



POLICY BRIEF

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Beyond Kinetic Operations: A "Human Security" Framework for Counter-Terrorism in the North-West and North-Central Zones

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Executive Summary

Nigeria's internal security landscape in early 2026 is defined by the rapid "terror-convergence" of banditry and ideological extremism across Kwara, Kaduna, and Katsina States. Despite the launch of the National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC) Strategic Plan 2025–2030, rural communities remain vulnerable to mass kidnappings and "parallel taxation" by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs). Recent data indicates a 110% increase in fatalities in the first half of 2025 compared to 2024, with over 650,000 IDPs in the North-West alone (ACAPS, 2025; NHRC, 2026).

The current "Implementation Gap" lies in the over-reliance on kinetic (military) strikes, which clears territory but fail to *hold* it, leaving a governance vacuum filled by insurgents. This policy brief proposes a shift from state-centric security to a Human Security Model. It advises the National Assembly to: (1) Legislate a "Community Policing Equalization Fund"; (2) Formalize "Indigenous Intelligence Networks"; and (3) Enact a "Rural Resilience Act" to restore agrarian livelihoods as a counter-radicalization tool.

1.0 Introduction

The security crisis in Kwara, Kaduna, and Katsina has evolved from localized cattle rustling into sophisticated, technologically-enabled terrorism. Groups now utilize AI-driven digital currencies for ransoms and commercial satellite systems for coordination (UN Security Council Report, 2026). Kwara State, previously a "buffer zone," is now witnessing a southward drift of conflict due to climate-induced migration and the "balloon effect" of military operations in the North-West (ACAPS, 2025).

The primary challenge is the "Ungoverned Space" paradox: Nigeria's security forces are concentrated in urban centers, while 80% of the terror activity occurs in rural forests.

Without a legislative framework that integrates rural inhabitants into the national security architecture, the state remains reactive rather than preventive.

2.0 Past Nigerian Legislative Context on Counter-Terrorism

The Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act of 2022 and the National Security Strategy 2019 laid the groundwork for the NCTC. However, these frameworks focus heavily on "Prosecution and Prohibition" but lack "Protection and Presence" in rural agrarian belts.

While the NCTC Strategic Plan 2025–2030 prioritizes "Counter-IED Enterprise" and "Strategic Communications," there is no



substantive law mandating the socio-economic rehabilitation of "frontline" communities (NCTC, 2025). Administrative measures have attempted to fill this with the "Safe Nigeria Initiative," but these lack the budgetary permanence of a legislated Act.

3.0 Cross-Country Experiences: Lessons in Community-Led Security

- **Tunisia (2021–2025):** Transitioned from a purely militarized response to a "Whole-of-Society" approach. By elevating oversight mechanisms and engaging local civil society in "early warning" digital platforms, Tunisia reduced terrorist recruitment in marginalized border regions (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021).
- **India (COBRA/Greyhounds Model):** To tackle Naxalite "Left-Wing Extremism" in rural forests, India created specialized units (Greyhounds) that operate within communities, combined with massive "Road Requirement Plans" (RRP) to ensure the state can reach the most isolated villages within minutes.
- **Kenya:** The "Nyumba Kumi" (Ten Households) initiative legalized a community-based policing model where every 10 households are responsible for knowing their neighbors. This "hyper-local" intelligence was crucial in disrupting Al-Shabaab cells in urban and rural fringes.

4.0 Legislative Pathways for Nigeria: A Comprehensive Action Plan

To bridge the rural security gap, the National Assembly must move from "Top-Down" to "Bottom-Up" Security Governance:

1. **The "Rural Borderlands" Command:** Legislate the creation of a specialized **Forestry Security Guard** (distinct from the overstretched Army) tasked exclusively with patrolling the Kamuku and Rugu forests straddling Kaduna and Katsina.
2. **Digital "Early-Warning" Act:** Mandate Telecommunications companies to provide "Zero-Rating" for emergency security reporting apps in high-risk zones, ensuring rural farmers can report movements without data costs.
3. **Indigenous Intelligence Integration:** Formalize the role of **Traditional Rulers** in the National Security Council (NSC). Research shows that *Gaskiya* (truth) and *Lakuma* (peace) are indigenous concepts that can be leveraged to rebuild trust in state forces (Safer Communities, 2026).

5.0 Policy Recommendations

1. **Enact a "Rural Resilience & Security Act":** Legislate that 5% of the Defence Budget be ring-fenced for "Agro-Security", providing armed escorts for farmers in Katsina and Kaduna to restore food systems and break the cycle of poverty-driven recruitment.
2. **Institutionalize State-Level "Security Trust Funds":** Mandate the 36 states to create transparent, audited funds to support "Vigilante Groups" with standardized training and human rights compliance monitoring (NCTC Strategic Plan, 2025).



3. **Mandate "Plain Language" Counter-Narratives:** Legislate that the National Orientation Agency (NOA) must produce weekly counter-radicalization content in Hausa, Fulfulde, and Nupe to challenge ISWAP and bandit propaganda on local radio (NCTC, 2025).
4. **Create "Safe Zone" Projects:** Following the NCTC's 2025 "Safe Zone" pilot, legislate the permanent establishment of these zones in Kwara and Kaduna to protect schools and markets from mass abductions.

NCTC (2025). *Strategic Plan 2025-2030: Federal Government of Nigeria.*

Safer Communities (2026). *Rural Banditry and Structural Marginalization in Nigeria: A Political Economy Analysis.*

UN Security Council (2026). *Strategic-Level Report on the Threat Posed by ISIL/Da'esh in Africa.*

World Bank (2025). *Nigeria Development Update: The Economic Cost of Insecurity*

6.0 Conclusion

The rise of insecurity in Kwara, Kaduna, and Katsina is a symptom of "Governance Desertification." Military might can win battles, but only the presence of the state, in the form of justice, roads, and responsive policing, can win the war against terror. By adopting a "Human Security" framework, the National Assembly can transform these states from "frontlines of fear" into "corridors of commerce."

References

ACAPS (2025). *Conflict Dynamics and Humanitarian Implications: North West and North Central Nigeria.*

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