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INTELLIGENCE FAILURE AND STRATEGIC DIPLOMACY IN NIGERIA'S COUNTERINSURGENCY: IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL SECURITY.

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Abstract

This article examines how intelligence failure among Nigerian security agencies shapes strategic diplomacy between insurgent actors and the Nigerian state, and what this reveals for global security. It addresses a core problem in the literature: intelligence failure and strategic diplomacy are often studied separately, with limited analysis of how they interact in concrete counterinsurgency contexts. Drawing on neoclassical realism and perception–misperception theory, the study conceptualises intelligence failure as a structural and cognitive phenomenon rooted in weak state institutions, governance deficits and systematic misjudgements about insurgent capabilities and intentions. Methodologically, the article adopts a qualitative, comparative case study design, using secondary sources such as official reports, academic studies, think-tank analyses and credible media accounts to trace how different types of intelligence failure (in collection, analysis, sharing and use) have shaped Nigeria's counterinsurgency choices and diplomatic engagement with Boko Haram, ISWAP and related actors. The findings show that recurrent intelligence failures have narrowed the menu of perceived options for Nigerian decision-makers, reinforced reactive, force-centred responses and undermined attempts at dialogue, amnesty and regional cooperation. They also reveal how misperceptions on both state and insurgent sides have contributed to missed opportunities for strategic diplomacy and weakened Nigeria's contribution to regional and global security governance. The article concludes that improving strategic diplomacy in Nigeria and comparable conflict-affected states requires not only technical reforms of the intelligence cycle, but also broader governance and institutional changes that enhance trust, accountability and the effective use of intelligence in policy-making.

Keywords: intelligence failure; strategic diplomacy; counterinsurgency; Boko Haram; ISWAP; Nigeria; global security; governance.

Introduction

In recent decades, Nigeria has become a key testing ground for how states manage complex internal security threats while trying to uphold political stability and regional responsibilities in West Africa and the wider global security environment. The country faces protracted insurgencies and terrorist violence, particularly from Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), alongside mass kidnappings and rural banditry that have affected large parts of the North-East and North-West (Crisis Group, 2017). These challenges have persisted despite rising defence and security spending and repeated military operations, raising difficult questions about the effectiveness of Nigeria's security architecture, its intelligence services and, by extension, the credibility of its contributions to regional and global counter-terrorism efforts.

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Within this landscape, intelligence understood as the collection, analysis and sharing of security-relevant information by agencies such as the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Department of State Services (DSS), the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) is expected to serve as a central pillar of national security and a critical support to both operational planning and high-level decision-making (Intelligence and National Security in Nigeria Democratic Governance, 2022; Nigeria Intelligence Framework and the Challenges of Combating Boko Haram Terrorism, 2023). Yet recurring surprise attacks, mass abductions, prison breaks and assaults on military positions, even in areas with a long-term security presence, indicate persistent weaknesses in Nigeria's intelligence cycle and inter-agency coordination (Amaraegbu, 2012; BusinessDay, 2025). Analysts highlight failures of human intelligence, infiltration of security forces, poor information-sharing between agencies and with regional partners, and the under-use or politicisation of available intelligence.

At the same time, the Nigerian state has experimented with various forms of engagement with insurgent actors, including amnesty offers, indirect talks, prisoner exchanges, community-based deradicalisation and regional cooperation through the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which can be understood as elements of strategic diplomacy in the context of internal armed conflict (Boko Haram Insurgency and Nigeria's Foreign Policy, 2020; Intelligence and Management of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria, 2018). The success or failure of these initiatives has often depended on how accurately the state understood insurgent capabilities, internal dynamics and intentions, and on how insurgent groups perceived the strength, resolve and credibility of the Nigerian government and its security agencies (Crisis Group, 2017; Modern Diplomacy, 2025). In other words, intelligence performance and diplomatic strategy are closely intertwined in Nigeria's struggle against insurgency and have wider implications for global security debates on counter-terrorism and conflict management.

Against this background, the **aim** of this article is to examine how intelligence failures within Nigeria's security agencies shape strategic diplomacy with insurgent actors and what this implies for counterinsurgency outcomes and global security. It addresses three guiding **research questions**:

1. What are the key dimensions of intelligence failure among Nigerian security agencies in the context of insurgency?

2. How has strategic diplomacy between insurgents and the Nigerian state been shaped and constrained by these intelligence failures?

3. What are the implications of this interaction for Nigeria's security outcomes and for broader regional and global security governance?

The study contributes to the literature in two main ways. First, it bridges a gap between works that focus primarily on intelligence failures as operational or institutional problems and those that examine diplomacy and foreign policy responses to insurgency without systematically linking them to the quality of intelligence. Second, by applying neoclassical realism and perception–misperception theory to the Nigerian case, it offers an integrated framework for understanding how domestic institutions, leadership

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perceptions and intelligence performance jointly shape strategic diplomacy with insurgent actors and, by extension, the credibility of state responses in a global security context (Amaraegbu, 2012; Intelligence and National Security in Nigeria Democratic Governance, 2022; CDD West Africa, 2026).

Literature Review

The literature on intelligence and insecurity in Nigeria has grown significantly since the escalation of Boko Haram's violence, but it tends to focus on three main themes that are directly relevant to this assignment: intelligence failure, insurgency dynamics, and the limits of Nigerian diplomacy and state responses.

First, several studies explicitly link the persistence of Boko Haram and related forms of violence to failures in Nigeria's intelligence system. Amaraegbu (2012) argues that the Boko Haram insurgency exposed a "failure of human intelligence" in Nigeria, highlighting infiltration of security agencies, weak community-level information networks, and the lack of credible human sources in affected areas. Similarly, Intelligence and Management of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria finds that intelligence failure is not an aberration but a recurrent feature of intelligence practice, and that counter-terrorism operations have often been "devoid of the vital ingredient of intelligence", particularly in terms of timely collection and analysis (Intelligence and Management of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria, 2018). Other works stress structural problems such as inadequate training, poor technical capacity, and weak information-sharing mechanisms among security agencies, which undermine the ability of the state to anticipate and prevent attacks (Intelligence and National Security in Nigeria Democratic Governance, 2022; Intelligence Sharing: The Challenges among the Nigerian Security Agencies, 2018; Intelligence Gathering and Challenges of Insecurity in Nigeria, 2020).

Second, a broad body of scholarship examines the Boko Haram insurgency itself and the Nigerian state's response, often pointing to governance deficits and flawed security strategies rather than intelligence per se. Much of this work notes that Nigeria's failure to contain Boko Haram since 2009 cannot be explained only by military weakness, but is closely linked to corruption, abuses by security forces, and the erosion of trust between communities and the state, which further discourages intelligence sharing at the local level. These studies emphasize that counter-insurgency campaigns relying heavily on force, without parallel efforts to build reliable intelligence networks and community cooperation, have struggled to produce sustainable security gains.

Third, a growing set of works explores Nigeria's foreign policy and diplomatic responses to the insurgency, including regional cooperation and attempts at negotiation. Analyses of Nigeria's foreign policy in the Lake Chad region show how Boko Haram's cross-border activities pushed Abuja to revitalise the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and engage in sustained shuttle diplomacy with Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. At the same time, studies of Nigeria's counter-terrorism policy argue that diplomacy and multilateralism have been hampered by inconsistent strategies, limited capacity to provide accurate intelligence to partners, and disputes over burden-sharing (Boko Haram Insurgency and Nigeria's Foreign Policy, 2020; "Case Study of the Boko Haram

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Insurgency in Nigeria," 2020). Policy analyses and editorials also point to failed or incomplete efforts at dialogue, amnesty, and prisoner exchanges, suggesting that misperceptions about insurgent intentions and state strength often rooted in poor or politicised intelligence have contributed to missed opportunities for strategic diplomacy (The Art of the Impossible: Intelligence and Nigeria's Boko Haram War, 2021; BusinessDay, 2025).

Across these strands, the literature provides detailed accounts of intelligence shortcomings, insurgent tactics, and Nigeria's regional and diplomatic responses. However, it rarely treats intelligence failure and strategic diplomacy together as a single analytical problem. Studies on intelligence tend to focus on operational lapses and institutional weaknesses, while those on diplomacy and foreign policy examine regional cooperation and multilateral engagement without systematically tracing how specific failures in collection, analysis, sharing, or use of intelligence have shaped the conditions and outcomes of Nigeria's diplomatic engagement with insurgent actors. This gap is precisely where the present assignment positions itself: it seeks to bridge these literatures by interrogating how intelligence failures among Nigerian security agencies have influenced both hard-security choices and strategic diplomatic initiatives in the context of insurgency.

Theoretical Framework:

This study applies a combined theoretical framework based on **neoclassical realism** and **perception–misperception theory** to analyse how intelligence failure shapes strategic diplomacy between insurgents and the Nigerian state.

Neoclassical realism argues that foreign and security policy results from the interaction between the international or regional environment and domestic-level variables such as leaders' perceptions, state capacity and internal political constraints (Rose, 1998; Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell, 2016; Firoozabadi & Ashkezari, 2016). States do not simply react mechanically to objective threats; systemic pressures are filtered through domestic institutions and the subjective interpretations of decision-makers, which can produce risk-acceptant or sub-optimal policies. In the Nigerian context, this perspective helps to conceptualise intelligence failure as a **domestic constraint** that mediates how the state responds to regional and global security pressures. Weak institutions, fragmented security agencies, limited analytical capacity and governance deficits all affect how information is collected, processed and transmitted to leaders, and thus how Nigeria designs counterinsurgency strategies and decides whether, when and how to engage insurgent actors diplomatically (Intelligence and National Security in Nigeria Democratic Governance, 2022; The Role of Intelligence in Countering Terrorism in Nigeria, 2025). From a neoclassical realist viewpoint, recurring intelligence failures are therefore not accidental but reflect underlying state capacity problems and internal political dynamics that distort the translation of external threats into coherent policy.

Perception–misperception theory, associated especially with Robert Jervis, complements this structural focus by examining the **cognitive processes** through which leaders interpret information about threats, allies and adversaries, and the systematic errors that can arise from biases, images and expectations (Jervis, 1976; Jervis, 2010). Jervis shows

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that decision-makers often see other actors as more hostile and coordinated than they really are, underestimate how threatening their own actions may appear to others, and overestimate the clarity of their own signals. Applied to Nigeria, this lens is useful for understanding how political and military leaders may misread insurgent intentions, organisational cohesion or willingness to negotiate, and how insurgent leaders may in turn misperceive state strength, resolve or vulnerability. Misperceptions of Boko Haram and ISWAP for example, treating them as purely criminal, assuming that they are close to defeat, or underestimating their capacity for strategic adaptation can contribute both to flawed intelligence assessments and to poorly timed or poorly designed diplomatic initiatives, such as amnesty offers or dialogue efforts that lack credible guarantees (Amaraegbu, 2012; Intelligence and Management of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria, 2018).

Taken together, neoclassical realism and perception–misperception theory provide an integrated framework that links **structural, institutional and cognitive** dimensions of Nigeria's security and diplomatic choices. Neoclassical realism helps explain the **causes** of intelligence failure by situating weaknesses in collection, analysis, sharing and use within broader patterns of state capacity, governance and regional security competition, while perception–misperception theory illuminates how leaders' beliefs and biases shape the **interpretation** of intelligence and the **decision-making processes** that lead to either escalation or strategic diplomacy (Ripsman et al., 2016; Jervis, 2010). This combined framework is therefore well suited to exploring how intelligence failures inside Nigerian security agencies interact with domestic politics and misperceptions of insurgent actors to shape the conditions, timing and outcomes of Nigeria's diplomatic engagement with groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP, and to draw wider lessons for global security governance.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative case study design to analyse how intelligence failure influences strategic diplomacy between insurgent groups and the Nigerian state. A multiple-case approach is appropriate because the research question focuses on understanding a common phenomenon the impact of intelligence failure on state–insurgent diplomacy across several distinct but related episodes in Nigeria's recent security history. Rather than testing statistical relationships, the aim is to trace processes and identify patterns and mechanisms within and across cases. A qualitative strategy is particularly suited to this task because insurgency, intelligence operations and diplomatic engagement are complex, context-dependent processes that cannot be easily reduced to numerical indicators; they require close attention to narratives, institutional dynamics and actors' perceptions, which qualitative methods are better equipped to capture.

The analysis focuses on selected episodes of Nigeria's response to insurgency, such as key phases of the Boko Haram conflict in the North-East, the emergence of ISWAP, major attacks and kidnappings that revealed intelligence gaps, and specific attempts at engagement or negotiation with insurgent actors for example, amnesty initiatives, prisoner exchanges and regional cooperation through the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The study relies primarily on secondary data, including declassified or publicly available official reports, parliamentary and commission documents where

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accessible, academic articles, policy papers, think-tank analyses, and credible media and investigative reports on Nigeria's intelligence community and counter-insurgency efforts. These sources provide rich qualitative material on how intelligence is produced, interpreted and used in decision-making, and on how diplomatic initiatives have been designed and perceived over time.

Data are examined through a structured, focused comparison: the same guiding questions are asked of each episode or sub-case:

I. What type of intelligence failure occurred (collection, analysis, dissemination, coordination, politicisation)?

II. How did it shape the options that decision-makers perceived, and how did it influence concrete diplomatic choices (such as whether to negotiate, when to offer amnesty, or how to coordinate with neighbours)?

III. What outcomes followed for both security and diplomacy?

This approach makes it possible to compare different moments in Nigeria's insurgency management in a systematic way, while keeping the analysis closely tied to the research question and to the theoretical framework.

The methodological choices have some limitations. The study depends on open-source and declassified materials; many operational details and intelligence assessments remain classified or only partially available, which limits the depth of empirical verification (Intelligence and Management of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria, 2018; Intelligence and National Security in Nigeria Democratic Governance, 2022). Official narratives and media reports may also reflect political interests or incomplete information, requiring careful cross-checking across sources. In addition, because this research is conducted within an academic setting with limited time and scope, the analysis cannot cover every episode of the insurgency in detail and instead focuses on illustrative cases that highlight the link between intelligence failure and diplomatic choices. Despite these constraints, the qualitative, comparative case study design is well suited to exploring how intelligence failures within Nigerian security agencies shape strategic diplomacy in practice and to drawing cautious, mechanism-focused lessons from the Nigerian experience and its implications for global security.

Findings and Discussion

Structural intelligence failure and limits on strategic diplomacy

The Nigerian case shows that intelligence failure is not a marginal or accidental issue but a structural factor underpinning the broader crisis of insecurity and, by extension, limiting the state's strategic choices vis-à-vis insurgents. Adegoke (2020) argues that diverse security challenges from ethno-religious conflict and communal clashes to kidnapping, militancy and terrorism have escalated despite significant security spending, partly because of lapses in intelligence gathering and its proper utilisation. Drawing on Lowenthal's conception of intelligence as a full cycle of requesting, collecting, analysing and disseminating information for policymakers, Adegoke (2020) shows that in Nigeria

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there is a weak linkage between producers and users of intelligence and that ineffective or inaccurate intelligence can actually generate insecurity rather than prevent it.

In empirical terms, deficits appear at multiple stages of the intelligence process: lack of analytical skills, absence of real-time intelligence, weak ICT capacity, inadequate funding and manpower, and poor integration of intelligence into decision-making. High-profile episodes, such as prior warnings before the Chibok abductions that were not acted upon, illustrate not only failures of collection but also failures of timely use. On the societal side, public unwillingness to share information due to loss of confidence in government, lack of professionalism within agencies, corruption, and strong ethnic or religious loyalties further thin out or distort community-based intelligence.

From the structural-functionalist perspective adopted by Adegoke (2020), intelligence operates as a key "organ" within the wider security system, so dysfunction in this organ has consequences for the entire system. When intelligence gathering and analysis malfunction, the state struggles to foresee imminent threats and respond proactively, and its perceived menu of options vis-à-vis insurgents narrows to reactive, force-heavy responses, with limited room for calibrated negotiation, amnesty or political engagement**.**

How intelligence failure shapes strategic choices in key episodes

The second finding is that, in specific episodes of Nigeria's struggle against insurgency and communal violence, intelligence failures have directly influenced concrete strategic choices in both the use of force and the pursuit of dialogue. Studies on Boko Haram and ISWAP show that surprise attacks, mass kidnappings and prison breaks have repeatedly pushed authorities back toward hard-security responses intensified military operations, prolonged states of emergency and large-scale deployments sometimes at the expense of ongoing or envisaged negotiation processes. Poor anticipation of insurgent adaptive capacity, underestimation of the threat in particular areas and misreading of insurgent organisational cohesion have contributed to poorly calibrated diplomatic decisions, including amnesty offers made too late or talks initiated from a position of weakness.

These dynamics are reinforced by persistent information-sharing problems between Nigerian security agencies. Institutional rivalries, lack of trust and the absence of effective platforms for exchanging intelligence have limited the state's ability to design strategies that coherently combine military action, local mediation, deradicalisation programmes and regional cooperation. At the regional level, asymmetric intelligence contributions and difficulties in providing timely, reliable information to partners in the Lake Chad Basin have weakened the effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and complicated Nigeria's security diplomacy.

The June 2025 massacre in Yelewata and Daudu, Benue State, offers a recent and telling illustration. In that case, troops assigned to protect communities were reportedly diverted by a false alert about an attack on another village, enabling assailants with precise information on the location of internally displaced persons and shelters to carry out a coordinated assault. The military's subsequent explanation blaming insider sabotage and local collusion highlights again the vulnerability of Nigeria's defence and intelligence architecture to manipulation and infiltration, and the inability of institutions such as the

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Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) to anticipate or prevent large-scale violence despite their mandates. Strategically, such episodes not only generate reactive, force-centred responses and symbolic high-level visits; they also further erode trust between communities and the state, weakening the human intelligence networks and local partnerships needed to underpin any credible political or diplomatic engagement.

Multi-level patterns of intelligence failure in Nigeria's security and diplomatic system

A third finding is that intelligence failure manifests and produces effects at several interlinked levels of Nigeria's security and diplomatic system: within domestic institutions, in inter-agency and regional cooperation, and at the broader international level shaped by Nigeria's external position. At the domestic level, governance-focused analyses argue that the Boko Haram insurgency is rooted in a wider crisis of state performance and legitimacy in northern Nigeria, characterised by pervasive corruption, youth unemployment, mass poverty and weak conflict-management institutions. These structural weaknesses interact with intelligence failures poor collection and analysis, weak human intelligence and weak linkages between producers and users of intelligence to undermine the state's capacity to anticipate threats, protect citizens and design credible strategies of engagement with violent actors.

At the inter-agency and regional levels, the same fragility produces a fragmented security and intelligence architecture. Research on Nigeria's response to Boko Haram highlights persistent institutional rivalries, inadequate information-sharing and underdeveloped conflict-management mechanisms, which together create “ungoverned spaces” and limit the effectiveness of both domestic operations and regional initiatives such as the MNJTF. In the Lake Chad Basin, Nigeria's inability to exercise effective jurisdiction over all its territory, combined with porous borders and poor management of entry points, has facilitated arms trafficking and cross-border militant activity, while also complicating efforts to build sustained, trust-based intelligence cooperation with Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

At the international level, studies of Nigeria's foreign policy and its handling of the Boko Haram crisis suggest that the country's relatively strong regional and global position has had ambivalent consequences for intelligence and diplomacy. On the one hand, Nigeria displays many features of fragility at home; on the other hand, its economic and diplomatic weight has effectively precluded coercive external intervention and reduced international pressure for deep reforms in the 2010–2015 period. This combination of domestic fragility and external strength has allowed Nigerian leaders to manage or deflect some demands for change while continuing to rely heavily on reactive, force-based responses and ad hoc regional arrangements, limiting incentives to adopt intelligence-led and diplomatically integrated strategies.

Better intelligence as a precondition for strategic diplomacy

Across these levels, the findings point to a central conclusion: better intelligence is essential for credible and effective strategic diplomacy with insurgent groups. When

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information about insurgent capabilities, internal divisions and intentions is weak, distorted or poorly shared, decision-makers perceive a narrow menu of options and default to reactive, coercive responses, even when carefully sequenced dialogue or amnesty might be feasible. By contrast, high-quality and properly used intelligence can help authorities decide when to open talks, which factions to engage, and how to calibrate offers and guarantees so that state signals appear credible to insurgent actors.

In this sense, intelligence reform is not only a technical security issue but a necessary foundation for any strategic diplomacy that aims to de-escalate violence and support wider regional and global security goals. This directly informs the recommendations of this assignment, which focus on strengthening the intelligence cycle and professional capacity, improving inter-agency coordination and oversight, rebuilding community-based intelligence and trust, and aligning intelligence reform with broader governance and development measures in affected regions.

Conclusion

This assignment has examined how intelligence failure among Nigerian security agencies shapes strategic diplomacy between insurgents and the Nigerian state, within a broader context of governance fragility and regional security pressures. The analysis shows that intelligence deficits in Nigeria are not isolated technical mishaps but recurring, structural problems embedded in wider patterns of poor governance, weak institutions, poverty and social mistrust, particularly in the northern regions where Boko Haram and other violent actors have thrived (Okoro, 2014; Adegoke, 2020). At the operational level, failures in the collection, analysis, sharing and utilisation of intelligence have repeatedly led to surprise attacks, mass casualties and reactive, force-centred responses, often undermining or crowding out the space for carefully timed negotiation, amnesty or political engagement with insurgent groups (Case Study of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria, 2020; The Art of the Impossible: Intelligence and Nigeria's Boko Haram War, 2010–2021).

At the organisational and regional levels, inter-agency rivalries, inadequate information-sharing and porous borders have limited Nigeria's capacity to build coherent, intelligence-led strategies that integrate military action with local mediation, deradicalisation and cooperation through frameworks such as the Multinational Joint Task Force. Internationally, the combination of domestic fragility with Nigeria's comparatively strong regional and global position has reduced external pressure for reform and allowed Abuja to manage or deflect demands for more decisive action, even as intelligence failures continued to erode public trust and weaken the credibility of its security diplomacy. Overall, the evidence suggests that the role of intelligence failure in Nigeria's strategic diplomacy goes beyond operational setbacks: it narrows the menu of perceived options, reinforces reactive and coercive patterns, and undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of both domestic and regional engagements with insurgent actors.

Taken together, these findings indicate that better intelligence is essential for credible and effective strategic diplomacy, not only in Nigeria but also for wider regional and global security efforts. Strengthening the intelligence cycle, improving inter-agency

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coordination and oversight, rebuilding community-based intelligence and trust, and aligning intelligence reform with governance and development measures therefore emerge as central conditions for moving from predominantly reactive, force-driven responses to a more intelligence-led and diplomatically grounded approach to insurgency management.

Recommendations:

In light of these findings, several recommendations can be advanced to strengthen the role of intelligence in Nigeria's security governance and strategic diplomacy.

Strengthen the intelligence cycle and professional capacity. Nigerian intelligence agencies should prioritise the full intelligence cycle collection, analysis, dissemination and feedback by investing in analytical training, ICT infrastructure and modern surveillance technologies for real-time processing of information on insurgent threats. Strategic and operational plans for counter-insurgency should be based on systematically generated evidence rather than ad hoc or politicised assessments, supported by continuous professional development, clear ethical standards and better welfare for intelligence personnel.

Enhance inter-agency coordination and oversight. A centralised but accountable coordination mechanism should improve collaboration among the DIA, DSS, DMI, NPF and other bodies, reducing duplication and closing gaps in information-sharing. Parliamentary committees on defence and national security should exercise stronger oversight, while clearer legal and policy frameworks for intelligence operations, data protection and civil liberties help prevent abuses that undermine legitimacy.

Rebuild community-based intelligence and trust. Given citizens' reluctance to share information and the erosion of trust in state institutions, Nigeria should invest in transparent, locally rooted community-based intelligence structures under joint community and state oversight. Positive but carefully regulated lessons from the Civilian Joint Task Force and MNJTF practices, combined with strategic communications that show intelligence sharing leads to real protection and justice, can gradually rebuild willingness to cooperate.

Align intelligence reform with governance and development measures. Because insurgency is closely linked to governance failures, poverty and inequality in northern Nigeria, intelligence-led security strategies must be complemented by targeted socio-economic policies addressing youth unemployment, service delivery gaps and perceived marginalisation. At the regional and international levels, Nigeria should deepen intelligence cooperation with Lake Chad Basin partners and relevant organisations in ways that respect sovereignty but strengthen collective capacity to track cross-border financing, arms flows and insurgent movements.

Together, these measures point toward a shift from predominantly reactive, force-driven responses to a more intelligence-led and governance-sensitive approach, in which better intelligence becomes a foundation for more credible and sustainable strategic diplomacy between the Nigerian state, insurgent actors and regional partners.

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