicopters, as essential measures for restoring national security (S.11). With these deficits in effective counter-messaging mechanisms, RQ3 on what effective counter-messaging strategies the government is employing against BH has been answered.

8.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher synthesized the key themes and patterns identified in both BH videos and government videos through a comparative analysis. It critically examined the tone of the content, the level of violence depicted, intertextuality, and the overall effectiveness of the messages conveyed. Theoretical frameworks were applied to these concepts within the Nigerian context, culminating in the presentation of the research findings.

9. IMPLICATIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines the extensive implications of the study, emphasising its significant contributions to knowledge, especially in rethinking media-driven solutions for counter-messaging through Afro-multidimensional StratCom. It also discusses the study's limitations and suggests areas for future research, such as the inability to conduct fieldwork, potential biases, and the generalisability of findings. It presents a summary of the thesis and policy recommendations for the Nigerian government, regional authorities, and the UN. The Chapter maintains that these efforts are vital not only for depriving insurgents of resources but also for securing Nigeria's future against their ambitious agenda by highlighting the necessity for homegrown, practical counter-messaging initiatives.

9.1 Implications

Looking at the history of insurgent groups in Northern Nigeria and the ties between religion and politics, the researcher points out how deeply these issues shape national policy and practice. The insurgents' push for legitimacy and the military's bureaucratic hurdles have driven both sides to use social media as a strategic tool. The study highlights the importance of battles over land, territory, public perception, and media presence. While the government is starting to embrace StratCom, there is still a long way to go (Dyikuk, cited in Aineah, 2023). The Afro-multimedia StratCom framework marks a big step forward in counter-messaging, offering fresh insights into Africa's complex conflicts. This perspective underscores the need for practical solutions, with the research offering strong policy recommendations for leaders, security experts, and peace advocates. It emphasizes the influence of cinematic and religious platforms, the need for credible narratives, creative communication strategies, and stronger cybersecurity. By boosting media education and encouraging multi-sector collaboration, real progress can be made toward COIN efforts and lasting peace in the region.

The researcher analysed current counter-messaging strategies in Nigeria and reviewed the National Strategy for P/CVE, revealing significant challenges in existing narratives. The study emphasises that civilians and stakeholders can collaborate with security agencies to combat insurgency effectively by utilising.

local and innovative StratCom solutions. This dissertation has five implications as illustrated in Table 8.1 below:

Table 9. 1 1 Implications of Findings for Counter-Messaging against BH in Nigeria

S/N	Implications	Potential solution	Who is responsible?	Beneficiaries	Expected Outcomes
1.	Change in policy in the government's current kinetic approach	Homegrown strategy	Government, Relevant Stakeholders	Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria, refugees across Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, the Nigerian government, and leaders of the African Union (AU)	Minimal conflicts
2.	New Methods (Consistent messaging)	Winning hearts and minds	Government, media, educationists, media experts, and counter-Messaging Experts	The Nigerian people and neighbouring countries affected by the conflict	Ceasefire, peace, and development
3.	Fresh perspectives on Scholarship	Rebranded messaging to counter insurgents' weaponised messaging as instruments of war.	Media, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and communication units of the armed forces	The Nigerian people	Deradicalisation, peace, and unity
4.	Minimal Kinetic Methods	Prioritising intelligence-gathering	Government, armed forces, Multilateral Joint Task Force (MJTF), Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)	The government and people of Nigeria and the people of the Sahel region.	Mass surrender by insurgents leading to arms deradicalisation, and regional Peace
5.	Contribution To Knowledge	Reinstating the place of political communication in counter-messaging operations	Media, journalism, and communication scholars, and Journalists	Students and scholars or researchers in the fields of communication, political science, and sociology	Raising detribalised global leaders who act as agents of change

First, this research calls for a transformative, locally-driven strategy to tackle the insurgency by bringing the government and key stakeholders together. By addressing the needs of IDPs in Nigeria and refugees in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, it seeks to create a more compassionate and effective response. This teamwork not only supports vulnerable communities but also strengthens the Nigerian government, involves the AU, and engages the global community, with the potential to reduce conflict and build a stable future.

Second, it also introduces an innovative concept, Afro-multidimensional StratCom, aimed at winning people's hearts and minds. Drawing on insights from YouTube videos by international media outlets and existing literature on insurgent communication, it proposes a new StratCom framework. The first chapter highlights three key advances—conceptual, empirical, and practical—that drive this approach. Collaboration among government bodies, media professionals, educators, and counter-messaging experts is seen as vital to achieving a ceasefire and fostering genuine development.

Third, the study explores how insurgents craft their messages as powerful tools of "mass destruction," drawing on research in StratCom and political communication. It argues that the media, CSOs, and armed forces' communication units can create rebranded messages to counter these harmful narratives, helping protect Nigerians while promoting deradicalisation, peace, and unity.

Fourth, this thesis introduces an effective approach to StratCom that combines minimal force, intelligence gathering, and civilian participation, shifting away from an overdependence on military action. By focusing on intelligence collection from key players such as the government, the ONSA, the armed forces, and other security agencies, this strategy can encourage mass insurgent surrenders, foster disarmament, and support regional peace. In the end, this method offers clear benefits for both the people and government of Nigeria, as well as for the wider Sahel region.

Fifth, this research contributes to the fields of journalism, media, and communication by questioning the government's reliance on aggressive political messaging. By placing greater emphasis on political communication, scholars and journalists can inspire researchers to become transformative leaders and catalysts for

change in their communities.

9.2 Contributions to Knowledge

9.2.1 Homegrown Afro-Multidimensional StratCom

This study offers a fresh take on StratCom, aiming to guide communication-driven policies to ease conflicts. The Afro-multidimensional StratCom initiative (see Figure 9.1) counters harmful terrorist narratives and pushes for decolonizing media through an indigenous lens (Sabry, Mano, Medrado, 2025; Ross, Joyce & Matheson, 2025; Langmia, 2024). It moves away from the outdated 19th-century linear Message Influence Model (Kitzen, 2012) and the old-fashioned tactics of the Nigerian military. By highlighting unique cultural contexts, it promotes homegrown solutions and ties into ongoing conversations about de-Westernizing and decolonizing communication studies (Nutsugah et al, 2026). Decolonizing perspectives are key to unpacking and challenging power dynamics in communication scholarship (Ross, Joyce & Matheson, 2025).

The approach works best when digital media are combined with traditional communication practices. Obstacles like limited media access, low literacy, and the digital divide—often due to power cuts and poor internet—can be tackled with strong political will. The continued use of oral storytelling, drum signals, town criers, and community meetings shows the lasting value of indigenous communication in Africa. Blending folk media with modern digital tools creates a hybrid strategy that strengthens counter-messaging, spreads stories of resilience, and fosters peace talks on counter-terrorism by involving traditional leaders, peace ambassadors, ex-combatants, and officials via radio, social media, and mobile apps. Success can be measured through solid monitoring, evaluation, and community outreach.

This study uses the Relational Model of Human Communication (Philips, 2012; Kitzen, 2012) and the CMCT framework (Metz, 2012), focusing on participatory communication from an African viewpoint to boost counter-messaging efforts (Dikeocha, 2024). Traditional models often stem from Western perspectives and overlook the unique needs of Sub-Saharan Africa. To fill this gap, the research introduces a localized Afro-multidimensional approach that blends culturally informed communication with social transformation goals (Asuman, Tettey & Fosu, 2025). While it draws on COIN communication strategies, the approach intentionally

moves away from Western-centric models (Villanueva, 2024; Turner et al., 2024) to better address the rich cultural diversity across Africa. This thesis contributes to knowledge in four ways:

9.2.1.1 Deconstruction of Western Communication Theory

The Afro-multidimensional approach critiques Western Communication Theory, challenging its dominance in today's strategic communication models and underscoring the value of African knowledge systems for understanding social relations (Fanari, Sommier & Rahmani, 2025). It aligns with the Relational Model of Human Communication, which promotes the use of local community insights to build trust and expose weaknesses in insurgent groups (Kitzen, 2012). By confronting distorted portrayals of African realities, it aims to restore epistemic integrity and push back against colonial perspectives that dehumanize Africans (Nkoala, Matsilele, Ndlovu & Bosch, 2026; Asak, 2023). The research also points to the often-overlooked role of indigenous media in countering BH's messaging, noting that while international outlets amplify government videos, local voices remain sidelined. Documenting these local successes in public relations can help create a richer knowledge base.

This framework blends African ontologies with existing communication theories to drive transformative change (Dudovskiy, 2022; Pedersen & McEvoy, 2011), promoting a collective-thinking model inspired by the CMCT and combining traditional and modern tools through positive storytelling (Metz, 2012). As insurgent groups use both local and global languages, the strategy calls on governments to validate African knowledge systems to counter such narratives, stressing the role of language, culture, and history in decolonization and fostering stronger civilian participation in counter-messaging (Glowacki & Hengemuhle, 2014; Altarriba & Basnight-Brown, 2022).

9.2.1.2 Communitarian Ethics for Sustainable Development

African StratCom is fundamentally communal and relational, prioritizing social cohesion, accountability, and collective responsibility (Connaughton,

Cruz & Lumala, 2026). Informed by philosophical constructivism, this study foregrounds lived experiences to reveal reality (Keaton & Bodie, 2011) and emphasizes Africa's cultural values, particularly the Ubuntu philosophy as articulated by scholars such as J. S. Mbiti (Domínguez-Munllonch, 2024). Ubuntu expresses the principle of interdependence: "I am because we are" (Eze, 2023), highlighting Afrocentricity and Afrokology. While Afrocentricity seeks to reconceptualize Africa's historical trajectory in accordance with its own ideals (Moloi, 2024), Afrokology engages with African philosophical constructs to advance internationalization, de-Westernization, and decoloniality (Mano & Milton, 2021). This approach stands in contrast to Western corporate communication, which frequently prioritizes profit over community needs. The African model increasingly centres community values in the post-independence era (Mlambo, Masuku & Mthembu, 2024; Sutton & Le Roux, 2026). The Afro-multidimensional StratCom model serves as a moral compass, enabling scholars and practitioners to balance capitalist approaches with communal values (Nutsugah et al., 2026). Ultimately, this approach promotes both individual and societal development by integrating StratCom with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and connecting African institutions with stakeholders to facilitate effective national development plans (Cornish, 2011).

9.2.1.3 Addressing Polycrisis through Innovative Methodology

The concept of polycrisis highlights the complexities inherent in the African communication framework, which are shaped by digital inequality, political instability, and inadequate infrastructure (Lawal, 2025; Yemitan, Valley, Oyeniran & Impegor, 2025). This thesis presents Afro-Multidimensional StratCom, an approach that integrates digital, oral, and traditional communication channels to mitigate these. It proposes adaptive, culturally sensitive local strategies, particularly for regions experiencing violence. The research redirects analytical attention from communication objects to subjects, underscoring the role of audiences as active communicators. This paradigm shift enables governments and security

agencies to more effectively leverage narratives, drawing on insights from African practitioners to enhance counter-messaging efforts. The thesis is consistent with innovative methodologies - Agenda 2063 (African Union, 2026a; African Union Commission, 2015), which emphasizes participatory communication in governance reform and aspires to an African renaissance in communication infrastructure (African Union, 2026b). Afro-Multidimensional StratCom adopts a people-centred approach and fosters social change by empowering youth and women as principal contributors to counter-messaging initiatives.

9.2.1.4 Digital Transformation for Global Positioning

This thesis advocates creating localized content that connects with citizens, helping them engage with the government's vision for e-governance and digital platforms for reporting crime and criminal activity (Omotayo, Kehinde & Alaba, 2025; Amodu, Hammed & Tella, 2023). It explores how African identities are shaped by the Nigerian government and security agencies, which leverage laws like the Cybercrimes Prohibition, Prevention Act 2015, the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, SEC Rules on Robo-Advisory Services, the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2018, the Copyright Act 2022, and the Nigerian Communication Commission Act 2003 (Yemitan, Valley, Oyeniran & Impegor, 2025) to craft AI policies that use global platform algorithms to counter insurgency narratives. It argues that amplifying local voices online is key to addressing the complex mix of digital and social realities.

A multidimensional model examines the adoption of decentralized digital content, and given the mix of traditional and social media, the government should work to merge the two in its counter-messaging strategies. Afro-Multidimensional StratCom views communities as skilled digital natives ready to tackle these threats, built on values like intelligence gathering, open dialogue, and town hall meetings. By encouraging collaboration between Nigeria's armed forces, the MNJTF, and the CJTF, stakeholders can bring African StratCom elements into counter-messaging,

empowering everyone in the fight against terrorism. The study champions blended, locally driven StratCom solutions, emphasizing the importance of understanding target audiences, dictating early warning signals, maintaining consistent messaging, and engaging stakeholders. The Nigerian government can adopt best practices and seek help from the UK and the U.S., but it is important to acknowledge the unique cultural and contextual differences that call for homegrown solutions. By prioritizing ideas crafted by Africans for Africans, the continent can move toward independence from Western models.

9.2.1.5 UN's Whole-of-Government StratCom Versus Afro-Multidimensional StratCom

The Afro-multidimensional StratCom approach differs from the United Nations' "whole-of-society" strategy to counter insurgency narratives (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2020; United Nations, 2015; Dews, 2021). Table 9.2 presents the distinctive features of the Afro-multidimensional approach compared with the UN's whole-of-government strategies.

Table 9. 2 UN's Whole-of-government Approach versus Afro-multidimensional approach: Distinctive Features.

Features	UN's Whole-of-Government Approach	Afro-Multidimensional Approach
Drivers	Nigerian state and multilateral legacy	Communal identity and resilience
Philosophies	Peacebuilding and upholding human rights	Invoking African traditional values – dialogue, town hall meetings
Narratives	P/CVE mechanisms	Countering insurgent narratives through native intelligence gathering of sages
Stakeholders	Linear, asymmetric power dynamics and top-down	Bottom-up approach through youth, women, traditional and religious leaders
Means	Soft and non-kinetic approach	Hybrid – a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic approaches

First, the UN works to bring together governments, civil society, and the private sector (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2020; United Nations, 2015; Dews, 2021). At the same time, Afro-Multidimensional StratCom builds community and resilience by drawing on African cultural traditions and unique communication styles. It focuses on shared understanding, solidarity, and connection to strengthen communal bonds (Mlambo, Masuku & Mthembu, 2024; Sutton & Le Roux, 2026). Storytelling and engaging with IDPs can boost resilience, improve social cohesion, and empower communities affected by BH.

The second key point is the philosophy behind these efforts. The "whole-of-society" approach highlights human rights as the foundation for peace, promoting equality, freedom, and stability (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2020; United Nations, 2015; Dews, 2021). The UN supports peace-building through reconciliation, dialogue, and efforts to tackle the root causes of these violations, while also backing education, social justice, and fair resource distribution. In conflict areas impacted by BH, human rights abuses are common. CSOs can help create resilient communities built on understanding and tolerance.

The third factor is the role of narratives in the "whole-of-society" approach to P/CVE. The UN promotes inclusive societies, community dialogue, education, and economic growth to tackle the root causes of radicalization and conflict (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2020). On the other hand, Afro-Multidimensional StratCom draws on indigenous knowledge, local languages, and cultural traditions, including gender perspectives, to challenge insurgent narratives (Salawu & Molale, 2023; Okocha, Elele & Okujeni, 2024). This thesis suggests that Afro-Multidimensional StratCom can help communities recognize early warning signs, foster dialogue, and lower the risk of radicalization, ultimately supporting stability and unity.

The fourth feature focuses on stakeholder engagement. The UN takes a top-down, linear approach that places decision-making power in the hands

of influential member states. The absence of African countries from permanent seats on the UN Security Council (UNSC) (V.S.17) highlights how less powerful nations in Asia and Africa are often sidelined, weakening fair representation in global governance (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2020; Dews, 2021). Experts question the UN's credibility regarding equity and fairness (Karlsrud, 2015; Mearsheimer, 2019). To improve the Security Council's effectiveness, this imbalance needs to be addressed. In contrast, Afro-Multidimensional StratCom uses a grassroots model that actively involves youth, women, traditional leaders, and religious figures (Madobi, 2021; CNN, 2010). Their perspectives help create sustainable, locally tailored solutions that foster inclusive governance and development. Bringing their experiences into current counter-policies could better tackle local security issues.

The fifth feature focuses on counter-messaging strategies. The UN mainly relies on non-kinetic methods to promote dialogue and understanding (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2020; United Nations, 2015), favouring constructive engagement over confrontation. While Afro-Multidimensional StratCom values these approaches, it supports a hybrid strategy that blends non-kinetic and kinetic measures to address challenges posed by resilient insurgent groups engaged in asymmetric warfare (Onochie, 2024). This method pairs influence operations with military action when dialogue falls short, aiming to build trust while addressing the root causes of BH violence. In high-conflict situations, swift force is required to eliminate immediate threats. By acknowledging the role of inequality in driving insecurity, Afro-Multidimensional StratCom advocates combining soft and hard tactics to foster peace, stability, and sustainable development, adapting to the complexities of the geopolitical landscape.

The United Nations and the Nigerian government emphasize the importance of involving stakeholders to reduce violence. To boost credibility, Nigeria could use the Afro-Multidimensional StratCom framework to highlight diverse viewpoints. However, the UN's "whole-of-society" approach

(Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2020; United Nations, 2015) might fall short in addressing local realities. This thesis suggests better coordination among local, state, and federal levels to implement deradicalization programmes. Tailoring international guidelines to local contexts can strengthen global cooperation and national trust, paving the way for a more inclusive society built on teamwork and long-term commitment.

9.2.2 Maiden Quadruple-StratCom

Grounded in modern research, the study found that terrorists deploy quadruple-StratCom in four concrete ways:

9.2.2.1 Covert Communication

The findings indicate that 60% of the analyzed videos (18 out of 30) were filmed in the depths of Sambisa Forest, where jihadists showcase a landscape filled with armed fighters and vehicles. The insurgents use the forest to obscure their communications, creating a command-and-control center while evading surveillance. This setting is crucial for their messaging, exemplifying how nature can serve as a tool for expression. In line with Chinua Achebe's idea of the "evil forest" from *Things Fall Apart* (Edoro-Glines, 2018), African culture often views forests as areas of banishment and fear, inhabited by spirits. The terrorists exploit the imagery of Sambisa Forest, asserting their dominance through videos shot in hidden cells (Anjide, 2018), invoking unease in viewers. They suggest that, while the military resides in cities, they control the forests, highlighting their stronghold and ability to operate beyond government reach. The group engages in abductions for ransom to fund their activities (Badmus, 2026) and conducts illegal mining in the region to finance terrorism and promote an Islamic caliphate (African Security Analysts, 2025; Opinion Nigeria, 2025).

9.2.2.2 Symbolic Communication

In northern Nigeria, insurgents employ symbolic communication to

enhance their message. Their videos feature logos, flags, military attire, and emotional elements like music and sounds of gunfire from burning buildings to evoke strong reactions (V.6). By donning traditional clothing, such as the *Kaftan*, they blend in with civilians, allowing for easier infiltration and evasion. This tactic highlights unique aspects of African communication, where music and dynamic movements resonate deeply with audiences. Their use of military camouflage not only enhances their identity but also reflects the complex relationship between culture and conflict. Soldiers in Nigeria are both feared and respected because of their past interventions, and insurgents exploit military uniforms to gain legitimacy and instil fear. Older adults in the region use chewing sticks as tools of authority, which the insurgents appropriate to assert power over their audiences. Skekau takes advantage of the culture by using the stick as an “elder” – a person of authority to warn his audiences.

Flags are potent symbols of communication, as shown in the data (V.2; V.3; V.4; V.5; V.7; V.8; V.9; V.10; V.12; V.13; V.15; V.19; V.20; V.22; V.25; V.6; V.26; V.27; V.29) and the "miswak" as attested to by experts (Al Sadhan, 1999). Researchers Al Sadhan (1999) and Pieri and Zenn (2018) highlight how BH uses flags to assert power. When they proclaim an "Islamic Caliphate" (BBC, 2015d), raising the black flag symbolises their dominion, victory, and strict adherence to Shariah Law, becoming a defining emblem after their allegiance to the Islamic State. The black flag is a powerful symbol of allegiance to "Jihadi culture," reflecting deep anthropological insights. Based on the rudiments of VVVA (Pirini, 2017), the data reveal that this group emulates the Islamic State’s use of flags and logos. Their footage vividly portrays the enforcement of Sharia law through brutal acts like executions and amputations, with separate viewings for men and women. This approach often invites male participation in these punishments.

Militants utilize a miswak, a twig associated with the Prophet Muhammad, to reinforce their ideological commitment and instil fear within their communities. This symbol reflects their dedication to the Salafi tradition

(Al Sadhan, 1999). This analysis explores their strategic use of offensive messaging in warfare, focusing on methods, language, media manipulation, and representative deployment. Upon capturing territory, they display black and white flags and desecrate symbols of Nigerian authority to assert their allegiance to other sovereign powers (Nigerian Television Authority, 2013). In response, the military has occasionally returned flags recovered from the group's Camp Zero in the Sambisa Forest to the Nigerian government, marking significant victories (Oluwagbemi, 2016a). These actions highlight the effectiveness of symbolic communication in conveying impactful messages within the conflict.

9.2.2.3 Strategic Human Communication

The analysis highlights the importance of strategic communication in the 12 videos examined, where characters display a lack of empathy and emotion. The commander and his fighters deliver blunt, emotionless messages, and Shekau's threats often come with mocking laughter (V.3), emphasizing their chilling communication strategy. Additionally, the distribution of media resources—like leaflets and videos— to journalists reinforces this point (Voice of America, 2017; Abubakar, 2020). Before 2012, communication stemmed primarily from sect leaders, but the approach shifted to lieutenants and spokespeople to protect the leader's image, eventually involving journalists to amplify threatening messages. This evolution showcases the calculated strategies these groups employ. The insurgents also market themselves as a legitimate military force, promoting education within a Jihadist context. By using Hausa and Kanuri in the BAY states, they establish trust with local communities. Their ties to ISIS and ISIL require communication in French and Arabic, expanding their influence. While government officials focus on formal messaging, insurgents flood cyberspace with uncompromising propaganda from Shekau, capturing attention and allegiance. Understanding these tactics is essential for crafting effective responses from authorities.

9.2.2.4 Social Media Communication

The strategic use of social media by terrorist organisations, particularly BH, is significant. Thirty YouTube videos of the sect reveal how insurgents effectively amplify their messages using new media. By crafting concise communications and utilising short messaging systems, these groups exhibit their proficiency in navigating social platforms. Research confirms their active engagement with media (Moore, 2017; Mahmood, 2018; Ogunlana, 2019). They also produce high-quality YouTube videos that attract attention from major international media outlets - *BBC, CNN, AFP, The New York Times, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) Evening News, The Wall Street Channel, The Telegraph, Daily Mail, Africa News, Sahara TV*, and *eNews Channel Africa (eNCA).* This trend reveals critical insights into the psychological tactics employed by insurgents, underscoring the need for a more strategic response. This framework points to the psychological strategies used by insurgent groups in media production. It highlights their dynamic methods for engaging diverse audiences through multimedia resources that effectively combine visual and auditory elements into concise, powerful messages.

9.2.3 Rethinking Mediatised Solutions to Counter-Messaging

This study on BH messaging and government counter-messaging expands understanding of strategic and political communication in conflict discourse across Nigeria and the Sahel, or LCB, in three main ways.

Empirically, it provides strong evidence on effective messaging strategies, StratCom, and the political tactics used by terrorist groups. It examines Jihadi group messaging and media production, emphasizing the need for a solid government counter-messaging system to interpret and challenge extremist narratives while safeguarding vulnerable communities.

Conceptually, it proposes a counter-messaging model combining DMT, IMT, and government-specific StratCom, addressing the shortcomings of CMCT by incorporating African communication forms. This leads to the idea of Afro-Multidimensional StratCom as a practical solution.

On a *practical level*, it calls for the Nigerian government, African leaders, and the UN to adopt comprehensive, policy-based strategies that use locally developed electronic, informational, and cyber warfare tools, coordinated by regional presidents in partnership with the UN Secretary-General. By targeting insurgent media tactics at multiple levels, these measures aim to reduce the group's influence, highlighting the essential role of StratCom in shaping effective counter-messaging efforts.

9.3 Limitations and Future Research

9.3.1 Differing Timeframes

A comprehensive comparative approach was employed to account for the differing timeframes of BH messaging (2012-2018) and the government's counter-messaging efforts (2012-2025). Though a limitation, however, the decision is justifiable because in conflict studies, reliance on traditional "clock-time" or single-period frameworks often neglects the complex realities of war and conflict (Aradau & Huysmans, 2014). Experts advocate using multiple overlapping timelines and long-term perspectives to enhance our understanding and analysis of conflicts. Byman and McCabe (2025) suggest the need for acknowledging grey areas in inclusion, coding, and analysis when using data to guide policy. Tracking terrorism through open-source biographical information or media coverage often leads to major inconsistencies when you stick to a single, fixed timeline, underscoring the importance of more flexible, multi-year time frames. Multi-temporal biases in open-source intelligence, along with long-term trends where exact dates are missing or reporting periods do not match across borders, can throw off timelines and leave gaps. This points to a shift in how terrorism is tracked, as old-school, years-long timelines do not really work in today's decentralized, digital world (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2026; The Soufan Center, 2026). To address this shortfall, the messaging of BH and the government's counter-narratives were analysed in conjunction to evaluate the rhetoric and influence of BH communications, as well as the effectiveness of the government's strategies over time. This analysis prioritized a comparison of the outcomes of the insurgents' messaging against the government's counter-messages, rather than focusing on discrepancies in timelines.

9.3.2 Use of Data from Traditional Media

Sourcing 11 videos of BH from various media outlets highlights a key limitation of this study. This is because the content may have been influenced by the editorial processes of those organizations. Media outlets do not select material randomly; their editorial policies are shaped by ideological and political orientations. As a result, they may edit or curate videos from groups like BH, considering ethical standards, legal constraints, and the need to avoid inciting panic or spreading misinformation. Despite these limitations, these sources were chosen for several important reasons. They provide evidence of the "image of dominance" that BH seeks to project. Analysing these videos reveals the group's strategic messaging and recruitment efforts. Traditional news networks also serve as crucial interpreters of local conflicts. Examining how journalists frame these videos offers insights into public representations of the insurgency, illustrating the narrative power struggles between jihadi propagandists and mainstream media. Finally, traditional outlets generally implement verification protocols, enhancing the credibility of the content and allowing for reliable cross-referencing during analysis.

9.3.3 Inability to Include Interviews

The original research design included remote interviews with key informants, such as journalists from the news organizations in the dataset, to gain insights into media production contexts and editorial decisions. However, because of the significant risks associated with terrorism research, safety concerns for both the researcher and interviewees, the lack of ethical clearance, and funding limitations, fieldwork became unfeasible. Consequently, the approach shifted to focus on media-centric communication related to BH's messaging, StratCom, and government counter-messaging efforts. This revised methodology allowed for the extraction of valuable insights without direct interviews. To fill the gap, resources from various media productions and institutional analyses were utilized. Moving forward, I recommend conducting qualitative studies that include interviews with a range of participants, such as communications officers from the Nigerian Army, government media representatives, journalists, civilians affected by the messaging, and StratCom experts. Future post-doctoral research should also encompass a forensic analysis of

BH videos and crisis communication strategies to provide deeper insights into the psychological aspects of the insurgents' media production and propaganda tactics.

9.4. General Summary and Conclusion

In the First Chapter, the thesis explored the rationale for the study and identified its core problem, aiming to address empirical, conceptual, and practical gaps in knowledge. By presenting well-defined research questions and objectives, the researcher prepared the ground for highlighting the theoretical frameworks - The Relational Model of Human Communication and CMCT Theory, along with the research philosophy - Phenomenological Constructionism.

The Second Chapter clarified key factors such as BH messaging, government counter-messaging, and StratCom in Nigeria. It explored the historical context and social dynamics contributing to northern insurgencies, tracing BH's origins to Mohammed Yusuf and his controversial death, which sparked ongoing conflict. The chapter contrasted BH's extremist interpretations of Islam with those of moderate scholars considering faith and reason. It analysed the meanings of "Boko" and "Haram" within Islamic education, emphasising the sect's rejection of Western education. It explored conspiracy theories on BH, advocating for a more informed discourse.

Chapter Three comprised a comprehensive review of the existing literature on BH messaging, notable patterns and the role of international media in the insurgency. It identified critical elements of journalism and underlined gaps in the current literature on BH messaging, suggesting areas for further research and exploration.

The Fourth Chapter reviewed Nigeria's counter-messaging efforts against BH, focusing on the National Strategy for P/CVE and the UN's "Whole-of-Society" approach. It evaluated the NA's counter-messaging operations, analysed StratCom lapses, and highlighted the role of the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign.

In Chapter Five, the researcher delineated the research methodologies employed. By utilising both VVVA and CDA, it presented the criteria for critically examining thirty YouTube videos of BH messaging and thirty YouTube videos of the government's counter-messaging. This section facilitated uncovering significant insights into the dynamics of communication within the phenomena under

investigation.

Chapter Six revealed six key patterns identified in BH videos. These patterns, meticulously refined, represent each dataset drawn from a diverse pool of YouTube channels of local and international media outlets. This provided significant insights into the research.

In the Seventh Chapter, the researcher conducted an in-depth analysis of the government's counter-messaging. The data was organised based on five key patterns. Notably, familiar patterns/categories emerged across the sixty videos, setting the tone for addressing and enriching the existing body of knowledge in journalism, media, and communication.

Chapter eight provided a synthesis and comparative analysis of key themes across all videos - content tone, violence portrayal, intertextuality, and message effectiveness- and highlighted the relevance of theoretical frameworks. This analysis is followed by the presentation of the research findings.

Chapter Nine summarised the study's implications and limitations, emphasising the importance of homegrown *Afro-multidimensional* StratCom solutions as effective counter-messaging strategies. It underscored future research opportunities, concluding with policy recommendations to benefit the Nigerian government, its citizens, the African region, countries in the LCB, and the UN.

This study analysed the messaging of BH. It highlighted significant gaps in their communication unit that weakened the armed forces' counter-messaging efforts. The military's lack of strategic coherence at operational and tactical levels hampers its effectiveness. The terrorists employ guerrilla warfare to achieve political goals, challenge government authority, and destabilise the nation. The exploitation of uneducated and desperate individuals by corrupt politicians, who later abandon them, propels many to align with BH. This cycle reinforces the political and religious narratives supporting the group's ambition to establish an Islamic Caliphate in Nigeria. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing a more effective response to the insurgency and restoring stability to the region.

9.5 Recommendations for Policy

To fill empirical, conceptual, and practical gaps that drive Afro-multidimensional Stratcom, the following recommendations were made:

9.5.1 The Nigerian Government should create Effective Counter-Messaging Content

The Nigerian military has a significant opportunity to enhance its counter-terrorism efforts through targeted messaging and soft tactics. Modern cinema can serve as a key tool for deradicalization, fostering patriotism, and promoting national unity. Collaboration among agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), and Nigeria's film industries, Nollywood and Kannywood, is essential. By investing in narratives that emphasize cultural values, these partnerships can effectively influence public perception. A comprehensive strategy that incorporates a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach will revitalize the NOA and secure necessary funding, ultimately strengthening national security and development (Mahmud, 2022). Promoting counter-messaging through established channels like the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) will be vital for moral development among youth and societal reform.

Leveraging technology to detect radical materials through advanced algorithms is crucial for monitoring recruitment and radicalization efforts. By collaborating with filmmakers, the government can utilise the CMCT to produce impactful films that highlight DMT. Additionally, IMT can foster positive narratives of solidarity across various communities. There is an urgent need for integrated educational approaches in the Global South focused on counter-radicalization strategies (Edet & Anam, 2025). Investing in these initiatives will help protect the future and foster a united society.

9.5.2 The StratCom Inter-Agency Policy Coordination Committee Should Fast-Track National Development

Effectively countering BH through targeted messaging requires close collaboration between the Head of StratCom in the ONSA, the Theatre Commander of the JTF, and the StratCom Inter-Agency Policy Coordination Committee (Ogbuleke & Erameh, 2020). This team should work on tackling news sensationalism that can unintentionally glorify terrorism and weaken military efforts. Journalists and digital

platforms like YouTube, X, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp need to clearly distinguish between reporting violence and promoting insurgent propaganda. Reframing narratives to reflect core African values, such as honesty and moral integrity, is key to preventing insurgents from exploiting the media (Abubakar, 2017).

Guided by Phenomenological Constructionism, which values personal experience in building social harmony, the government should craft innovative communication strategies that empower the armed forces, media, and educational institutions to bolster Strategic Communications in political discourse. By using diplomacy, information, military, and economic tools, the government can boost its soft power. Partnering with civil society, as well as religious and traditional leaders, in deradicalization programmes is vital for impactful counter-messaging. A firm commitment to a strong communication framework is essential. Figure 9.1 illustrates the Afro-Multidimensional StratCom counter-messaging solution, a comprehensive approach that combines multiple local elements critical to effective communication and national unity.

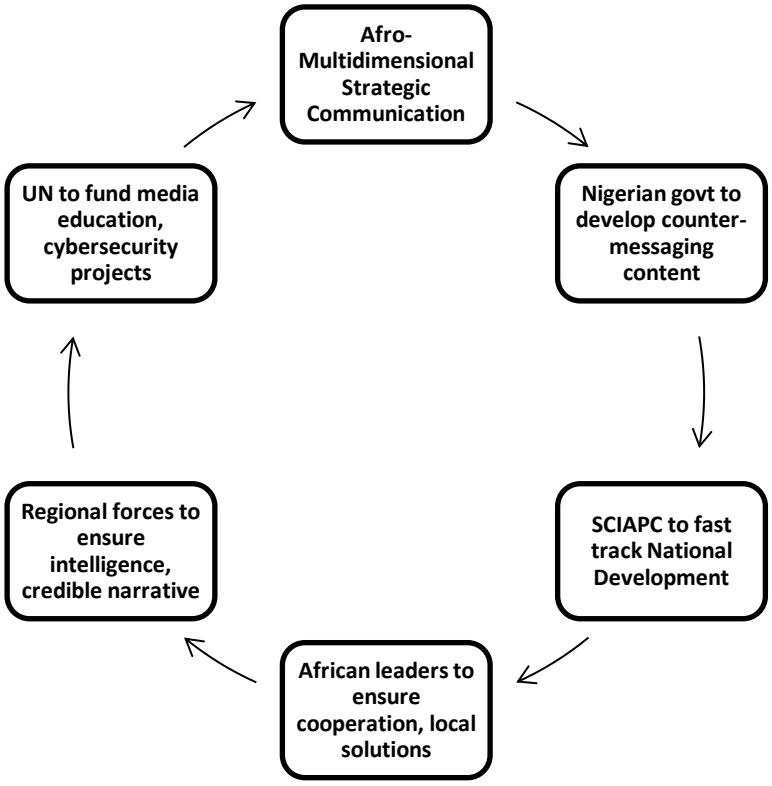


Figure 9. 1 Afro-Multidimensional StratCom Counter-Messaging Solution

9.5.3 Regional Forces Should Ensure Intelligence and Credible Messaging

Efforts to share intelligence and counter extremism among regional governments/forces in the LCB region need to shift away from purely military tactics toward community-focused approaches, such as town hall meetings and the empowerment of local whistleblowers. The CMCT highlights how participatory communication builds trust between organizations and the public (Phillips, 2012). Sharing credible stories can help the government win community support and weaken extremist influence. Afro-dimensional StratCom should focus on dialogue and engaging stakeholders (Dyikuk, cited in Aineah, 2023) to close the "say-do gap" (Defence Ministry, 2012) and strengthen trust. Communication must be credible to shape effective narratives (Ogbuleke & Erameh, 2020; Abubakar, 2017). Changing the narrative is crucial, giving Nigerians the chance to own their stories and spread positive messages. While "long shadows can last for centuries" (Wadlow, 2015), ongoing NGO-led negotiations can help tackle the insurgency. Using phenomenological constructionism with a strong push for change (Dudovskiy, 2022) can pave the way for lasting peace at the national and regional levels (Andrew, Pedersen & McEvoy, 2011).

9.5.4 African Leaders Should Ensure Multi-Sectoral Cooperation and Implement Local Solutions

Tackling terrorism in cyberspace depends on solid bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Nigeria should work closely with regional and global partners, address corruption in the security sector, and build political will. While this research does not cover the wider goals of counter-insurgency, stronger collaboration between the Nigerian Intelligence Agency (NIA), Nigerian Police Force (NPF), State Security Service (SSS), Nigerian Civil Defence Corps (NCDC), and the Nigeria Customs Service is key to restoring law and order (Yalmi, 2020). An Afro-multidimensional approach that encourages multi-sectoral teamwork is vital for crafting effective counter-messaging strategies. To address terrorism in the LCB and Sahel regions, it is crucial to weaken the appeal of joining extremist groups (Ajala, 2024). The June 2016 launch of a shared database by major tech companies—Facebook, YouTube, Microsoft, and Twitter (now X) to fight terrorist propaganda (Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018) should be sustained. Combining multisectoral efforts, academic perspectives, and the realities of modern warfare can defeat insurgency (Ogunlana, 2019). African leaders must

ensure such initiatives last to create a united front against terrorism and build a safer future for all.

9.5.5 The UN should Fund Media Education and Cybersecurity Projects

To tackle the spread of SALW (Dyikuk, 2022b), the UN should focus on media education and cybersecurity programmes in conflict areas like Nigeria to curb illegal arms trafficking. Education plays a key role in countering the influence of extremist media (Edet & Anam, 2025). Equipping the Nigerian armed forces with training and counter-messaging tools can boost border security and slow the flow of illicit weapons. Afro-centric cybersecurity projects, such as EW, IW, and CW, combined with non-kinetic strategies seen in Russia and China (Lehto & Henselmann, 2020), are essential for effective counter-messaging. Since terrorists increasingly exploit technology (Dyikuk, cited in Aineah, 2023), improving cybersecurity is critical (Ogunlana, 2019). Addressing Nigeria's electricity gap—where about 40% of the population lacks reliable power—is also key for stronger cybersecurity (Marley, 2024). The AU and UN should push for G-8 backing and help Nigeria implement solid counter-messaging plans. Promoting media literacy and dependable electricity through UN efforts can weaken extremist narratives. Also, teaching responsible social media use is vital for national security (Dairo, 2017). Encouraging open communication in education can lead to more reports of violence, helping create a safer society. These steps can boost regional security and lay the groundwork for lasting peace (Yalmi, 2020), building resilience against insurgent messaging.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Classification of 30 BH Messaging of YouTube Videos Analysed

S/N.	Title	Author	Year	Link
V 1.	Boko Haram attack on This Day Newspaper	Sahara TV	2 May 2012	https://youtu.be/Es--TR4TOJE?si=AiB9gy3B_NBz6ErZ
V 2.	Boko Haram is responsible for recent attacks in northeastern Nigeria- Abubakar Shekau	Africa News/*Agence France-Presse*	3 January 2018	https://youtu.be/nUtabV8pEQ4
V 3.	Boko Haram threatens U.S. in video - https://youtu.be/s6flerfasbk	CNN	14 August 2013	https://youtu.be/s6flerfasbk
V 4.	Boko Haram leader threatens Cameroon in YouTube video	AFP News Agency	7 January 2015a	https://youtu.be/l6HWr4x4rQs
V 5.	Boko Haram leader vows to disrupt Nigeria election in new Video	AFP News Agency	18 February 2015b	https://youtu.be/lntdalpUk_c
V 6.	Boko Haram releases threatening video	eNCA	30 March 2014	https://youtu.be/GzoO0nPw2ZY

V 7.	Boko Haram leader dismisses reports of his death in video	AFP News Agency	3 October 2014a	https://youtu.be/daIPjo4m_2g
V 8.	Boko Haram leader threatens war, burns Nigerian flag (archive)	Daily Mail	6 March 2015	https://tinyurl.com/y52tuha3
V 9.	Nigeria: Boko Haram's disturbing video threats	The Telegraph	6 May 2014	https://youtu.be/Ro7HVwErKsA
V 10.	Is Boko Haram's leader dead? Insane? Neither?	The Wall Street Journal	7 May 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDF1KQGpiBY
V 11.	Boko Haram member: Kidnapped girls willingly converted to Islam	CBS Evening News	20 May 2014	https://youtu.be/G2dGmuijwPc
V 12.	Boko Haram leader releases video	The New York Times	5 May 2014	https://tinyurl.com/492ex3u3
V 13.	Boko Haram leader vows to defeat regional force in new video	AFP News Agency	9 February 2015c	https://youtu.be/Yd2C2wWU0Cs?feature=shared
V 14.	Video 'shows Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau'- Daily Mail	Daily Mail	15 March 2018	https://youtu.be/IZRDoUFTl4I?feature=shared

V 15.	Nigeria: Boko Haram Releases New Video Denying Surrender	African News	2 April 2016a	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUVegJfwBXU
V 16.	Boko Haram Leader Abubakar Shekau: 'Kill, Kill, Kill!	The New York Times	5 May 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLAKoJYTLfA
V 17.	Abubakar Shekau (Boko Haram's leader), before picking up arms)	Our Gists	24 June 2021	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6fgY3tVMyo
V 18.	Boko Haram leader declares war on Nigerian Christians	Naijapals	11 January 2012	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dEJAo6wZa4
V 19.	Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau threatens Nigerian elections	Sahara TV	18 February 2015	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfBXdcUy_lI
V 20.	Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau killed, claims Nigerian military	The Guardian, UK	20 August 2013	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChHOV9Ug-2o
V 21.	Exclusive: In first video since July, Shekau taunts 'those who said I have died'	Sahara TV	9 November 2018	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBwQN2y5Z54

V 22.	New Nigerian Boko Haram video mocks Bring Back Girls campaign	AFP News Agency	13 July 2014b	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ipwr3Myz-Q
V 23.	Boko Haram leader says in a video group abducted the girls	Wall Street Journal	5 May 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9BU8AflC4g
V 24.	Boko Haram vows to take on AU troops.	CGTN	11 February 2015	Boko Haram vows to take on AU troops
V 25.	Abubakar Shekau resurfaces, insists on hostage swap for Chibok girls	Africa News	25 Septembe r 2016b	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PEnWvbyiis
V 26.	Video of 'dead' Boko Haram leader telling Nigeria, 'I'm still alive'	On Demand News	3 October 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suJMHh958u8
V 27.	Boko Haram leader praises attack on Charlie Hebdo	CGTN	15 January 2015	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKP71cg2PMo

V 28.	Boko Haram denies Nigerian government ceasefire claims	Euro News	1 November 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAvS3sxX8Yg
V 29.	Al Baghdadi shown for the first time in Boko Haram video	AFP News Agency	9 February 2015d	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d33Adg-YuA0&t=17s
V. 30	Shekau's 'personal Responsibility': to fight Nigeria and the entire world	African News	16 September 2016	https://youtu.be/PKQwbzXnwEI

Appendix 2. Classification of 30 Government Counter-Messaging Videos Analysed

S/N.	Title	Author	Year Published	Link/Date Accessed
S 1.	Inauguration ceremony: Swearing in of President Muhammadu Buhari	TVC	29 May 2015	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9euJ8Xtu4Iw- 28 March 2025.
S 2.	President Buhari addresses the nation as Nigeria celebrates its 55th anniversary	Channels TV	1 October 2015	https://www.channelstv.com/2015/10/01/full-text-president-buharis-independence-day-speech/- 28 March 2025.
S 3.	President Buhari's Independence Day address (Full Video)	Channels TV	1 October 2019	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCzo3RohQiU- 28 March 2025.
S 4.	Full video: President Buhari's Democracy Day speech	Channels TV	12 June 2020	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLXiBLcrNSY- 28 March 2025.
S 5.	Watch President Buhari's full exclusive interview with Channels TV	Channels TV	5 January 2022	https://shorturl.at/N6LaN- 24 June 2026.
S 6.	Full Video: President Buhari Address at UN 77th General Assembly.	TVC	21 September 2022b	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kS2khLlEnXU- March 2025.

S 7.	Muhammadu Buhari: 'I haven't failed' against Boko Haram- Talk to Al Jazeera	Al Jazeera	5 March 2016a	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1QZDA1BFUo- March 20205.
S 8.	Boko Haram: Chief of Army Staff motivates troops to final victory	TVC	14 April 2020a	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plW9nIF7ZDM- 28 March 2025.
S 9.	Nigeria Boko Haram: Militants 'technically defeated' – Buhari	BBC	24 December 2015c	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35173618- 9 April 2025.
S 10.	Army Commander says Boko Haram overwhelms troops in viral video	Punch	2 April 2020	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxm2sZ1SW7k- 28 March 2025.
S 11.	APC suggests wholistic counter terrorism strategy in the fight against Boko Haram	Channels TV	3 March 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhViKZ5pCG0- 29 March 2025.
S 12.	Insecurity: The govt knows sponsors of Boko Haram, says former Naval Chief	Channels TV	25 August 2021	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KyHowYHyAp8- 29 March 2025.
S 13.	[Full Video] Tinubu tours NSA facility, warns security agencies against disharmony.	Channels TV	5 June 2023	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8L1WVLpbUP8- 31 March 2025.
S 14.	Army organises seminar for spiritual warfare to tackle insurgency	TV360 Nigeria	1 October 2019	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HNuh3AtRfA&t=52s- 17 April 2025.

S 15.	Operation Safe Corridor is a huge success- General Bamidele Shafa	TVC	3 March 2020b	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWiDKrhtRDQ- 6 April 2025.
S 16.	Update: Nigeria's new president sworn in	Al Jazeera	29 May 2011a	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82MYxXAZkis&t=42s- 5 April 2025.
S 17.	President of Nigeria: HE Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's address to the parliament of RSA	Parliament of the Republic of South Africa.	8 May 2013	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6Nc-WV-Q5M- 1 April 2025.
S 18.	Presidential address by President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR.	Nigerian Television Authority	14 May 2013	https://youtu.be/c_d3A4bGVF8- 2 April 2025.
S 19.	Goodluck Jonathan speaks [to] Amanpour on CNN [Full Interview]	CNN	15 April 2010	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUAEBfhzjgM- 2 April 2025.
S 20.	Major General Edward Buba on financing terrorism in Nigeria.	A Square TV	11 July 2024	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFdpv4sthj0- 2 April 2025.
S 21.	Nigeria Police Begins Counter-Terrorism Campaign	Channels TV	2 June 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6Li4xcXkC0&t=1s- 30 June 2026.

S 22.	Nigeria's army arrests to effectiveness in the use of a non-kinetic approach	TVC	17 November 2023a	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyVQBTOydHs- 2 April 2025.
S 23.	Hedayah hosts Nigerian delegation to advance counter-extremism efforts.	Emirates News Agency	12 December 2024	https://www.wam.ae/en/article/b6nl6d4-hedayah-hosts-nigerian-delegation-advance- 2 April 2025.
S 24.	ONSA leads renewed national effort to curb violent extremism	TVC	8 August 2023b	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9emi5b2ZY4- 3 April 2025.
S 25.	Nigerian army claims victory over Boko Haram	Al Jazeera	27 December 2016b	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CK4sNdpf4rA- 3 April 2025.
S 26.	Video: Goodluck Jonathan talks of Boko Haram fight	France 24	27 January 2016	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ew21gbl6c7w - 5 April 2025.
S 27.	Army urges Boko Haram terrorists to surrender.	Channels TV	6 March 2024	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YrsXwOUass- 3 April 2025.
S 28.	Boko Haram attacking Christians to stir religious war full speech.	Channels TV	28 February 2020b	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AU5IJRQD9sw- 4 April 2025.
S 29.	Keynote Address – Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF).	GRV Global	22 November 2021	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLQw_KMXVbc- 4 April 2025.
S 30.	Military unveils first indigenous attack drones, vows to eliminate security threats.	Channels TV	3 April 2025	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VoAP3eMyL8- 5 April 2025.

Appendix 3. Semiotic Description of key objects and actions in BH videos

Videos	Frequency	Description
Sambisa Videos	16	Habitat for illegal mining of resources, abduction, and land of Death
Indoor Videos	12	Jihadi group evades the public
Barracks Video	1	Attack, kill, and loot
Undetermined Video	1	Fear and attack
Amoured Tanks	6	War, intimidation, and carnage
4K47	26	Kill and create fear
Hilux	12	Mobility and ease of travel to attack
Khaki	15	Legitimacy as an organised army
Quran	7	Purported religious affiliation with Islam
Flags	6	A seemingly organised institution seeking legitimacy
Chewing Stick	5	Scare and scold
Music	7	Religious connotation to sway Arabic or Muslim listeners
Emotion	12	Threaten, create fear, and moral panic

This table displays the various multimodal elements, their frequency of appearance in the data, and the connotative meanings of the emotional, socio-cultural, religious, and political undertones they evoke.