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FANTASTIC WALLS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Bilkent University

FANTASTIC WALLS AND WHERE TO
FIND THEM: A RESPONSE TO BORDER
FORTIFICATION

A Master's Thesis

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To Ömer and Yuşa



FANTASTIC WALLS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM:
A RESPONSE TO BORDER FORTIFICATION

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of International Relations.

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ABSTRACT

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Why do not all Violent Non-State Actors (VNSA) modify their strategies and tactics equally in response to border fortification? The global rise in border wall construction has been extensively studied in the context of affluent countries, while a significant gap in understanding the outcomes of this phenomenon in developing countries still exists. This study examines the effects of border fortification on transnational militancy. I argue that this relation is moderated by several intra- and extra-group dynamics. In this thesis, I devise a “theory of change” proposing that groups are only encouraged to shift in the long-term strategies when they fail to compensate for the loss delivered by fortification. VNSAs also find incentives in the reallocation of the existing resources and reduce the cost of their violent tactics by adopting more cost-effective approaches, driven by the setbacks caused by fortification. After employing logit models with interactions, my findings suggest that fortification, in combination with

foreign support, increases the likelihood of civilian targeting and the use of irregular weapons by VNSAs. Yet, only groups that were able to operate “differently across attacks” before fortification demonstrate a tendency towards using irregular weapons. Additionally, I found evidence that the interaction between fortification and state violence encourages selective targeting by VNSAs.

Keywords: Border fortification, transnational militancy, counterinsurgency, violent non-state actors, violent tactics, VNSA strategies.

ÖZET

FANTASTİK DUVARLAR NELERDİR VE NEREDE BULUNURLAR: SINIR TAHKİMATINA YANIT

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Neden bütün Şiddet Yanlısı Devlet Dışı Aktörler, sınır tahkimatına yanıt olarak strateji ve taktiklerini aynı şekilde değiştirmiyor? Sınır kuvvetlendirme politikalarındaki küresel artış, gelişmiş ülkeler bağlamında kapsamlı bir şekilde incelenirken, bu olgunun gelişmekte olan ülkelerdeki sonuçlarını anlamada hala önemli bir boşluk mevcut. Bu çalışma, sınır tahkimatının uluslararası militanlık üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektedir. Çalışmamda, bu ilişkinin çeşitli grup içi ve grup dışı dinamiklerden etkilendiğini vurguluyorum. Bu tezde, grupların ancak tahkimatın sebep olduğu kaybı telafi edemediklerinde uzun vadeli stratejilerini değiştirmeye yöneldiklerini öne sürdüğüm bir “değişim teorisi” geliştirim. Ayrıca devlet-dışı silahlı aktörlerin, tahkimatın sebep olduğu kısıtlamaların etkisiyle, halihazırda mevcut olan kaynakların yeniden tahsisine yönelip, daha uygun maliyetli taktiksel yaklaşımlar benimsediklerini savunuyorum. Tezdeki analizlerim için etkileşimli

logit modelleri kullanarak, tahkimat ile dış desteğin etkileşiminin bu aktörlerin sivilleri hedef alması ve daha uygun maliyetli silahlar kullanması olasılığını arttırdığını bulguluyorum. Bununla birlikte bulgularım, tahkimattan önce de taktiksel anlamda esnek hareket edebilen grupların sınır tahkimatından sonra maliyet etkinliği olan silahlar kullanmaya eğilimlerinin arttığına işaret etmektedir. İlaveten, tahkimat ile geniş çaplı devlet şiddeti arasındaki etkileşimin bu aktörleri saldırılarında sivilleri dışarıda bırakarak daha spesifik hedeflere yönelmeye teşvik ettiğine dair kanıtlar bulguluyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sınır tahkimatı, uluslararası militanlık, terörle mücadele, devlet-dışı silahlı aktörler, şiddet içeren taktikler, devlet-dışı silahlı aktör stratejileri.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDF – Civilian Defense Force

CTA – Clandestine Transnational Actors

ESD – External Support Dataset

ESD TY – External Support Dataset Triad-Level

GED – Georeferenced Event Dataset

GTD – Global Terrorism Database

START – Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism

UCDP – Uppsala Conflict Data Program

VNSA – Violent Non-State Actor

WGI – Worldwide Governance Indicator

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, amidst growing concerns over cross-border militant threats, Kenya embarked on a significant security initiative. Following a series of devastating attacks by al-Shabab, including a tragic massacre in Mandera (BBC, 2014), the Kenyan government announced plans to build a 708-kilometer concrete barrier along its north-eastern border. This ambitious project aimed to block militants from infiltrating Kenyan territory and enhance national security. Construction began a year later, in 2015, and by 2019, a 10-kilometer barbed wire fence had been erected along the border (BBC, 2019). Although it fell short of the originally planned massive wall, this specific instance of fortification is one among the many vivid illustrations of the rapid proliferation of border walls around the globe.

Having heterogeneous objectives such as political economy related motivations and various security concerns, authorities attempt to emphasize their political boundaries in a concrete manner. While there exists considerable research on the rationales driving the construction of solid border walls, especially in affluent countries, there is a dearth of information regarding their post-construction consequences. Hence, the outcomes of border reinforcement in relation to transnational militancy, especially in the context of the developing world, is one of the

avenues that requires further investigation. Expanding on previous studies that have identified significant causality between fortified borders and shifts in adopted strategies of certain insurgencies, I ask the following question to address an emerging gap in the literature: Why do some insurgent groups change their strategies and tactics in response to border fortification while others do not?

It is essential to begin by exploring the questions, what is border fortification, and why do states fortify their borders? Causes behind the physical manifestation of border strengthening, often referring to walls, fences, and wires, is explained within the literature under three overarching headings. First, a substantial portion of explanations are based on political-economic dimensions of cross-border control (See for example: Andreas, 2003; Hassner & Wittenberg, 2015), and the results thereof (Getmansky, Grossman and Wright, 2019). This approach underscores that border reinforcement is predominantly an endeavour to control and limit flows among countries that have economic disparity, the target state being the economically disadvantaged one, and with fortifications such as the Maginot line accepted as exceptions (Carter & Poast, 2017).

Another branch of the literature focuses on leaders' struggle to remain in power, parallel to the fundamental assumptions of Foreign Policy Analysis (B. de Mesquita et al., 2003). In this perspective, the leader's political survival is put into the centre, attempting to create a domestic rally effect. A remarkable and recent example is an article by Braithwaite and Linebarger, who rely on a global dataset of leader-years to deliver the result that politically insecure leaders are more likely to start building a wall (Linebarger & Braithwaite, 2022).

However, both claims are recently being challenged as it is believed that these do only partially, if any, explain the reasons for border fortification in the developing

world, where tangible security issues such as transnational militancy form the core of motivation. As Blair argues, “This oversight owes to a strong presumption that *de jure* borders are less salient in the Global South” (Blair, 2022). Moreover, the ability of developing states as well as their willingness to increase presence and authority at their borders has been questioned multiple times (See for example: Atzili, 2011). Yet, although the trend of border fortification has started in affluent states, clearly the developing countries have become major players in the field, which indeed stresses the significance of alternative explanations.

Adopting the third strand of the given literature as my foundational framework for border fortification, it becomes necessary to encapsulate the accumulated insights on rebel strategies and shifts in these strategies. Through this, I aim to position my thesis within the existing literature, this exploration being a precursor to my in-depth analysis in the subsequent chapter. It is crucial to depict the contextual landscape of my study through contemporary scholarly contributions, which will naturally guide the identification of problems and voids I have encountered.

Earlier works on insurgency and counterinsurgency underline the general assumption that violent non-state actors (VNSA) rely to a great extent on their constituencies for support in food, sanctuary, information, recruitment, and matériel (See also: Galula, 1964/2006; Aydınlı 2015; Fearon & Laitin, 2003), but also on foreign support (Staniland, 2005), and in some cases on natural resources or crime (Walsh et al., 2018). These dependencies as well as the ideational profiles of these actors have accordingly been shaping their strategies (Akcinaroglu & Tokdemir, 2018). Constituency in particular has remained “the sea” (Tse-tung, 1937) for many VNSAs endeavouring to obtain desired social or political conclusions, which has led to growing research on rebel strategies and tactics in line with civilian targeting,

ideological presentations, rebel propaganda, recruitment, and motives for incentivizing and punishing.

Parallel to this reliance, factors that threaten favoured conditions or trigger potential alteration in them become stimuli for shifts in VNSA behaviour, as may be anticipated. The captured changes in rebel strategies have for instance been attributed to intensified inter-rebel competition or narrow counterinsurgency policies, yet, only a handful of studies have analysed shifts in rebel strategies stemming from border fortification. Among these are attempts to quantify the “success” of walls (Braithwaite & Linebarger, 2020; Demarest & Grau, 2005), while others are satisfied with micro-level examination (Blair, 2022). Predictably, even fewer studies have probed deeper into the trajectories of expected or observed change (Nanes & Bachus, 2021; Blair, 2022).

There are indeed remarkable studies that focus on the responses of VNSAs, to triggers of change, encompassing adjustments of ideology and demands (Tokdemir et al., 2021), alterations in the use of violent activity and terrorism (Wood, 2010; Asal et al., 2019), the extent of violence (Asal & Linebarger & Greig, 2021), or variation in the severity of violence (Costalli & Moro, 2012). However, these studies omit or exhibit no concern for perhaps the most contemporary catalyst for shifts in rebel strategies, i.e., border fortification.

At this juncture, one encounters the first major problem within the existing body of research, namely, the absence of a comprehensive study exploring change in VNSA behaviour due to border fortification. I mean that, existing studies either focus solely on specific actors (Blair, 2022), or illustrate the implications of border strengthening processes within a single country (Tholens, 2017; Arslan & Can & Wilson, 2021; Ali & Khan & Khan et al., 2021). Nonetheless, as highlighted to some

extent earlier, the literature strongly claims that shifts in rebel behaviour can be observed due to intra-, inter-, or extra-group dynamics (See for instance: Tokdemir et al., 2021; Blair, 2022; Nanes & Bachus, 2021). This almost obliges one to delve for a deeper general understanding of VNSA reaction to border reinforcement, and specifically to walls as its most solid form. In line with this gap, I focus on the effects of border walls on VNSAs and attempt to trace the shifts in their strategies and tactics, limiting my study to the developing world in harmony with the first foundational framework I have provided.

However, the second challenge I am going to introduce will lead me to my final concern of intellectual curiosity. That is to say, existing studies portray tangible incongruities, or at the very least, they lack satisfying harmony and substantive consistency. In other words, relevant studies at hand either argue that border walls challenge the capabilities of insurgencies, compelling tactical and strategic adaptations (Blair, 2022), or claim that the impact of walls on counterinsurgency effectiveness is confined or contingent, yielding marginal influence over these groups (Braithwaite & Linebarger, 2020). This tolls the bells for a muddled organization within this branch of scholarly discourse. I believe that both the confusion and gap regarding the implied question are reasonable given the relatively recent emergence of the border fortification trend, particularly in the context of the developing world, and aim to clear the atmosphere by further investigating this fertile avenue.

Hence, I concentrate on both the inner dynamics of VNSAs and the outer conditions that pave the way for change and conduct a group-level analysis to capture shifts in rebel strategies. Complementing both general studies on the endurance and capabilities of insurgents (See for example: Young, & Dugan, 2014), their strategies and strategic shifts (Tokdemir et al., 2021; Nanes & Bachus, 2021), and the effects of

walls on transnational militancy (Blair, 2022), I ask ambitiously, why do some insurgent groups change their strategies and tactics in response to border fortification while others do not?

This question is of remarkable significance for, at least, three reasons. To start with, as the border reinforcement phenomenon has only become popular relatively recently in the developing world (Blair, 2022), the existing explanations on the causes and post-construction effects of border walls for these regions, remain highly untouched. That is, the shift of this trend, or at least its expansion from the developed to the developing world, is partly observable but its consequences are far from covered. It is noteworthy that, as mentioned above, the trends in fortification in the developed and developing countries can be approached as almost distinct trends, as their foundational motives remain, at least partly, different, making it even more vital to pay equal attention to the developing sphere of the globe. Given the focus of prior insights on developed countries (Andreas, 2003; Carter & Poast, 2017; Getmansky et al., 2019; Hassner & Wittenberg, 2015), it becomes a pressing need to interrogate post-construction dynamics through a selective framework, which encompasses the context of the developing world.

Taking it from this point, the causes behind the variance in effectiveness of walls on VNSAs is crucial to detect and portray both intra- and extra-group dynamics. By examining this variance and its roots within organizational structures as well as in relation to the character of the fortified border, this thesis also provides a contribution to the accumulating scholarly endeavour based on group-level analysis. Although there has been a smooth shift to organizational-level research, there still are multiple spheres that remain unexplored. However, it is significant to shed light on particularly intra-group dynamics, in relation to others, to distinguish the long-term strategic effects of

the border fortification trend and carefully elucidate the resource allocation of VNSAs within the context of conflict.

To continue, the study delivers significant policy implications in several ways. First, recent studies depict that some groups are eager to shift between strategies to adapt to the novel conditions of fortified borders, at least until alternatives are discovered or created, demonstrating the (potential) effects of walls on transnational militancy. Yet, for instance Blair's (2022) post-construction analysis of walls embeds the argument that VNSAs have the tendency to invest more in local networks to overcome the disadvantages of solid barriers, creating a "fortification dilemma" for the government. Therefore, it is essential to detect the consequences of border reinforcement for different VNSAs and craft responsive policies that align with counterinsurgency measures. Moreover, prevailing studies also illustrate that physical barriers do not exactly withhold violent groups from attacking or merely encourage them to rely more on civilians, but instead *delay* their attacks or brings a new pattern in them (Nanes & Bachus, 2021), highlighting an undiscussed function of borders, opening space for further exploration. Therefore, I believe that grasping adapted and adopted strategic and tactical behaviour of VNSAs stands as an initial step in enhancing the strategic border management dynamics of conflict and counterinsurgency. To build on this, and partially explain this second perplexity, I look for generalizable and significant explanations for why not all VNSAs are triggered for change in the same way against border reinforcement, relying on a variety of spatial and temporal frames and a large number of observations.

One other deep-lying implication and call of this study, making it a remarkably significant initial step for others, is on how civilian political opinion may be challenged by central policies, and though subject of another study, even how social life at

borderlands is impacted by border fortification regimes. Although my purpose is not to explore the human dimension of border fortification in this thesis, I rely highly on the shift in strategies regarding constituencies. Hence, my study softly embraces this underlying portrait between its lines.

The precise objective of my study, on the other hand, is to identify essential intra- and extra-group dynamics that contribute to the divergence in how VNSAs respond to border fortification. That is, I aim to fish out the critical variables that distinguish between VNSAs in a manner that pushes some to modify their tactics and strategies, while granting others the latitude to remain largely indifferent.

I argue in this thesis that, for border fortification to trigger change in VNSA behaviour specific inner dynamics and outer conditions must align. My study promises a comprehensive approach to the highlighted question, which to my knowledge does not resemble any other work, and thereby draws a novel approach, departing from conventional ones that treat border walls as static or uniform variables (Blair, 2022) or attribute their effectiveness solely to one or two interaction variables (Hassner & Wittenberg, 2015), often assessed based on changes in VNSA activity.

My argument is centred upon the conditionalities on which the stimulating effect (i.e., creating an obligatory and significant shift of VNSA strategies and tactics) of border fortification is anchored. Hence, having fed my theory with prior knowledge on the general durability conditions of insurgent groups (Young, & Dugan, 2014), triggers for change in strategies and tactics such as increasing threat or loss (Tokdemir et al., 2021; Nanes & Bachus, 2021; Wood, 2014), and the potential directions of change (Blair, 2022; Wood, 2014), I argue that to “survive statically” (i.e., without any remarkable need for change in strategies and tactics in the long term) when faced with border fortification, VNSAs and the environmental context need to meet some criteria,

which are depicted in length in the following chapter but which I will hint at in the following sentences.

I devise a “theory of change” in my thesis, which essentially suggests that, VNSAs would not modify their strategies to more civilian-oriented ones as a long-term response to border fortification when they receive external support (Wood, 2014), which reduces their need to invest significantly in civilian populations, have robust organizational structures, or are surrounded by the ideal extra-group conditions like intense indiscriminate state violence. While strong organizational structures may enable VNSAs to bargain and cooperate with civilians, internal discipline will, supported by resources and flexibility, allow these groups to adhere to their original long-term strategies and prioritize these. Regarding their tactics, groups that are flexible enough, indicating the range of capabilities of the group, will have the opportunity to adjust their tactics to less costly and more indirect, irregular ones (Biddle, 2021; Carter, 2016; Blair, 2022) when exposed to border fortification. In other words, the group can be expected to have a higher chance to neglect or minimize the limitations set by border walls when it can operate “differently across attacks” (Young, & Dugan, 2014).

Under these specified conditions, such VNSAs would be unlikely to undergo remarkable shifts towards civilian-centred strategies in the long term as they have the potential to minimize the drawbacks of border fortification, while tactical flexibility will allow them to apply cost-effective attacks in the short term. However, these groups, may initially resort to looting civilians when they face loss due to border fortification. Instead of investing more in civilians as suggested by the response to border fortification that I outline, these VNSAs may even focus on targeting civilians to obtain additional resources. This initial response is influenced by their high reliance

on foreign sponsorships and other sources of support. However, these VNSAs would not fundamentally alter their strategies toward one that is more focused on constituents, being too costly and time-consuming to apply after loss of border liberty.

VNSAs that do not satisfy the given criteria and draw other profiles would, on the other hand, adjust their tactics and long-term strategies and play a different game when border fortification enters the stage. Groups with less flexibility in their attack methods, less reliance on foreign sponsorship, and, in some cases, with territorial control and/or political affiliations, tend to invest more in civilian populations, decreasing their targeting of civilians, which turn into the essential source of recruitment, food, sanctuary, and intelligence.

This tendency is intensified further due to extra-group conditions. In situations where the state exerts little or no control over border areas, where policies concerning border regions are insufficient or absent, or where broad counterinsurgency policies are applied, these VNSAs are more inclined to adopt civilian-oriented strategies in the long term to fill in these vacuums. I predict that a border wall will only create change in the behaviour of the insurgent when the presence of the state and its policies are less dominant or absent in borderlands. Only then can the insurgent rely on civilian populations more and shift its tactics and strategies accordingly to look for refuge and resources in localities (Blair, 2022).

In addition, the state's policies regarding insurgent groups matter. Whether the state adopts narrow or broad counterinsurgency policies can impact the insurgent's ability to endure, as narrow coercive tactics are more effective compared to collective punishment (See also: Asal & Linebarger & Greig, 2021). Policies based on collective punishment can bolster local and public support for the insurgent, making it smoother to shift tactics and strategies that rely more on civilians. Finally, the access to

borderlands plays a vital role. Relying on the accumulated knowledge, I anticipate that the geographical accessibility to borderlands creates significant variance in the effectiveness of the wall in reducing insurgent capacity (See: Braithwaite & Linebarger, 2020). In simpler terms, the wall's effectiveness depends on the land it is placed in and the surrounding conditions. The rougher the terrain, the harder for the counterinsurgent to control, despite concrete walls.

“Forts are not new, and, perhaps for this reason, are overlooked in recent military considerations of technological change,” (Demarest & Grau, 2005) yet, this study around forts has several contributions to offer underlining their enduring significance. First, this unprecedentedly comprehensive study adds to the limited attempts to clarify the doubts on the effectiveness of modern border fortification. Moreover, it bridges the realms of two distinct bodies of literature encompassing conflict studies and border fortification analyses, through combining the previous assumptions concerning the endurance of VNSAs with assumptions regarding border fortification.

Second, I introduce an expansive merged dataset that holds promise for future research endeavours. This will encourage and facilitate further research on this understudied but crucial sphere of investigation. Third, if my argument and theory hold, they reveal that, even in cases where VNSA behaviour undergoes change in response to border fortification, the observed long-term strategic shifts indicate that walls may actually perpetuate conflict in a different fashion instead of drawing an end. Even when VNSAs are triggered for tactical and strategic change, this will either be in a direction towards short-term adjustment in tactics or, in cases where the group has less foreign resources, in a direction towards civilian-oriented policies, opening new channels of incentives for them, and complicating the resolution of conflict further by changing the nature of it in the long-term.

Finally, as also touched upon above, this thesis comes with policy implications, which carry significance as, if a systematic relationship between the variables holds, it might allow policy-makers and military strategists to better anticipate VNSA behaviour and strategies, allowing for more efficient counterinsurgency policies.

1.1 Thesis Outline

In the subsequent chapter, I provide an in-depth portrayal of the existing scholarly endeavour related to my study. In the second half of Chapter 2, I draw a “theory of change” as drawn above, building further on the presented literature, and introduce my hypotheses. In this thesis, I anticipate that, for border fortification to trigger change in VNSA behaviour specific inner dynamics and outer conditions should be satisfied. I explore change by focusing particularly on a shift in tactics from conventional to irregular ones through examining tendencies after fortification takes place, and in strategies, I assess whether there is a tendency to more civilian-oriented ones, indicating a decrease in targeting civilians (Blair, 2022) or into the opposite direction.

Chapter 3 covers my research design, in which I give a detailed description of my data and operationalization as well as my empirical strategy. To capture the different degrees of response to border fortification by insurgent groups, conditional on the given interaction terms, I use logit models with interactions, as my dependent variables are of a dichotomous nature. I choose civilian casualties as my first dependent variable to estimate tendencies in civilian oriented behaviour. A decrease in civilian targeting after fortification suggests that the group is investing more in civilians to offset losses delivered by walls. Conversely, no change or an increase in civilian targeting indicates that the group is either resilient to fortification or can quickly adapt, making increased

reliance on civilians less cost-effective during periods of finding new smuggling routes. In parallel, I examine secondary dependent variables (attack and weapon type) to depict tactical patterns after fortification. I anticipate groups will shift to irregular tactics to reduce costs. I focus in this thesis on the aftermath of building walls, fences, or wires, as border strengthening efforts after the year 2000, as the beginning of the 2000s symbolizes the shift of border fortification efforts from the developed to the developing world because “despite the security concerns that heightened in Western populations, the actual fortification took place in low- and middle-income countries after 9/11” (Blair, 2022b; Jones, 2012; Longo, 2017). My research stretches until 2020, as the most up-to-date data allows me. To test my hypotheses, I create a time series cross-sectional data-set merging raw data from sources like the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).

I produce the results of my analyses in Chapter 4. While I find support for some hypotheses, others deliver insignificant or mixed results. Finally, I discuss my findings and implications in Chapter 5, followed by the depiction of the limitations of the study and of a base for future research. The study presents potential limitations. First, as there are multiple interaction variables it is hard to isolate the core effect. However, this is in line with the nature of a complex phenomenon like insurgency. Hence, the study may be considered a value added to the accumulating literature. Second, as is the case with many studies, lack of access to specific data remains a limitation. Also, the time-demanding character of the interaction variables might seem like an indicator of limitation to feasibility. Yet, I again believe and argue that the study’s core lies in its comprehensiveness, and this obstacle is far from being a complete limitation. I should note, though, that restrictions regarding data allow me to only address my research question and theoretical frame with a limited dimension.

Despite its limitations, the study will fill a necessary gap by engaging in both the literature on borders and on counterinsurgency at, to the best of my knowledge, an unprecedentedly comprehensive way. As the trend on border fortifications seems to remain fashionable for the near future, it is significant to capture its post-construction effects. The developing world in particular remains far too understudied within this scope, promising fruitful avenue for future research. It is significant to not only examine the relatively “quick” responses in insurgent behaviour but observe the long-term strategic effects of border fortification on VNSAs. Capturing how fast and in what ways VNSAs respond to fortification, and whether these responses are in line with rationality expectations are some of the questions that flourish from this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND A THEORETICAL FRAME FOR CHANGE

The root of my research question is deeply buried in foundational studies addressing VNSA objectives, and even more in research capturing through which evolving strategies and tactics these objectives are attempted to be achieved. However, this study goes beyond a portrayal of VNSA behaviour, focusing in general on the interaction of counterinsurgency measures that create shifts in VNSA strategies and tactics while in particular civilian-related strategic tendencies and tactical choices in response to border fortification are being examined.

In this chapter, I depict a general frame for my study, underline overlooked spheres in the literature, and list my expected contributions. I begin with a review of relevant research casting light on the overarching goals of VNSAs. I then extend this to VNSA strategies and tactics, accentuating the role of violence and exploring potential shifts along with their triggering elements. Subsequently, I delve into a comprehensive analysis of counterinsurgency measures that play a role in these shifts. Finally, I tighten my scope to repercussions of fortified borders in the context of VNSA strategies and tactics, thereby underscoring the gap I address.

In the second part of this chapter, I portray a theoretical frame for change, arguing that groups may only be encouraged to shift in their strategies in the long term when they fail to compensate for loss delivered by border walls. Additionally, they tend to

adjust their tactics in the short term when they have the necessary capabilities. Hence, I explore intra-group and external dynamics that moderate the relationship between fortification and insurgency behaviour.

2.1 Literature

I discuss and highlight gaps in the existing literature in the upcoming sections, starting with a review of VNSA goals and behaviour in general and narrowing it down to shifts in their behaviour in response to border fortification.

2.1.1 The Use of Violence for VNSAs: Means vs Ends

Regardless of the ethnic, ideological, or political character of the VNSAs¹, and the motivations for the onset of conflict (Cederman et al., 2013; Hendrix, 2011; Kalyvas, 2003), multiple studies have underlined that the central endeavour remains to maintain the sustainability of the group's existence with a fluctuating necessity to "fight for survival" (Crenshaw, 1987; Cronin, 2009; Fortna, 2015). In other words, although essential objectives may target larger political goals organizational survival often overshadows these (Cronin, 2009).

Questioning the objectives of VNSAs first demands a well-constructed approach explaining whether those groups align with the broadly emphasized rationality assumption. Initial arguments concentrating on the rationality expectation have been proposed by multiple scholars, depicting or challenging either a "strategic" (Abrahms,

¹ I rely on an "inclusive" definition of a terrorist group (Phillips, 2015) and attempt to capture overarching motivations.

2008; Pape, 2003) or “instrumental” (Crenshaw, 1987; McCormick, 2003) model. This approach is largely based on core assumptions that terrorist groups have relatively stable political preferences and are expected to evaluate relevant policy options, assessing the use of terrorism as one of the means to political ends (Abrahms, 2008). On the other hand, a competing philosophy of terrorism opposes the rationality assumption, arguing that every organization’s fundamental aim is its maintenance, terrorism being a representation of the group’s complexly interwoven inner dynamics

This second “organizational” approach (See also: Crenshaw, 1987) highlights that the group’s motivation to use terrorism, regardless of its costs, exceeds the mere delivery of a political message. For instance, Abrahms (2008) examines the empirical validity of the rationality framework in relation to VNSAs use of terrorism, finding contradictions to the previously suggested argument that these actors have decision-making processes based on the rationality assumption and political ends. Rather, he proposes that the main objective lies within the group identity and that terrorist organizations do behave as “social solidarity maximizers” instead of “political maximizers”. Similarly, Cronin (2009) highlights that terrorist organizations do construct their strategies different from states, relying mainly on short term strategies and tactics to maintain the organizational survival, which overshadows the cause. Post (1990) even argues that a group should in the short term be successful enough to attract members and continue its existence without being “so successful that it will succeed itself out of business”. While framing Violent Non-State Actors, Aydınli (2015) in parallel reveals the relation between the group’s desire for sustainability and its underlying purpose or cause, underlining that other actors than states acquire their importance to a great extent with a sustainable representation, implying that both the

management of membership and the sustainability of actions are determinant on the sustainable capacity of the group.

In sum, the focal point of the group's web of interests is the sustainability or continuity of the group, having a potential to transcend or overshadow any other long-term strategic objectives it may have either completely or fragmentedly. The use of violence, therefore, is multiple times considered an attempt to survive longer and to perpetuate the ongoing conflict, which can be an end in itself, delivering a dilemma: "an instrument that allows groups to survive longer at the expense of their larger political goals" (Fortna, 2015)

2.1.2 Violent Strategies and Tactics of VNSAs

Contradicting that non-state actors both differ in their ends and means from states, Biddle (Biddle, 2022) argues that the difference between the two is based on matters of degree instead, quite different from the sharp contrast defined by "turning into a giant in the clothes of a dwarf" (Galula, 2006). Although non-state actors do perhaps not always literally look for territorial conquest, the use of force may remain an instrument for political aims especially based on controlling civilian populations. This undoubtedly highlights the central role of constituencies in VNSA strategies. However, although states and VNSAs look similar in building a positive reputation, they remain often significantly different from one another when it comes to civilian targeting, even while "mass killing" may remain "simply war by other means" (Clausewitz, 2008; Valentino, 2014)

In the literature, particular mid-range theories and outcomes thereof covering VNSA strategies and tactics around constituencies and civilian targeting have been developed. Although this branch of the scholarly endeavour is open to further

contribution, remarkable examples are present. One such example is Tokdemir and Akcinaroglu's (2018) attempt to cover the variation in the approach of terrorist groups towards constituencies. Their study shows that while groups with cross-border support have a tendency to build a negative reputation among its constituencies, being less dependent on them, groups with ethnic/religious characters or territorial control are eager to invest in their constituency (See also: Boukhars, 2020; Stewart & Liou, 2017; Wood, 2014b).

Wood's previous work (Wood, 2010, 2014b) is in dialogue with this, as he captures that there is significant change in civilian targeting, in line with dependency, after a group faces material loss. Through both micro- and macrolevel analyses, he argues that groups with foreign support are more likely to target civilians following loss, whereas territorial control works in the opposite direction, allowing the group to successfully bargain with civilians for support. There is also the implication that not only groups with strong ethnic or religious ideologies rely more on civilians, reducing targeting, but that foreign support comes with further "increased ideological distance" and "mutual indifference" between rebels and civilians.

Yet, it should not be overlooked that territorial control might come with rebel governance, and rebel governance delivers rebel "judicial institutions" and processes that might affect this equation. That is, rebels' judicial processes function both as concessions for supporters and coercion when this support is weak, carrying a potential of violence with them (Loyle, 2021). To complement this and partly challenge the previous conclusions, micro-level evidence from Sierra Leone also suggests that the most significant determinant of civilian abuse might not always be factors like territorial control. Instead, the inner group dynamics, and whether the group can police the behaviour of its members plays a vital role, making ethnically fragmented groups

hard to control as these do apply material incentives instead of punishing mechanisms (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2006). Going one step further and complementing, it can also be observed that groups that have a factional frame of leadership and rely on tactical violence are more often subject to organizational split in the long-term (Asal et al., 2012).

The reasons for using violence for political organizations may also have embedded roots in the group's principles and long-term strategic objectives. When both violent and non-violent political organizations are included in the equation, the impact of religious ideology decreases significantly while a new pattern emerges. Asal et al. (2017) provide the literature with evidence that groups advocating the exclusion of women from public life and/or a change in state boundaries are more likely to use violence.

In parallel, ethnicity also has a potential to play a role on the construction of rebel strategies. Although the role of ethnicity is much debated in terms of conflict onset and duration (Costalli & Moro, 2012; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Fjelde & Hultman, 2014), endeavour shows that the ethnic dimension, particularly ethnic heterogeneity, can impact the severity of violence and complicate the process. An example is Costalli and Moro's (2012) argument that in conflict, in which ethnicity is crucially involved, different groups strategically target ethnic homogeneity at first making ethnically polarized areas targets of severe violence, diminishing in time. Similarly, prewar dimensions leading to political cleavages (Balcells, 2010) or identity-related fragmentations can end up in higher levels of violence after the onset of conflict, another manifestation of the complexly interwoven nature of conflict, covering local cleavages and intracommunity dynamics (Kalyvas, 2003, 2006).

Another factor defining the group's strategies and tactics are the "host" state's relevant policies. Evidence shows that the use of violence in groups that face state repression is more likely to be observed (Asal et al., 2019, 2023; Bakker et al., 2016; Boukhars, 2020; Huff, 2023; Moore, 1998; Shkolnik, 2023; Wood, 2010). Although state strategies' effectiveness (Lalwani, 2017; Mir, 2018) or outcomes (Pechenkina & Bennett, 2017; Toft & Zhukov, 2015) on VNSAs are dependent on their interaction with other variables, counterinsurgency strategies based on violent tactics such as indiscriminate killing or torture (Huff, 2023; Kalyvas, 2006) have a potential to increase group grievances, increasing the likelihood of the continuation of fighting as conflict unfolds. At this point it is significant to note that, as briefly introduced above, rebel motivations are decisive in almost every stage of the conflict, i.e., onset, duration, and termination, also mediating the relationship between state repression and its outcomes. In line with this, groups with psychological objectives differ from groups with material motivations in their response to state repression, facing a larger marginal effect on their efficacy (See for example: Mesquita & Shadmehr, 2023).

From a different perspective, Bakker et al. (2016) have brought this discussion one step further by exploring not only the impact of government or structural characteristics on the choice of terrorism, but also multiple behavioral dimensions within these and potential opponents. Controlling for a variety of independent variables, the study delivers a broad set of conclusions, including positive associations between the use of terrorism and participation, civil liberties, physical quality of life, or international conflict.

Tactics

Strategies and tactics address the maximal goals of organizations such as regime change or territorial gains, and the proximate goals such as attracting or retaining supporters. However, tactics are often picked to realize proximate goals, regardless of their leading effect to maximal goals (Conrad & Greene, 2015; Cronin, 2009; K. G. Cunningham et al., 2017).

Hence, this requires a calculation of the immediate response of the relevant state and the group's ability to withstand repression if necessary. A relatively recent study by Carter (2016) shows that guerrilla groups' preference for provocative tactics in Western Europe depend on the "precision with which democratic states can respond to attacks," also underlining that guerrilla attacks are likely to be part of their long-term provocation strategies. Although this argument does not cover less democratic states with more precise and fast response mechanisms to guerrilla attacks, the implication that groups avoid violent tactics that might provoke a forceful response from the relevant state does hold.

Complementary to this implication, when "successful" counterinsurgency measures are applied, a decrease in the welfare (E. B. de Mesquita, 2005; Sandler et al., 1983) and mobilization ability of the group may be observed, leading to a shift from conventional to irregular tactics as these require less number of recruits to be "effective" and perpetuate the conflict (Blair, 2022a; Bueno de Mesquita, 2013; Cronin, 2009; Hazen, 2013).

Considering them as a coherent whole, tactics and strategies are like two simultaneously working mechanisms towards the same direction, yet, with different scopes that can and will potentially affect one another.

2.1.3 Shifts in Violent Strategies and Tactics: Directions and Variables

Yet, they are *mechanisms*; a dynamic system open to evolution and adjustment. To put it differently, it is crucial to investigate shifts in strategies and tactics caused by a variety of factors, leading to diverse directions.

One major conclusion of the accumulated knowledge is that while the decrease or inefficiency of capacity of VNSAs leads to leaning more towards particularly irregular tactics, turning relatively vulnerable locations into even more attractive targets, an increase in groups' capabilities and access to resources may lead to a more frequent use of conventional tactics, requiring more expenditure (Butler & Gates, 2009; Byman, 2007; Galula, 2006; Wood, 2014b, 2014a). A recent study covering this transition throughout a multiperiod war delivers a specific conclusion, by underscoring that while shifting "from guerrilla to conventional tactics after gaining strength," the expectation of the group to grow delays the transition, making it harder for the state to "buy off" the group and prolongs the conflict (Qiu, 2022).

To develop further, evidence from micro and macro-level analyses manifest that material losses can lead to an increase in civilian victimization, when the group does not have territorial control, when it receives foreign support, or when it has weak organizational structures (Wood, 2010, 2014a). A hint, which will be developed further below, may be found here that, border fortification, leading to and standing for material loss may similarly affect groups to change their tactics from conventional to irregular ones (Blair, 2022a), indicating a change in civilian targeting.

Yet, the treatment of civilians has not always been considered a direct consequence of loss, but also of potential loss depicted within a competitive or multi-party environment. One remarkable example, as it uses a fuzzy-set approach based on interviews, is Metelits' (2009) argument that groups are more likely to treat civilians

violently when there is “active rivalry.” This implies that resources on their own might not be stimuli independent from the presence of potential groups targeting overlapping resources.

Furthermore, a competitive environment for rebel groups may affect the rebel tactical choice. Cunningham et al. (2017) argue within this framework that “diffusion” and “diversification” of tactics are not mutually exclusive and are both valid when looked at shifts and tactics. In other words, rebel groups both increase the use of tactics that are applied by other actors under the umbrella of the same movement and shift between high/low-resource tactics to use a different approach compared to other organizations within the same movement. In another sense, a competitive environment is not only decisive on the quantity of attacks but also on their quality. Conrad and Greene (2015) categorize and evaluate the impact of domestic competition, within the broader understanding of groups’ attempts to create their own “brand” and thereby be distinguishable from others, on the severity or in their terms “shock value” of attacks. Examining variables like type of method and target, their study indicates that these “increase” when level of competition intensifies.

This finding aligns with the broader comprehension of the concept of “outbidding” within the literature (Bloom, 2004; Crenshaw, 1981; Findley & Young, 2012; Jaeger et al., 2015), roughly referring to an increase in violence as a result of rebel-competition (For example: Boukhars, 2020). While accepting the potential manifestation of outbidding, studies that dig deeper and deliver interaction variables exist. Nemeth (2014) for example, underscores that ideologies can mediate the relationship between competition and the rise of violence. Relying on data of the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) between 1970 and 1997 he suggests that, religious groups’ response to multi-party environments does demonstrate outbidding logic at a

higher scale as their engagement in terrorism rises significantly, while left-wing groups' response remains relatively low.

The connection between competition and violence is also specified as an increase in suicide attacks due to inter-rebel rivalry. However, evidence exists that challenges both the general and specific assumption, limiting the outbidding logic to unique cases like the Israel-Palestine conflict, and allowing space for spheres to explore, such as the heterogeneous dynamics that increase terrorism and a revision of mid-range conflict theories that have flourished from single cases (Findley & Young, 2012). An example that illustrates such a single-case study by Jaeger et al. (2015) finds indeed support for the outbidding logic on the Palestine case, investigating how attacks against Israeli targets impact the public support Palestinian groups receive. Although the study demonstrates that groups receive higher support after these attacks from constituencies of similar lined sections, it is perhaps more significant in that it does not encounter any reverse causality. That is, public support for groups like Hamas or Fatah does not lead to a significant increase in their use of violence (See also: Arves et al., 2019).

A competitive environment or the potential risk of outbidding are not enough to conclude that multi-party and single-party scenes of insurgents can be distinguished in a straightforward manner or that outcomes are given. Perceptions of civilians regarding these groups have the potential to turn into vital determinants of VNSA behaviour, particularly against the state (Kaplan, 2012). More specifically, the opinion of out-group civilians, or political independents, determine rebel behaviour ranging from escalation of violence to its restraint, as competing over local or public support preserves its significance but does not always demand violence.

Another shift in rebel strategies is seen in their ideological and demand positioning due to an increasingly competitive environment with multiple rebel groups (Tokdemir

et al., 2021) Clearly, outdated ideologies can be modified when they do not efficiently address the needs of groups such as support, resources, and delivery of an effective message to minorities and external groups. This adjustment can also respond to changes in preferences at both the micro and macro-level. Eventually, groups need an ideological and demand positioning that are on the right track and distinguishing them uniquely and effectively from others (See also: Conrad & Greene, 2015).

Shifts in rebel behaviour are not only limited to domestic factors such as rising competition, material loss, or repression, but there is also a way of diffusion that is delivered by a “learning” process. And hence, “just like epistemic communities can influence the framing of a state’s foreign policy, transnational insurgents can affect the framing of a domestic insurgent movement’s goal” (Bakke, 2010). In other words, by “relational” as well as “mediated diffusion,” “which engender ideationally or instrumentally-motivated learning and emulation,” transnational militants have a potential to create a shift and impact on the tactical innovation or resource mobilization, in addition to framing of goals of VNSAs.

Finally, though not explicitly depicting a shift in strategies or tactics, one factor leading to the group’s fragmentation, implying change, is state repression. While the effects of state repression are part of a larger, unresolved, debate that is discussed in the following section, it is significant to capture the interaction variables and the complexly interwoven interactions of state behaviour and nonstate actors’ character. One significant contribution is made by McLauchlin and Pearlman (2012), highlighting the determinant position of the internal equilibrium of rebel movements. When groups constituting a movement are satisfied with the internal dynamics of it, state repression is perceived and handled like a challenge to be overcome in a unified

manner. Yet, with the opposite, dissatisfaction, repression may be seen as an opportunity to clarify division (See also: Asal et al., 2012).

2.1.4 Shifts as Responses to Counterinsurgency Measures

It is significant to define what an “effective” counterinsurgency resembles, before diving into the shifts in VNSA strategies and tactics that may directly or indirectly be a result of counterinsurgency policies. Since the earlier works on it (Galula, 2006; Mao, 1961) the ideal character of counterinsurgency strategies that can create change in the behaviour or efficacy of rebel groups is being depicted as multidimensional, with specific emphasis on both military and civilian dimensions. Following this traditional approach, contemporary scholarly endeavour implies that “carrots” and “sticks” should operate simultaneously (Pechenkina & Bennett, 2017).

Regarding its specifics, evidence demonstrates that aid in line with selective targeting, reducing civilian targeting to a significant extent, by the government has a potential to suppress insurgent attacks. On the other hand, indiscriminate violence by the government shadows the gains expected by the delivery of aid (Pechenkina & Bennett, 2017). This conclusion implies an effect on recruitment policies of insurgents. As in the first instance it becomes significant to operate recruitment processes in secrecy, while in the latter civilian abuse yields a counterproductive result creating stimulation for insurgent support by locals, though an increase in recruitment efforts may not be seen necessary for the groups.

Another drawback of the delivery of aid, when relevant policies are not constructed efficiently, is that rebel groups have the potential to undermine these efforts at contested territorialities. A micro-level study of Afghanistan by Sexton (2016) exemplifies this. The research indicates that aid delivery in contested areas leads to a

crucial increase in insurgent violence, and only produces decrease in violent behaviour when delivered in progovernment localities, “solidifying control”. Another implication is regarding the type of projects (Sexton, 2016) which is depicted in detail in a complementary micro-analysis on Afghanistan. Lyall et al. (2020) argue that single economic interventions create short-lived pro-government attitudes, but trigger disappointment in a counterproductive manner when these are not sustainable. Additionally, and more significantly, the scholars underscore the vitality of information channels, creating lines to deliver a message of commitment by the government, and decreasing support for Taliban while increasing support for the legal authorities. Yet, these results are not generalizable as the reputation of fund receiving governments may seem fragile to the public (Lyall et al., 2020; Sexton, 2016).

In contrast to these general assumptions regarding counterinsurgency success, studies that suggest that civilian-centred, or leadership/reputation-related strategies are over-emphasized exist. Two such examples, which have different concentrations, are delivered by Lalwani (2017) and Mir (2018). Lalwani argues that the literature has unfortunately neglected the preserved substance of “material preponderance” in conflict. Examining the individual case of Sri Lanka’s counterinsurgency policies, the author argues that a satisfactory degree of material asymmetry is the actual decisive component in a successful government strategy. Mir, on the other hand, bases counterinsurgent success on the “legibility” of civilian populations” and “the ‘speed’ of exploitation of legibility gains”. While doing so, he poses the implication that although current endeavour underlines civilian protection, hence support, for the counterinsurgent as well as it does for the insurgent, counterterrorism can be effectively managed without it, leaving it merely as a humanitarian concern.

Another suggestion embedded in accumulated scholarly endeavour is that, civilian defence forces (CDFs) backed by government are effective in facilitating the counterinsurgency efforts by providing political authority in localities while eliminating the alienation delivered by regular state forces, the flow of intelligence and data, and the strengthening of the state's power on the field (Peic, 2014). Yet, this scope of study remains understudied and present studies bring more questions than that they respond, such as “why do not more states engage in this policy if it evidently is effective?”

Moreover, although ideology is not fixed per se (Tokdemir et al., 2021), the group's character might be decisive on its response to selective counterinsurgency methods, considered more effective in comparison to broad policies (Asal et al., 2023; Huff, 2023; Pechenkina & Bennett, 2017). To illustrate, one micro-level study on North Caucasus (Toft & Zhukov, 2015), with potential for broader implications, implies that nationalist groups are sensitive to narrow government policies while Islamist groups can remain little or not affected, attributing this finding mainly to Islamist groups' smaller reliance on local support. A similar study on the case of Israel-Palestine conflict also delivers a difference in response due to the groups' identities. Shkolnik (2023) underscores similar responses from various factions to broad counterinsurgency policies due to constituency pressures, and differing responses to peace-process related events. He explains this with nationalist groups' relatively limited goals and willingness to reduce violence to accommodate peace, while radical factions have demanding objectives eliminating a two-state option.

Escalating regime violence is not always taken as a direct cause of change in the use of violence but also as an interaction variable. Wood (2010) attracts attention to the complex interaction between insurgent capabilities and counterinsurgency policies

which shapes the use of violence. Portraying that only groups with robust resources and capabilities can shift to strategies of selective incentives when faced with harsh counterinsurgency policies like indiscriminate regime violence. In contrast, weaker groups' use of violence escalates further as they cannot deal with the heavy burden of investing in civilians or manage to attract support during times of escalating counterinsurgent violence.

On the other hand, a study by Asal et al. (2019) captures the effects of conciliatory and coercive counterinsurgency tactics on the use of violence against civilians by militant groups, delivering complementary yet different results. Although their research has a straightforward logic concluding that carrots by governments will lead to less civilian targeting, and sticks to more likeliness of civilian targeting by groups (See also: Boukhars, 2020), the conditionality of group capability holds. Yet, this time, it is being argued that although terrorism is defined as the weapon of the weak, some capability is still needed to allow groups its use, making only strong groups able to apply terrorism when the group faces coercion.

One of the other impacts of counterinsurgency on violent VNSA strategies includes a stimulation for international attacks (Asal et al., 2023). Parallel to other findings regarding state repression or indiscriminate regime violence, rebel groups that face broad repression policies by the host governments are less likely to engage in international attacks, while narrow government policies give a lead to attacks of international character.

2.1.5 Shifts in Strategies and Tactics due to Border Fortification

Narrowing the topic down to this thesis' specific interest, the expected and observed impacts of border fortifications within the literature will be drawn. Border fortification as a counterinsurgency measure resembles a revived convention. While porous borders have been depicted as holes in counterinsurgency endeavour, border defence complementary to propaganda and intelligence initiatives are by some evaluated as effective strategies at relatively lower costs (Avdan & Gelpi, 2017; Staniland, 2005). And yet, and perhaps especially because "forts are not new," "they are overlooked in recent military considerations of technological change" (Demarest & Grau, 2015) and in their ability to trigger shifts in violent strategies and tactics of VNSAs. The critical change that is argued to be delivered by the "right" fortification of borders is especially due to their limiting nature on lines of communication with the markets (resources) of violent groups and their potential in protecting the hearts and minds of border locals (Demarest & Grau, 2015), but also, straightforwardly, due to efficient control of flows through them (Ali et al., 2021).

Yet, right fortification remains a challenge and the question, "Does border fortification work?" preserves its significance while more and more states are becoming part of the fortification trend due to tangible security concerns (Ali et al., 2021; Blair, 2022a, 2022b) Braithwaite and Linebarger (2020) ask such a question and argue that the fortification's ability to limit the international diffusion of violent militancy is vitally contingent upon the state's accessibility to the borderland. In dialogue, Hassner and Wittenberg (2015) argue that fortification only delivers "success" against the crossing of clandestine transnational actors (CTA) (Andreas, 2003), which are not limited to VNSAs, when combined with other measures of defence, and when no alternative routes are present. Avdan and Gelpi (2017), on the other hand, demonstrate evidence that fences can deliver a decrease of 67 percent in

terrorist attacks annually. Similarly, a single case study focusing on the Pak-Afghan fortification underscores that walls have a potential to withhold terrorists, especially with an intention to commit a suicide attack, that flow from threatening neighbours, in the case of Pakistan, predicting that similar results would yield for states with similar geo-political settings, e.g., hostile neighbours and rough terrain (Ali et al., 2021).

These studies, however, do not deliver generalizable conclusions and even raise different concerns and question. While depicting a trend of decreasing terrorist attacks due to border fences, they are not sufficient in exploring whether the impact of the terrorist threat vanishes or evolves (Avdan & Gelpi, 2017; Nanes & Bachus, 2021). Neither do these studies depict impact on borderland residents, socio-economic structures, and public opinion. That is to say, walls may work in favour of governments' reinforcement of the concept of sovereignty and territoriality (Andreas, 2003) or a decrease in actual numbers, but ironically also might counterproductive effects on public opinion, implying "penetrability, impenetrability, and porosity" (Arslan et al., 2021).

Although the effectiveness of walls is defined differently across scholarly work and no consensus regarding their impact is found, several studies embrace the idea that they at least create tactical and strategic shifts in VNSA behaviour (Blair, 2022a; Nanes & Bachus, 2021). While this area remains understudied to a large extent, some remarkable micro-level endeavours are worth noting. Nanes and Bachus (2021), by concentrating on the Israeli fortification, argue that terrorist groups can adapt themselves to the conditions of physical barriers by managing the right timing, and shifting from protected to unprotected targets, while also adjusting the attack and weapon types, not tying their success to specifics. One implication of their study is that walls might perpetuate conflict by actually incentivizing terrorist innovation.

Although their study captures only one case, that walls change the nature of conflict is evident in other studies. Blair's (2022a) recent work has a different nature but a similar direction and seems complementary. He introduces a "fortification dilemma," which captures the notion that as physical barriers limit the transnational rebel groups' access to resources, it will encourage them to prefer more irregular attacks and rely, hence invest, more in civilian cooperation, evoking a potential of counter effects for the government.

At this juncture, a significant challenge and puzzle arises within the existing body of literature, that is, the absence of a comprehensive examination of behavioral transformation of VNSAs resulting from border fortification. Existing studies either focus merely on specific actors (Blair, 2022, Nanes & Bachus, 2021), or portray the consequences of fortification processes within a single country (Ali et al., 2021; Arslan et al., 2021; Tholens, 2017). However, as indicated earlier, the literature strongly contends that shifts in rebel behaviour can be observed due to intra-, inter-, or extra-group dynamics (See for instance: Tokdemir et al., 2021; Blair, 2022; Nanes & Bachus, 2021). This essentially compels a more profound exploration of VNSA reaction to border reinforcement. Addressing this gap and the incongruities regarding the effectiveness of border fortification, my focus is directed towards examining the impact of border walls on VNSAs and attempt to manifest shifts in their strategies and tactics.

Addressing this gap is significant as the literature on fortification concludes broadly merely with responses regarding post-construction effects, as well as construction motives, for the developed world, neglecting the developing world's state. This gap might also result from its position among several literatures. In other words, literature on "bordering" and socioeconomics, group-level analyses of VNSAs'

behaviour and behavioral change, and counterinsurgency, neglect the given question when taken independently while, and perhaps because, the question embodies aspects of all. In addition, the incongruities regarding fortification's impact on groups that individual micro-level studies yield, as well as the lack of a comprehensive study with a general framework, deliver misleading results that lead to overlooking the potentially paradoxical effects of the rising fortification trend with regard to VNSAs. Finally, the study also promises to provide a more generalizable behavioral pattern of VNSA behaviour to the understudied sphere of shifts in their tactics and strategies, especially as a response to specific counterinsurgency measures.

2.2 A Theoretical Frame for Change

Relying on the literature depicted above, I centre my thesis to challenge some findings, align with others, and ultimately address a unique gap. My study takes a distinct approach to the highlighted question, “why do some insurgent groups change their strategies and tactics in response to border fortification while others do not?” by promising a comprehensive examination that diverges from existing conventional approaches treating border walls as static or uniform variables (Avdan & Gelpi, 2016) or attribute their effectiveness solely to a limited set of interaction variables (Hassner & Wittenberg, 2015).

Instead, I devise a theory of change proposing that groups are only encouraged to shift in strategies in the long term when they fail to compensate for the loss delivered by fortification. Certain groups possess satisfactory intra-group dynamics or encounter external dynamics that render them largely indifferent to border fortification policies

or allow them to use their tactical flexibility in their advantage to minimize the effects of fortification. This argument is of a multi-dimensional nature, delving into a diversity of variables that mediate the relationship between border fortification and insurgency behaviour. Consequently, I systematically explore these variables, refining them into hypotheses after integrating the definition of the change I expect due to border fortification.

2.2.1 What is Change?

To begin with, a fundamental definition of change, i.e., a shift in strategies and tactics, needs to be portrayed. Existing evidence indicates that material loss (Wood, 2014a), a decrease in capabilities (Butler & Gates, 2009; Byman, 2007; Galula, 2006; Wood, 2014b, 2014a), and the implementation of specific counterinsurgency policies have the potential to significantly impact the behaviour of VNSAs, influencing both immediate reactions (tactics) and long-term responses (strategies). Border fortification embodies aspects of all these influences (Blair, 2022a; Nanes & Bachus, 2021). That is, it is a counterinsurgency policy, which leads to a decrease in capabilities resulting from material loss.

In a very straightforward interpretation, it might be anticipated that when resource pools shrink or access to resources becomes more challenging, VNSAs would either seek new resources or concentrate more on existing channels. This is particularly valid because under specific conditions, like fortification, material considerations might outweigh broader strategic objectives and approaches (Lalwani, 2017). Hence, I posit that long-term strategic change in VNSA behaviour due to border fortification will manifest itself in an increased reliance on civilians, driven by incentives inherent in this strategic shift, as also implied in previous scholarly endeavour (See for example:

Blair, 2022a). Additionally, a more cost-effective resource management approach should be adopted, compelling VNSAs to transitions from conventional to irregular tactics that demand less expenditure, although they are usually more indirect (Blair, 2022a; Bueno de Mesquita, 2013).

Yet, this equation cannot be applied indiscriminately to all VNSAs, as some may swiftly compensate for the material losses delivered by fortification, while others may lack the flexibility to innovate novel strategies and tactics. What, then, plays a crucial role in determining this variation?

2.2.2 Intra-Group Dynamics

In this section, I introduce the intra-group factors which determine whether and how a VNSA adjusts its strategies and tactics to respond to border fortification. I explore foreign sponsorship and tactical flexibility to demonstrate their link to civilian-related behavior and tactical innovation in an environment of fortification.

Multiple studies have suggested or implied that foreign funds create a tangible impact on rebel behaviour, with particular emphasis on their relations with civilians (Akcinaroglu & Tokdemir, 2018; Boukhars, 2020; Stewart & Liou, 2017; Wood, 2014b). Research consistently demonstrates that when a group receives foreign funding the group's reliance on resources provided by civilians may diminish, rendering the organization more inclined to target civilians or at least not interested in building a positive reputation, which remains costly and time-consuming. To complement, groups that do not have concerns like building a positive reputation may opt to use coercive tactics or indiscriminate violence, which are less costly and require fewer resources. For example, African violent extremist groups, particularly those with

low hostility towards out-groups (i.e., the ethnic/religious/ideological group not claimed to be represented or served by the VNSA) and who heavily depend on local constituency, fear to attract a civilian backlash as a result of targeting innocent civilians. On the contrary, groups extending from Burkina Faso to Mali and from Nigeria to Somalia employ various tactics with the sole aim of “demoralizing” the government and its supporters by selectively targeting symbolic figures of the state (e.g., judges, army officers, police, politicians) (Boukhars, 2020). Yet, the “origins of support shape the incentives for violence” (Wood, 2014b). Hence, for instance the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) that relied highly on external support from Rwanda and Uganda, never prioritized building governance and thus did not feel constrained in victimizing civilians. (Mampilly, 2012; Wood, 2014b). This mutual indifference, which is fuelled by the lack of material dependency of the VNSA on its potential constituency, delivers a growing sense of alienation and distance between the constituency and VNSA (Wood, 2014a) making it more challenging for the group to adopt new strategies when faced with material loss.

How, then, does receiving foreign funds affect VNSA reflexes against a challenging change that delivers material loss, namely, border barriers? Although fortification does not depict a sudden but gradual and ongoing change, groups that have built a negative reputation among locals due to their proclivity for targeting civilians may lack sufficient flexibility to reverse their position and cultivate positive relations with civilians. To complement, groups that receive foreign funding may have a potential to compensate partly for the material loss that fortification implies, through alternative channels/smuggling routes, in the long term. Hence, while there occurs a shift in their position, this will not affect their ties with civilian communities in the positive direction or consistently. Considering these, I anticipate that groups relying

on foreign funding will escalate violence after fortification takes place as I predict them to coerce civilians for resources. However, although I do not compute a longitudinal analysis and this remains outside the scope of my modelling, I predict that this escalation will be followed by no or insignificant change in their approach towards civilian targeting in the long term, as they can compensate for the loss delivered by such fortification. The porous and district-level fortifications in Iraq for example, revealed that overt foreign sponsorship diminishes the efficacy of border walls (Blair, 2022a). Areas in Iraq that Iranian proxy groups dominated had the option to rely on Iranian external resources (and even subversion), while in other regions close to neighbours like Syria and Jordan, which were covertly supporting militant groups, the impact of border fortification seems to have been more precise. Thus,

H1a: VNSAs are more likely to target civilians when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their receipt of foreign funds.

On the other hand, it is observed that tactical shifts occur quickly in comparison to a shift to civilian-oriented strategies (Blair, 2022a). VNSAs receiving external sponsorship will also temporarily shift tactics as a survival strategy until they discover or activate new smuggling routes or sponsorship channels. That is, to expand their resource pool, groups might find incentives in the reallocation of the already present resources by decreasing the expenditure of their violent tactics, seeking more cost-effective tactical approaches due to the setbacks caused by fortification (Blair, 2022a; Nanes & Bachus, 2021). Hence, I anticipate a change in tactical behaviour of rebels, making them shift from expensive and demanding conventional tactics to more cost-

effective irregular ones (Butler & Gates, 2009; Byman, 2007; Galula, 2006; Wood, 2014b, 2014a).

H1b: VNSAs are more likely to apply irregular tactics when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their receipt of foreign funds.

Besides being relatively costly, direct tactics are also vulnerable to civilian reporting, putting VNSA attacks under constraint (Blair, 2022a; Kalyvas, 2006). Indirect tactics, on the other hand, can be set up at long-range making them less susceptible to both civilian informing and border barriers. The study of Nanes and Bachus (2021), covering about 18 years of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (2000-2017), resembles a simulation to measure the tactical responses of groups against physical security barriers at borders. Among multiple findings, the study points out that the use of weapons of convenience (e.g., knives or vehicles) rises from 21 to 77 per cent when checkpoints at the Israeli border are closed due to holidays. However, even for less expensive and less demanding tactics some resilience is required (Wood, 2014a). This implies that the group needs to manifest a certain degree of flexibility in terms of its attacks (i.e., attack and weapon type), which is an indicator of whether it can adjust its tactics to the novel environment of border fortification. Therefore,

H2: VNSAs are more likely to apply irregular tactics when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their tactical flexibility.

Other moderating factors, which I leave outside the scope of this particular study, could have been the territorial control and central command strength of groups. That is, conversely, having previously invested in civilians, having maintained a favourable standing among local populations, or possessing territorial control allows groups to successfully bargain with civilians for support (Akcinaroglu & Tokdemir, 2018; Wood, 2010, 2014b). The leftist group in Oman, People's Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG), illustrates a vivid example of this type of bargaining in the late 1960s. The group provided education, security, and medical services in the captured rural territories of Oman in exchange for resources, recruits, and information (Halliday, 2013; Stewart & Liou, 2017). These groups with control over territory and reliance on civilians usually secure an opportunity to modify their policies during crises, translating into an adaptation that involves a decrease in civilian targeting, and thus, a deliberate expansion and concentration on this resource pool of civilians.

Similarly, the organizational character of VNSAs and their leadership patterns exhibit whether a group can construct effective and rational strategic responses to challenge fortification and maintain survival (Butler & Gates, 2009; Byman, 2007; Galula, 2006; Wood, 2014b, 2014a). The group's leadership pattern is particularly crucial in its ability to coherently and effectively respond to this specific counterinsurgency policy. Groups characterized by fragmented or ineffective leadership mechanisms may experience division (Asal et al., 2012) or can shatter, leading to group factions targeting more civilians without considering its long-term outcomes. One vivid example that portrays the significant relationship between internal discipline within VNSAs and their tendency to abuse civilians seems to be evident in the factions in the Sierra Leone conflict. The Revolutionary United Front

(RUF), the major insurgent group in the conflict, had internal space for plenty of indiscipline within the faction, which correlated directly with a higher likelihood of abusing individuals outside of the faction (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2006). In contrast, groups with robust leadership mechanisms (i.e., clear and strong command-and-control structures), capable of controlling the majority of the factions within the group, can restrain group members and attempt to cultivate positive relations with civilians through well-designed strategic approaches as a response to the material loss delivered by fortification. Strict organizational frameworks can deter individual group members from pursuing personal interests following material losses thanks to internal policing mechanisms (Wood, 2014a). In contrast, weaker organizational structures can lead to an increase in civilian abuse.

2.2.3 Extra-Group Dynamics

Under this subtitle, I present the second dimension of my theory and argue that not only intra-group dynamics but also (their interaction with) extra-group dynamics can mediate the relationship between insurgency behaviour and the presence of walls. I explore regime violence and governance efficiency to depict changes in VNSA behaviour.

The existing literature indicates that government policies characterized by widespread, indiscriminate violence can potentially deliver counterproductive results (Asal et al., 2023; Huff, 2023; Pechenkina & Bennett, 2017). In essence, when governments or recognized authorities apply non-selective violence instead of securing civilians through selective violence, this may yield civilian support for insurgents or at least neutralize civilians. The civilian populations may perceive themselves as direct targets of the state, feeling alienated and perhaps encouraged to

find motives for the legitimization of VNSAs (and even their use of violence) to satisfy their psychological and physical security needs. Public suspicions may also arise concerning the state's capacity to protect its citizens. Evidence even suggests that governments that provide socio-economic support to conflict zones but fail to apply selective military counterinsurgency policies struggle to acquire public sympathy (Lyall et al., 2020).

The response of VNSAs to indiscriminate state repression remains a nuanced process. Previous work underlines that violent counterinsurgency strategies can increase grievances, thereby increasing insurgent violence (Huff, 2023; Kalyvas, 2006). However, insurgent capabilities play a crucial role at this point. That is, competent VNSAs can invest in civilians and employ selective targeting when faced with indiscriminate regime violence. On the other hand, weaker groups may be inclined to respond with broad and escalating terror as they cannot take the burden of employing, more costly and demanding, selective violence (Wood, 2010). In other words, while the survival instinct that drives armed groups under pressure may lead them to find more incentives in the use of violence, VNSAs that have substantive territorial control, broad operational capability, and well-disciplined organizational structures can turn the vacuum created by indiscriminate counterinsurgency measures into an area to find more constituents or at least less opponents by using selective targeting. Al-Shabaab, for instance, compelled young boys to join the fight and punished dissent harshly when faced with the risk of elimination. Furthermore, while territories controlled by the organization experienced fewer attacks, contested areas witnessed far more civilian assaults (Boukhars, 2020). Similarly, Boko Haram initiated its campaign of kidnapping Muslim and Christian girls in Northern Nigeria starting in

2013, directly in response to the government's decision to detain the families of several Boko Haram commanders.

Drawing a line between indiscriminate state violence and fortification, the fortification dilemma introduced by Blair (2022a), defined as “greater competition between rebel and counterinsurgent forces over local civilian populations as a side-effect of the reduced rebel capacity as a result of fortification,” aligns with the broader insights discussed earlier. This intensified competition is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of counterinsurgency policies, with violence being one of them. Relying on this dilemma, I suggest that the heightened need to find resources from local civilians will potentially encourage groups to apply selective targeting in the long term. I hypothesize that extensive violent counterinsurgency strategies may create incentives for VNSAs and allow them to enrich their civilian reliance by decreasing their indiscriminate civilian targeting. I will observe broad regime violence's impact on the relation between fortification and selective targeting.

H3: VNSAs are more likely to apply selective targeting when exposed to border fortification conditioned on indiscriminate regime violence.

Both governments and rebels find incentives in favourable public opinion. Nevertheless, studies depict that this is not always achieved straightforwardly. The mere socio-political or economic presence of governments in conflict zones does not automatically translate into civilian support. For support to materialize, government actions must also function effectively as tools for communication. Aid interventions, such as employment schemes, training programs, or direct financial assistance, operate on the belief that they can dissuade individuals from supporting armed groups by

strengthening loyalty to the aid provider, i.e., the government. This weakens groups' potential to recruit new members. Although the impact of government-led economic improvements on combatant support requires further investigation, examples like Lyall et al.'s (2020) study indicate that instead of through improving economic livelihoods, economic aid increased the support for the Afghan government, at least for a while, through "providing information about government resolve and competence". The signal that a government which has "captured" funds from a foreign state draws a competent and (often) reliable image is also visible in the example of Bangladesh, where growing confidence in the government was observable among aid recipients after a USAID-funded project (Lyall et al., 2020; Winters et al., 2017).

Good governance, to complement, is another sign of reliability and trust that cannot be overlooked. Efficient governance, characterized by the quality of public services, the quality of civil services, transparency, responsiveness, and policy implementation, is essential in sustaining and enhancing public support. When citizens perceive their government as competent and committed to their welfare, they are less likely to be impacted by groups' recruitment efforts. This is particularly critical in conflict zones, where the struggle for public opinion can be decisive as the conflict itself.

That is why, in this study, I focus on the governance efficiency of states and examine how this moderates the relationship between civilian targeting and fortification. I take objective governance efficiency data as an initial step for positive public opinion, as, considering the scope of my study, I have no access to contemporary public opinion data for all the countries included in my study. I argue that an efficient governance may lead to increased confidence in the government or at

least to less combatant support, delivering intensified civilian targeting by VNSAs, particularly in the case of fortification. In other words, while civilians are the excellent alternative for VNSAs once they face fortified borders, their capacity to attract recruits or supporters will be limited in a scenario where the government has the upper hand in propaganda, encouraging violent actors to enforce civilians for resources. Hence,

H4: VNSAs are more likely to target civilians when exposed to border fortification conditioned on government efficiency.

Though again beyond the direct concern of this study, one further step of this analysis could be, as explained above, placing particular emphasis on genuinely “winning the hearts” of civilian populations through propaganda. This is crucial because, even in cases where the socioeconomic conditions of civilians are not directly affected or improved by one channel, either government or rebel, support may be extended due to psychological and emotional factors fueled by rhetorical strategies. Hence, efficient propaganda, i.e., continuous propaganda that highlights the government’s presence (through especially aid), will weaken the potential of a VNSA to shift its reliance more onto civilians with the emergence of border fortification. Although assistance does not have to have a direct effect on its own, the hope for improvement in conditions, and the sense of security it delivers, are crucial in defining propaganda as efficient. Simultaneously, as room within the hearts of civilians shrink, coercion will manifest itself within the actions of VNSAs.

Conclusion

Although the trend of border fortification has started in affluent states, clearly the developing countries have now taken significant roles in this field. However, there is a notable lack of attention to “bordering” (Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2002) and its consequences in developing regions primarily due “to a strong presumption that de jure borders are less salient in the Global South” (Blair, 2022b). This assumption is further fuelled by the belief that developing states lack the capability and willingness to strengthen their borders (Atzili, 2012) creating a delusion that hinders scholars and policymakers from observing the rapid solidification of borders in the developing parts of the world due to tangible security motivations, such as addressing VNSAs. While a limited group of scholars have drawn attention to causes behind fortification in developing regions and to the shifts bordering might create in violent tactics and strategies of VNSAs, these efforts remain fragmented, deliver incongruities, and fail to address gaps within the broader literature. Therefore, I focus on exploring the inner dynamics of VNSAs and the outer conditions that facilitate behavioral change, employing a group-level analysis to understand the transformation in rebel strategies and tactics. I draw a general frame with the conclusions of studies depicting the endurance conditions of insurgents (See for example: Young & Dugan, 2014), of studies observing tactical and strategic change in VNSA behaviour (Nanes & Bachus, 2021; Tokdemir et al., 2021), and finally of studies delivering significant results on the effects of walls on transnational militancy (Blair, 2022a). Having drawn the theoretical frame through the distilled contributions of the existing literatures, I respond to the question, why do not all insurgent groups modify their strategies and tactics equally in response to border fortification?

The construction of such a study will satisfy several drawbacks within literatures on VNSA behaviour and behavioral change, fortification effects, and

counterinsurgency. First, the thesis, being unprecedentedly comprehensive, aims to create a clarifying response for the incongruities among micro-level studies that examine the post-construction effects of border walls, not aligning with one another in that border barriers create a significant impact on armed non state actors. Although the phenomenon might deliver varying results when different cases are examined separately, I argue that a significant common trend of shift in VNSA behaviour will be observable, representing an initial step towards establishing a general framework for a specific bordering effect.

Bridging two distinct bodies of literature, conflict studies and fortification trends, the endeavour also contributes to revealing the “dilemma” (Blair, 2022a) or paradox that fortification delivers. That is, while it is often believed that border barriers are a significant part of countering transnational militancy, I argue that fortification only turns into a multiplier in decreasing the capabilities of VNSAs in the short term and when certain criteria are satisfied (as depicted below). Robust (i.e., having the durability capabilities listed below) VNSAs, on the other hand, will demonstrate the tendency to evolve and adjust their tactics and strategies in line with general and specific, durability norms. In other words, while barriers are part of counterinsurgency measures, they might push VNSAs to transform their tactical behaviour or invest more in civilians and strengthen their place within local communities, creating a paradoxical effect. This paradoxical consequence of fortification also implies that instead of ending conflict, border barriers have a significant potential to perpetuate it, through opening new channels of incentives for VNSAs.

In addition, the study has embedded policy implications and introduces a fresh dataset. If the systematic relationship between the given variables holds, detected

consequences of border fortification, and the revealed dilemma, will provide smooth floor for fabricating more efficient policies in the long term. Moreover, the dataset I provide in the study will encourage and facilitate further research on this overlooked but significant realm of literature.



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

After narrowing down the broader literature on VNSA behaviour to my central question that depicts its relation with walls, I will explain my chosen route to address my theoretical considerations. I will assess my data, portray the variables that frame my hypotheses regarding intra- and extra-group dynamics, clarify relevant definitions, and discuss my empirical strategy. This will be followed by the processes, explanations, and results of my statistical analyses in the next chapter.

3.1 Data and Operationalization

Throughout my thesis, I run a time-series cross-sectional analysis to test my hypotheses. Yet, before I explain my central datasets, I should elaborate on my selection criteria for border fortification. As described previously, I focus on the contemporary border fortification trend within the developing world because, particularly after 9/11, the gap between the developed and developing world increased in terms of fortified borders (Blair, 2022b)². This widening disparity could be attributed to various factors, including the climbing and concrete security challenges faced by developing nations, particularly concerning transnational militancy. Therefore, when examining instances of fortification and VNSAs within that context,

² Between 2001 and 2006 75% of all fortifications took place in the Global South. Despite the security concerns that heightened in Western populations after 9/11 (Blair, 2022b; Jones, 2012; Longo, 2017), the actual fortification took place in low- and middle income countries. In 2016 60% of all border fortification were erected by developing countries.(Blair, 2022b)

I select those that are contemporary, align with the pattern of transnational terrorism, and are situated within developing countries, which have distinct motivations compared to developed states (Blair, 2022b; Carter & Poast, 2017). For the definition of “border fortification,” which I constantly refer to throughout my thesis, I rely on Keegan’s (1994) definition of a strategic defence. He underlines that, “[s]trategic defenses may be continuous, as Hadrian’s Wall was when kept in repair, or more commonly may comprise individual strongpoints so positioned as to be mutually supporting and to deny avenues of attack to an enemy across a wide front.” Clearly, the definition overlooks subtle distinctions between walls, which are uninterrupted, and lines, which are discontinuous but encompass various fortification elements like ditches or fences. (Carter & Poast, 2017). Carter and Poast build this definition further and highlight that “while strategic defense lines can indeed be directed toward denying ‘avenues of attack to an enemy,’ they are more broadly intended to prevent entrance by any unwanted entities, be it persons or things (including, of course, a foreign army).”

Yet again, my purpose differs from that of Carter and Poast in that I focus on the developing and contemporary world, leaving aside “ancient” walls like the Maginot Line (1930-36), Hadrian’s Wall (122-127), or Pré Carré (1678-80) in Sterling’s (2009) cases for investigation and even walls like France-Germany (1930-40) or East-West Germany (1947-89) as well as contemporary walls in the developed world which differ in their motives of construction. Their construction is based on motives regarding economic disparity, whereas the developing states’ motivations for fortifying borders can be explained from a perspective of threat by militancy. Hence, I have drawn the list (table 1) of fortified borders that are built (mainly with motivations to prevent transnational militancy) in developing states in the 21st century,

using data from Carter and Poast (2017), Hassner and Wittenberg (2015), Avdan and Gelpi (2017), and Benedicto et al. (2020). After this, I concentrate my observations on attacks of groups that a) are (or have been) engaged in terrorist activity, b) target (or have been targeting) a specific country or group of countries in my list, and c) are transnationally active (i.e., either funded or hosted by third parties or placed/active outside the national borders of the target state(s)).

Table 1: List of fortified borders

Builder country	Year of construction	Target country
Iran	2000	Afghanistan
Uzbekistan	2001	Afghanistan
Turkmenistan	2001	Kazakhstan
Thailand	2001	Malaysia
Turkmenistan	2001	Uzbekistan
Botswana	2003	Zimbabwe
India	2003	Burma
India	2003	Myanmar
Zimbabwe	2003	Botswana
UAE	2004	Oman
Saudi Arabia	2004	Yemen
Brunei	2005	Malaysia
Pakistan	2005	Afghanistan
Jordan	2006	Iraq
Saudi Arabia	2006	Iraq
Kazakhstan	2006	Uzbekistan
UAE	2007	Saudi Arabia
Saudi Arabia	2007	Jordan
Saudi Arabia	2007	Kuwait
Jordan	2008	Syria

Burma	2009	Bangladesh
Myanmar	2009	Bangladesh
Saudi Arabia	2009	UAE
Saudi Arabia	2008	Iraq
Saudi Arabia	2009	Oman
Saudi Arabia	2009	Qatar
Egypt	2009	Gaza
Uzbekistan	2009	Kyrgyzstan
Kazakhstan	2010	Kyrgyzstan
India	2010	Myanmar
Azerbaijan	2011	Armenia
Iran	2011	Pakistan
Türkiye	2012	Syria
Uzbekistan	2013	Tajikistan
South Africa	2013	Lesotho
Iran	2013	Afghanistan
Oman	2013	Yemen
Turkmenistan	2014	Afghanistan
Morocco	2015	Algeria
Tunisia	2015	Libya
Iran	2015	Iraq
Kenya	2015	Somalia
Türkiye	2017	Iran
Iraq	2018	Syria

After explaining my selection criteria for fortification and groups, I can introduce my major sources of data. I borrow my fundamental data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), which is produced and maintained by the National

Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland. The GTD is a comprehensive event-level database featuring over 200,000 records of terrorist attacks worldwide dating back to 1970 (GTD, 2022). The Database uses a broad definition for a “terrorist attack” which concludes that it is the “threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation” (GTD, 2022). This definition embraces the criteria that the incident “must be intentional”, “must entail some level of violence or immediate threat of violence,” and that “the perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national-actors.” Additionally, the Database emphasizes that an attack must meet at least two of the following criteria. That is, “a) The act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal; b) There must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims.; and c) The action must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities.” Within the frame of my research, short-term tactical attacks do not necessarily have to have direct “political, economic, religious, or social goals or a concern to deliver a message.” Hence, I only apply the third criteria as a filter during my research.

Apart from its satisfying definition of terrorism and its accessibility, the broad GTD is advantageous in several ways, though also poses some limitations and drawbacks. First of all, the database is event-based and focuses on all terrorist attacks since 1970, specifying attack type, weapon type, and target/victim/casualty information. As all my dependent variables rely on civilian targeting, target type, type of weapons and attacks as well as the shifts between these, as discussed in detail below, the database addresses my fundamental needs. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) One-Sided Violence (Version 24.1) for example, could have been an

alternative to the GTD, but the UCDP dataset only contains attacks against civilians, leaving, for example, attacks targeting military infrastructures aside. It is significant for me to cover these, however, because, for instance, for H3, I need to examine whether the group uses selective or indiscriminate targeting, or for H2 (and H3), I need to embrace data that explains the tactical flexibility of the VNSAs. The UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (Version 24.1) could have been another alternative if the dataset portrayed attacks in broader detail. That is, the dataset this time does include both attacks against other actors and civilians, but does not fully identify the nature of the attack in terms of the variation in arms.³ There are multiple other datasets within the collection of UCDP, but none are as clearly event-based and as comprehensive (both in time and scope) as I need, and as the GTD provides.

However, the GTD also has its drawbacks. The dataset is an aggregate effort of multiple stages of data collection covering a broad temporal frame dating back to 1970. While this delivers advantages, it also means that there have been various changes in the codebook⁴ and differences in levels of coded attacks and casualties. The most up-to-date codebook (August 2021), also used in this research, refers to the differences such as those in target-subtype⁵. However, the final version supersedes prior codebooks (with minor exceptions), and changes throughout the years were applied retroactively to the entire dataset, limiting the effects of the potential drawbacks that could have occurred. The different levels of coded attacks and

³ Arms are defined as “any material e.g. manufactured weapons but also sticks, stones, fire, water etc.” in this dataset. (Davies et al., 2023; Sundberg & Melander, 2013)

⁴ There are changes made prior to August 2014, in August 2014, in June 2015, in June 2016, in June 2017, in July 2018. No substantive changes were made between 2019 and 2021. (GTD, 2022)

⁵ One example is a change made in July 2018. “Target subtype = 65 was changed from ‘Refugee Camp’ to ‘Refugee (including Camps/IDP/Asylum Seekers).’ Attacks against these targets were re-classified under target type = 14 (Private Citizens and Property) rather than target type = 13 (Other).” Yet, as is explained above, this kind of changes are applied retroactively and are not of weight or relevance to affect the results of this research (GTD, 2022).

casualties in different temporal frames on the other hand, is a result of outer conditions such as improvements in technology and the expansion of the internet, which allows both accessibility within a shorter lag behind real time and more efficiency regarding workflows. As GTD, like multiple other datasets, relies on unclassified and publicly available source materials, of which today the internet is the main provider, this potential limitation is not unique to this dataset. As my research focuses on the 21st century, however, it is less affected by these variations, which particularly belong to the previous century. Thirdly, apart from temporal frames, spatial frames also draw limitations on the data of the GTD. That is, “scarcity of high-quality sources in certain geographic areas results in conservative documentation of attacks in those areas in the GTD”. Yet, again, this is not a drawback unique to this dataset and will not negatively impact the research goal of capturing and predicting substantial change over time.

While the GTD data provides me with the fundamentals, it needs the import of additional data in order to address my hypotheses related to foreign funds (H1a & H1b), regime violence (H3) and government efficiency (H4). I find satisfying data regarding foreign funds in the, triad-level, UCDP External Support Dataset (ESD) Version 18.1⁶. The data-set covers data on state and non-state or sub-state supporters of state and non-state recipients between 1975-2017. Apart from its parallel temporal frame to the GTD, the triad-level dataset (ESD TY) is disaggregated, and conflict-level or actor-level units of analysis can be created from it. The dataset defines external support “as the provision of military relevant assistance by an outside party to a primary warring party in a state-based armed conflict with the intent to assist that party in that conflict”. (Meier et al., 2023). The dataset is rich in its definition of “assistance”

⁶ The ESD builds further on the UCDP Dyadic Dataset 18.1 derived from the UCDP/PRIO Armed conflict Dataset 18.1 but offers alternatives to its dyadic nature (Meier et al., 2023).

and includes “troops”, “access to infrastructure/joint operations,” “weapons,” “materiel/logistics,” “training/expertise,” “funding,” “intelligence,” “access to territory,” and “other” or “unknown support”. One drawback could have been the neglect of UCDP’s datasets regarding conflicts with less than 25 battle-related deaths within one calendar year. However, as I focus on the individual external supporters of VNSAs for this research, this will not significantly affect my results.

For my hypotheses regarding extra-group dimensions (H3 and H4) I need to merge additional data with the GTD because the GTD merely focuses on attacks by non-state actors, leaving violence used by states outside. Thus, I use data from the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) Version 24.1 to measure the ratio of civilian casualties to combatant (rebel) casualties as a result of state-based violence in conflicts. The GED is advantageous in that it covers a broad contemporary temporal frame, extending from the beginning of 1989 to the end of 2023, and in that it is event-based, parallel to the GTD. The UCDP defines an incident of lethal violence as “An incident where armed force was used by an organized actor against another organized actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 1 direct death at a specific location and a specific date” (Davies et al., 2023; Sundberg & Melander, 2013).

I finally need data on government efficiency, which I borrow from The World Bank Group’s “The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)” project. The project has six aggregate governance indicators, of which I use “government effectiveness”. This indicator “captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government’s commitment to such policies” (Daniel & Aart, 2023). The project relies on more than

30 sources⁷ to construct its indicators, covering a broad spatial (200 countries and territories) and temporal (1996-2022) frame.

3.1.1 Dependent Variables

As my research question targets the strategic and tactical shifts in VNSA behaviour, my primary dependent variable is centred around “civilian targeting” to measure civilian-oriented strategic shifts, while my dependent variable regarding tactical shifts is conceptualized either as “type of attack” or “type of weapon.” As is drawn in the table below (table 2), an increase or indifference concerning civilian targeting means that the group is robust enough and gets less affected by fortification or can compensate in a short amount of time, leaving the option of increased reliance on civilians expensive and tiresome in this phase of for example finding alternative smuggling routes or channels.

The DVs regarding “type of attack” and “type of weapon”, on the other hand, are in this research mainly helpful in deciding whether conventional or irregular tactics were used in the observations. I expect the groups to shift from conventional to irregular tactics (as explained in the previous chapters) to decrease their expenses. While H1b, for instance, measures such a shift when a group receiving foreign funds faces border fortification, H2 looks at whether the group’s previous tactical flexibility is decisive in such a shift from conventional to irregular tactics. Moreover, H3

⁷ “The WGI aggregate data from more than 30 think tanks, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and private firms across the world selected on the basis of three key criteria: 1) they are produced by credible organizations; 2) they provide comparable cross-country data; and 3) they are regularly updated. The data reflect the diverse views on governance of many stakeholders worldwide, including tens of thousands of survey respondents and experts.” (Daniel & Aart, 2023).

examines the groups' attack behaviour in terms of whether it is selective or indiscriminate, with DV "target type", in relation to regime violence and in an environment of walls.

I use the data for all four dependent variables from the GTD due to its precision in attack type, weapon type, target type, and civilian deaths. The data captures terrorist attacks since 1970, but in parallel with the border fortification trend in the developing world I focus on the aftermath of 2000.

3.1.1.1. Coding Procedure for the Dependent Variables

I focus on civilian casualties for my first dependent variable, creating a dichotomous variable that indicates whether there are civilian casualties or not for every attack. For my variable concerning "target type" I create another variable by filtering the "Target/Victim Type" (*targettype1*) in the GTD that contains 22 categories, and include only categories that may have an aspect of civilian targeting, which are, "business", "abortion related", "airports & aircraft", "educational institution", "food or water supply", "journalists & media", "maritime", "ngo", "other", "private citizens & property", "religious figures & institutions", "telecommunication", "tourists", "transportation", "utilities". On the other hand, I leave the following target types outside my filter: "government", "police", "military", "government (diplomatic)", "terrorists/non-state militias", "unknown", and "violent political parties".

For the third (binary) dependent variable (*attacktype*) I create, I rely on the GTD (categorical) variable *attacktype* consisting of nine categories: "assassination", "armed assault", "bombing/explosion", "hijacking", "hostage taking (barricade incident)", "hostage taking (kidnapping)", "facility/infrastructure attack", "unarmed assault", and "unknown". I create a binary variable coding "1" for irregular attacks and

“0” for conventional attacks⁸. I list “assassination”, “hijacking”, “kidnapping” as conventional and “bombing/explosion”, “armed assault”, “unarmed assault”, and “facility/infrastructure attack” as irregular (cost-effective). I neglect the (binary) *success* variable in the original database because the intention of attack, even though it does not create a tangible effect, is enough to list the attack for my research as I try to measure the tendency of VNSA behaviour rather than its success. My fourth DV (*weapontype*) is actually inseparable from the second and is rather complementary. I examine with this variable the type of weapon that is used in the attack relying on the GTD’s *weaptype1* containing of 13 categories. I create a parallel binary variable to support my previous dependent variable.

Table 2: Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	DV	IV	MV
Intra-Group Dynamics			
1a. VNSAs are more likely to target civilians when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their receipt of foreign funds.	Civilian casualties	Border fortification	Foreign support
1b. VNSAs are more likely to apply irregular tactics when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their receipt of foreign funds.	Type of weapons Type of attacks	Border fortification	Foreign support

⁸ With “irregular” and “conventional” attacks I do refer to the directness/indirectness and cost-effectiveness/expense of the attack as all attacks in the dataset are part of terrorist tactics. My “irregular tactics” therefore, require less expenditure, less number of recruits to be “effective” and perpetuate the conflict (Blair, 2022a; Bueno de Mesquita, 2013; Cronin, 2009; Hazen, 2013).

2. VNSAs are more likely to apply irregular tactics when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their tactical flexibility.	Type of weapons Type of attack	Border fortification	Weapon and attack flexibility
Extra-Group Dynamics			
3. VNSAs are more likely to apply selective targeting when exposed to border fortification conditioned on indiscriminate regime violence.	Type of attack Type of weapon	Border Fortification	State violence
4. VNSAs are more likely to target civilians when exposed to border fortification conditioned on governance efficiency.	Civilian casualties	Border Fortification	Effective governance

Table 3: Operationalization and Sources of the Dependent Variable

Variable	Coding	Source
Civilian casualties (<i>estciviliancas</i>)	Dichotomous variable, “1” for civilian casualties and “0” for no civilian casualties	Global Terrorism Database (GTD)
Type of attack (<i>attacktype</i>)	Dichotomous variable, “1” for irregular attacks and “0” for conventional attacks.	Global Terrorism Database (GTD)
Type of weapon (<i>weapontype</i>)	Dichotomous variable, “1” for irregular weapons and “0” for conventional weapons.	Global Terrorism Database (GTD)
Type of target (<i>selective</i>)	Dichotomous variable, “1” for selective targeting and “0” for indiscriminate targeting.	Global Terrorism Database (GTD)

3.1.2 The Independent Variable

The independent variable of my thesis is border fortification (*bfort*), which is operationalized as a binary variable. As described above, I have collected data regarding fortifications in the developing world from multiple sources. The *bfort* variable I create takes the value of “0” when there is no fortification built yet, and the value of “1” after fortification.

Table 4: Operationalization and Sources of the Independent Variable

Variable	Coding	Source
Border fortification (<i>bfort</i>)	Dichotomous variable, “0” when there is no fortification, and “1” after fortification.	Carter and Poast (2017), Hassner and Wittenberg (2015), Avdan and Gelpi (2017), and Benedicto et al. (2020).

3.1.3 Moderating Variables

As explained in the previous chapter, my hypotheses consist of intra-group and extra-group dynamics that moderate the relation between border fortification and VNSA behaviour. My moderator variables (table 5) for intra-group factors contain foreign funds (H1a, H1b) and tactical flexibility (H2), and for extra-group factors, regime violence (H3), and finally government effectiveness (H4).

For hypotheses 1a and 1b I create the binary variable *foreignsupport*. I find satisfying data regarding foreign funds in the, triad-level, UCDP External Support Dataset (ESD) Version 18.1, expanding from 1975 to 2017. The dataset lists ten categories of external support (listed above), and provides this information for state,

non-state, and sub-state supporters. As my hypotheses rest on the flow of foreign funding I could use data regarding the variable *ext_f*, covering all observations in which funding support was provided. However, as I argue that foreign support decreases the necessity to rely on civilians for intelligence, shelter, food, materiel, arms, and recruits, I take into consideration the variables regarding all types of tangible support that could decrease the dependency of the VNSA on civilians. Hence, I rename and use the variable *ext_sup* to cover all observations with external support regardless of its type.

For hypothesis 2, I again rely on the GTD. This time I measure the tactical flexibility. Hence, I create two ordinal variables portraying whether the VNSA has a wide range of use of different weapon and attack types. My variables extend from 1 to 3. For the flexibility of attack type variable (*attackflex*) “1” means having used only 2 of 8 types of attacks, “2” means having used 4 out of 8 attacks, and “3” stands for having used more than 4 types of attacks until now. Similarly, for the weapon type flexibility variable (*weaponflex*) “1” means having used 3 types of weapon categories out of 11, “2” means 5 out of 11, and “3” means more than 5 types of weapon categories. Note that, all these categories have sub-categories in the original dataset, which are not elaborated on here.

For hypothesis 4, I use data from the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) Version 24.1 to measure the ratio of civilian casualties to combatant (rebel) casualties as a result of state-based violence in conflicts. Firstly, I use the *type_of_violence* variable to filter only state-based violence by choosing observations that include “state-based conflict”. Then, I calculate the ratio of civilian casualties

(*deaths_civilians*) to rebel casualties (*deaths_b*)⁹. Finally, I categorize the different levels into 5 (lowest to highest) levels of state violence. Another indicator of regime violence might be found in the “one-sided violence” category, in which the target group consists entirely of civilians. However, in order to compare civilian casualties to rebel deaths I merely focus on state-based conflicts’ fatalities.

For hypothesis 4, I rely on the World Bank Group’s WGI project. Yet, as there are limitations related to access to the raw data, I use the “interactive data access” and hand coding to provide data for my continuous variable (*govefficiency*). I code the percentile rank (1-100) (among all countries in the world) for each country in my list by creating 7 categories (lowest to highest) on an annual basis. While in the original dataset the value of “0” refers to the lowest rank, while “100” refers to the highest rank a country can possibly get, in my dataset this ranges from 1 to 7.

Table 5: Operationalization and Sources of the Moderator Variables

Variable	Coding	Source
Foreign support (<i>foreignsupport</i>)	Dichotomous variable, “1” if the VNSA receives foreign support, “0” if not.	UCDP External Support Dataset (ESD) Version 18.1
Tactical flexibility (<i>attackflex</i>)	Ordinal variable, “1” if used 2/8 types of attacks (low flexibility), “2” if used 4/8 (moderate flexibility), “3” if more than 4 (high flexibility).	Global Terrorism Database (GTD)
Tactical flexibility (<i>weaponflex</i>)	Ordinal variable, “1” if used 3/11 types of weapons (low flexibility), “2” if used 5/11 (moderate flexibility), “3” if more than 5 (high flexibility).	Global Terrorism Database (GTD)

⁹ The best estimate of deaths sustained by side b. Always 0 for one-sided violence events. Side b (side_b) is “the name of Side B in the dyad. In state-based always the rebel movement or rivaling government. In one-sided violence always ‘civilians.’”

Regime violence (<i>sviolencee</i>)	Ordinal variable, 1 – 5, “1” indicating the lowest and “5” indicating the highest level of state violence.	The UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (Version 24.1)
Government effectiveness (<i>govefficiency</i>)	Ordinal variable, 1 – 7, “1” indicating the lowest and “7” indicating the highest level of government effectiveness.	World Bank Group’s WGI project.

3.1.4 Control Variables

Undoubtedly, various factors might influence VNSAs' behaviour regarding their strategies and tactics toward civilians. To avoid spurious relationships and results in my thesis, I also incorporate control variables. I control for GDP per capita and democracy level.

I look for conditions related to state-level analysis. First, I control for the economic condition of the relevant (builder) state. I particularly focus on gross domestic product (GDP) per capita as it is a conventional indicator of state strength and may create an additional impact on VNSA behaviour within or against that state. I create a variable (*gdp*) relying on data from the World Bank Databank (World Bank Group, 2024) and use its logarithmic transformation.

Additionally, I include a *democracy* variable, to portray the democracy/autocracy level of the regime/government. This can play a significant role because (as elaborated on above) the groups’ preferences for provocative tactics also depend on the “precision with which democratic states can respond to attacks,” implying that less democratic states with the ability to react with more precision and faster to attacks may push groups to avoid violent tactics that might provoke forceful

responses (World Bank Group, n.d.). I rely on the Polity5 (Marshall & Gurr, 2020) dataset, focusing particularly on the *polity2* variable, which indicates a revised version of the previous *polity* variable that stands for combined polity score. *polity2* is more useful as it converts “standardized authority scores” (-66, -77, and -88) into values within the original scale of -10 to +10. I align with the original rationale of the dataset, in which the polity score is calculated through the subtraction of the “institutionalized autocracy” value (*autoc*) from the “institutionalized democracy” value (*democ*). Yet with a slight change, I create an ordinal variable extending from 1-20, with “1” referring to strongly autocratic, while “20” refers to “strongly democratic”.

Table 6: Operationalization and Sources of the Control Variables

Variable	Coding	Source
GDP per capita (<i>gdp</i>)	Log of continuous variable (in current \$)	World Bank Databank
Democracy level (<i>democracy</i>)	Ordinal, “1” refers to “strongly autocratic, “20” refers to “strongly democratic.”	Polity5

3.2 Empirical Strategy

To test my hypotheses, I employ logistic regression (with interactions) as all my dependent variables are of a dichotomous nature. I will discuss these models within the frame of my research and how I play with my data to meet their assumptions and conditions in my (next) analysis chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In chapter 4, I will present and start discussing the results of my analyses and assess whether I find support for my hypotheses. I begin with demonstrating and interpreting my logistic regression models, and then, focus on the substantive effect through predicted probabilities and marginal effects.

4.1. Logistic Regression

As all of my dependent variables are dichotomous variables, instead of metric ones, I employ logistic regression throughout my research. I aim to estimate the probability of VNSAs' tendency to target civilians, apply selective targeting, and use irregular weapons and attack types through this model. The logistic model is well-suited for my binary outcome variables, which do not follow normal distributions, ensuring the robustness of the model. In addition, I use the data in its most granular, event-based (attack) form. This level of disaggregation ensures the independence of every observation, which is crucial for the validity of the standard logistic regression model. By examining each event individually, I capture the nuances of the behaviour of VNSAs more accurately.

Yet, my skewed (independent) variables still needed modification. Hence, I have applied categorizations or logarithmic transformations in order to address the skewness. These help normalize the data through a more symmetrical distribution and improve the model's overall performance. After estimating the simple logistic model, I use the margins command to compute and illustrate the predicted probabilities and

marginal effects. This is essential to provide a clear and tangible portrayal of the relationship between my variables. With adjusted predictions (margin), I specify the values for my independent variable, capturing the presence or absence of border fortification, and compute the likelihood of the various outcomes. The results of my logit regressions are depicted and discussed in the upcoming sections.

4.2. Results and Findings

The first set of results in table 1 shows the impact of border fortification on the tendency for civilian casualties conditioned on their receipt of foreign funds. Border fortification and foreign support, as well as their interaction, are statistically significant as indicated by their low p-values. The results show that border fortification is associated with a decrease in civilian casualties. In parallel, foreign support also reduces the likelihood of VNSA tendency for civilian casualties. However, the positive direction of the interaction suggests that border fortification has an increased effect on the tendency to target civilians when VNSAs receive foreign support confirming H1a.

Model 2 and 3 capture the impact of border fortification on the tendency to apply irregular tactics conditioned on the receipt of foreign funds by the VNSAs. Interestingly, this time fortification indicates a weak and statistically insignificant effect on the use of irregular attacks (Model 2) and a statistically significant decrease in the use of irregular weapons (Model 3). The positive direction of foreign support alone in Model 2 indicates an increase in the likelihood of applying irregular attacks, while Model 3 indicates that the likelihood of the use of irregular weapons decreases significantly when a group receives foreign support. The central interaction seems only significant in Model 3, which is in the positive direction, giving support to my expectation that VNSAs facing border fortification are more likely to use irregular

weapons when they are receivers of foreign support. Hence, H1b is partially confirmed as I only found a statistically significant interaction outcome for the use of irregular weapons.

Model 4 and 5 cover the impact of fortification on the tendency to apply irregular tactics conditioned on their tactical flexibility. Both models deliver statistically significant results. Model 4, which focuses on attack flexibility's impact on attack type, indicates that fortification has a positive effect on the use of irregular attacks, while attack flexibility alone does not create a statistically significant impact on the likelihood of the use of irregular attacks. Yet, the interaction, which is the core of the model, has a negative and statistically significant effect.

That is, while attack flexibility alone remains insignificant, its combination with border fortification has a mitigating effect. This means that no support is found for H2 in this model. Yet, in contrast, model 5, which focuses on the impact of weapon flexibility on the use of irregular weapons, confirms my expectations for H2 as the interaction is statistically significant and in the positive direction. In other words, the interaction of border fortification and weapon flexibility increases the likelihood of using irregular weapons.

Model 6 covers the impact of fortification on the tendency to apply selective targeting conditioned on the level of indiscriminate regime violence. The interaction variable in the model is statistically significant in the expected direction, translating into the indication that the interaction of state violence and border fortification delivers selective targeting by VNSAs. I find support for H3 in this model.

Finally, Model 7 captures the impact of fortification on VNSAs' tendency to target civilians conditioned on governance efficiency. Only the interaction variable is statistically significant in the model, being in the opposite direction of my expectation.

The result indicates that the interaction of fortification and governance efficiency has a negative effect on VNSAs' tendency for civilian targeting. I do not find any support for H4 in this model.

The complementary control variables GDP per capita and Democracy also provide further insight and depth. Model 1 indicates that GDP per capita demonstrates a negative association with the likelihood of VNSAs targeting civilians, while the use of irregular attacks is negatively impacted by it but the use of irregular weapons has a positive direction. Regarding the democracy level of the relevant state, the results show that it has a statistically significant yet weak negative impact on attack type, while it has a statistically significant yet again, weak positive impact on weapon type.

Table 7: Logit Models

DVs IVs	(1) Civilian casualties	(2) Attack type	(3) Weapon type	(4) Attack type	(5) Weapon type	(6) Target type	(7) Civilian casualties
Border fortification	-0.704** (0.347)	0.0198 (0.403)	-0.673* (0.367)	0.787* (0.406)	-2.976*** (0.247)	0.977*** (0.131)	0.0746 (0.128)
Foreign support	-0.834** (0.357)	1.362*** (0.448)	-1.985*** (0.376)				
Border fort. X Foreign support	1.094*** (0.407)	-0.582 (0.498)	0.915** (0.424)				
GDP per capita	-0.201*** (0.0551)	-0.284*** (0.0691)	0.602*** (0.0605)	-0.179*** (0.0414)	0.0948*** (0.0359)	-0.437*** (0.0386)	-0.0278 (0.0460)
Democracy	0.00556 (0.0134)	-0.0430** (0.0175)	0.0491*** (0.0141)	-0.0746*** (0.0105)	0.0918*** (0.00713)	-0.0177* (0.00943)	-0.00176 (0.00695)
Attack flexibility				-0.000518 (0.127)			
Border fort. X Attack flexibility				-0.496*** (0.144)			
Weapon flexibility					-1.221*** (0.0837)		
Border fort. X Weapon Flexibility					1.693*** (0.0985)		
State violence						-0.211*** (0.0322)	
Border fort. X State violence						0.140*** (0.0428)	
Governance efficiency							-0.00361 (0.0261)

Border fort. X Governance efficiency							-0.139*** (0.0381)
Constant	1.295*** (0.388)	3.089*** (0.476)	-3.046*** (0.417)	4.334*** (0.411)	-0.197 (0.272)	1.106*** (0.223)	0.353* (0.208)
Observations	1,678	1,638	1,559	7,274	6,961	6,768	7,651

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

4.2.1 Predicted probabilities and marginal effect

To better interpret the practical implications of the results and discuss the substantive effect embedded in the models I also computed the marginal effects and predicted probabilities. The predicted probabilities at the contradicting levels of my binary dependent variables portray how the likelihood of an outcome changes throughout these varying levels of the key predictors, while marginal effects help to understand the change in the predicted probabilities with a one-unit change in the predictor variable(s). I will discuss the substantive effect for each hypothesis below through the models.¹⁰

H1a: VNSAs are more likely to target civilians when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their receipt of foreign funds.

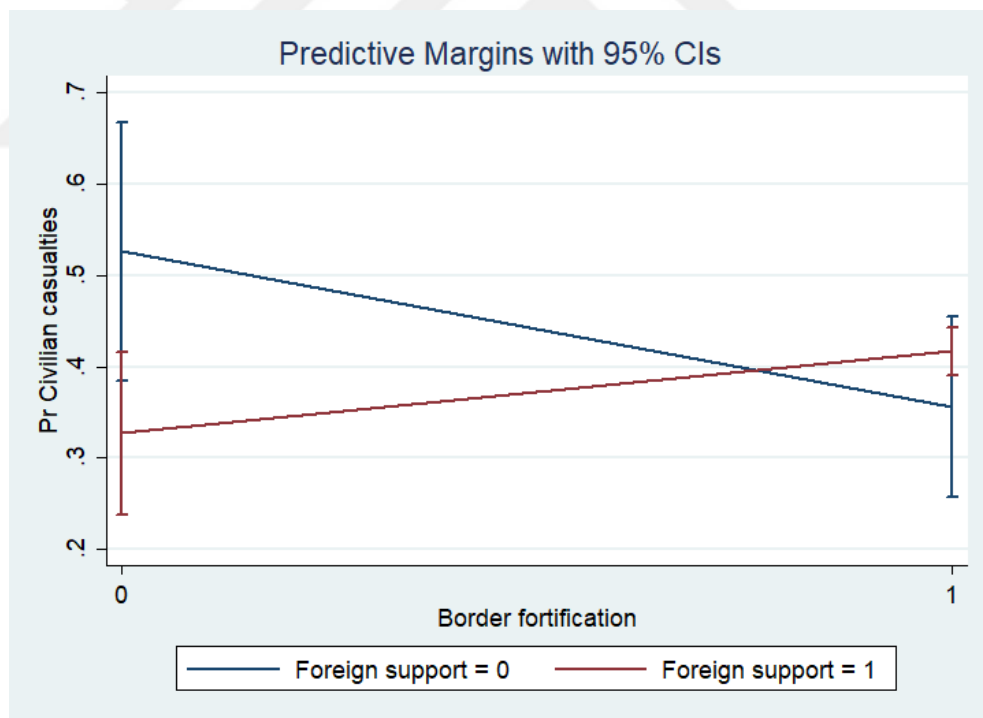


Figure 1: Predicted probability – H1a

¹⁰ The naïve models for all hypotheses covering predicted probabilities and marginal effects can be found in the appendix.

Figure 1 suggests that when fortification shifts from absence to presence, the probability of VNSAs' tendency to target civilians rises from 32 to 41 percent if the group is a foreign support recipient, while the tendency to target civilians decreases from 52 to 37 percent if the group does not receive any foreign support. Hence, my results demonstrate that else being equal groups that receive foreign funds are more likely to target civilians when they are exposed to border fortification, which is consistent with H1a. In parallel, figure 2 suggests that the absence of foreign support is associated with a decrease in the probability of civilian casualties by about 20 percent, while the presence of foreign support increases the probability of civilian casualties by about 9 percent.

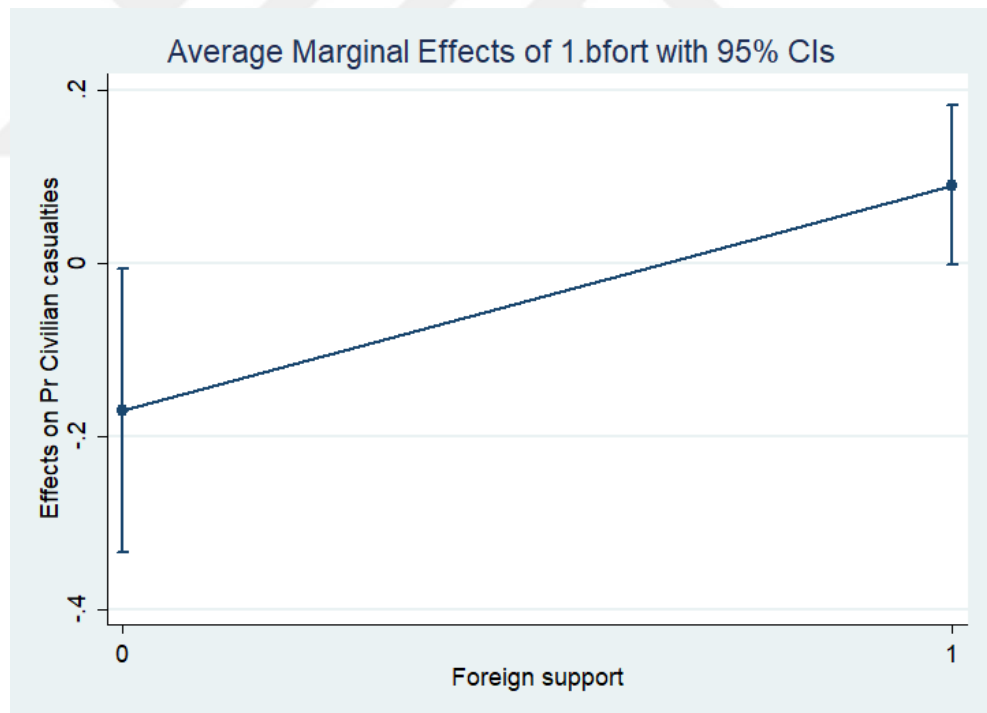


Figure 2: Marginal effect- H1a

H1b: VNSAs are more likely to apply irregular tactics when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their receipt of foreign funds.

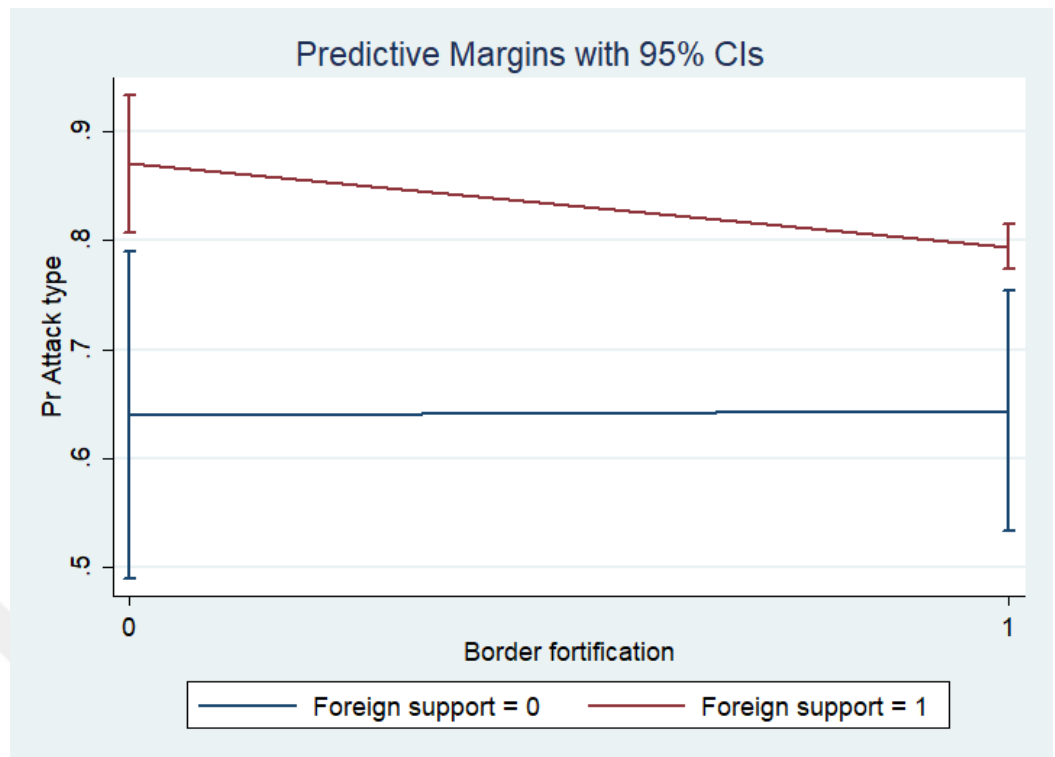


Figure 3: Predicted probability- H1b (attack type)

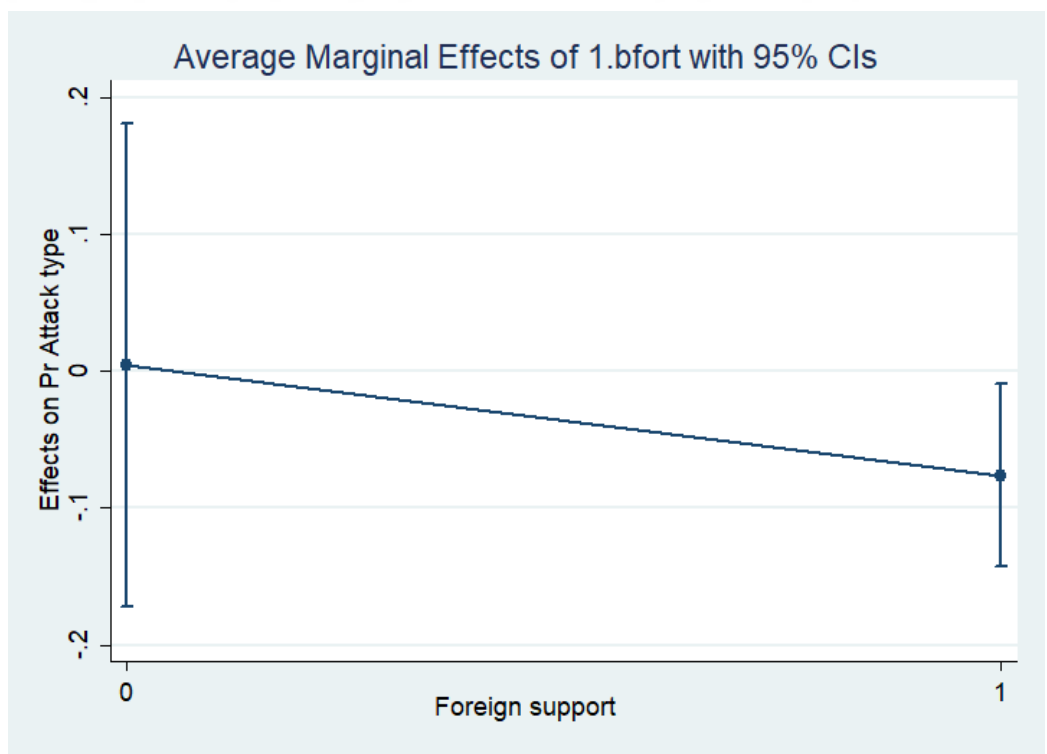


Figure 4: Marginal effect - H1b (attack type)

In figure 3, the probability of using irregular attacks remains almost constant for groups without foreign support when fortification shifts from absence to presence, while a slight decrease of about 8 percent is observable for groups receiving external support. Figure 4 depicts that while the marginal effect for groups without foreign support is insignificant, VNSAs that are support recipients are about 8 percent less prone to apply irregular tactics in this scenario. These models do not provide evidence in support of H1b.

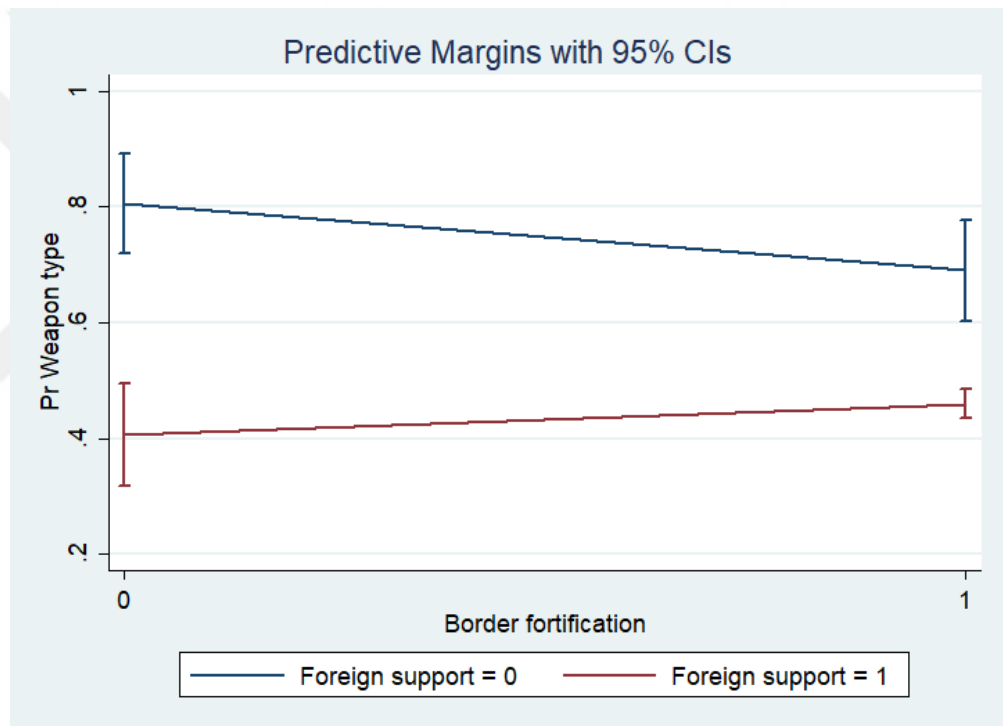


Figure 5: Predicted probability– H1b (weapon type)

In figure 5, however, the probability of using irregular tactics for groups that do not receive foreign support decreases slightly from 80 to 69 percent when border fortification is implemented, while it increases for groups receiving support from 41 to 47 percent. Figure 6 has a slightly positive slope, indicating an increase of 16 percent towards irregular weapons in the presence of foreign support. Yet, while theoretically

the interaction seemed significant, its substantive effect seems to be statistically insignificant.

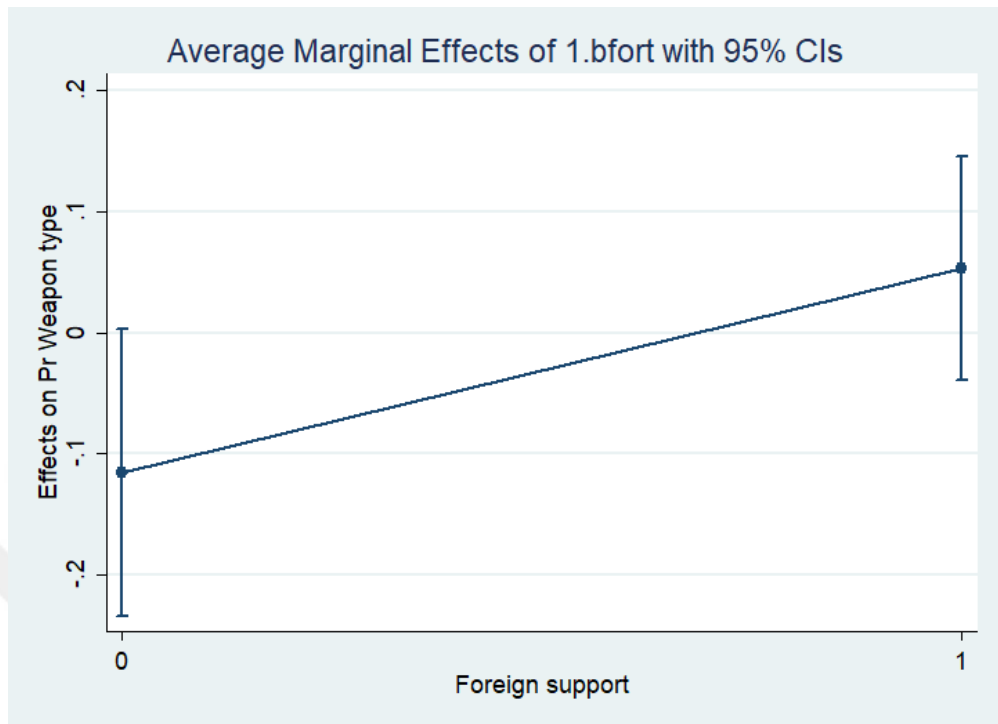


Figure 6: Marginal effect- H1b (weapon type)

H2. VNSAs are more likely to apply irregular tactics when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their tactical flexibility.

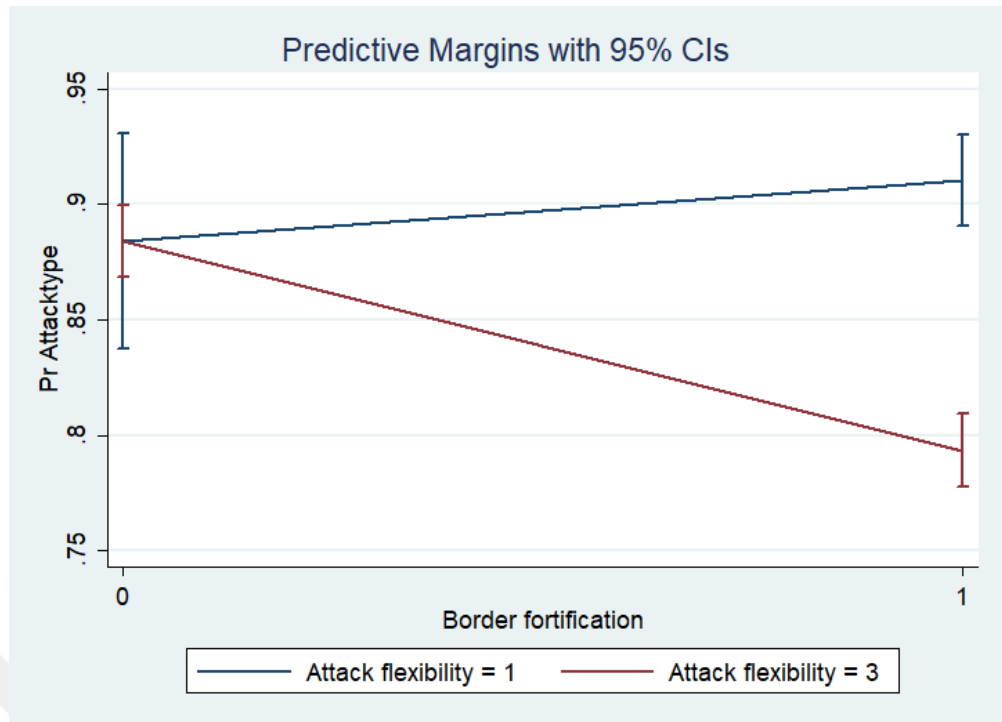


Figure 7: Predicted probability - H2 (attack type)

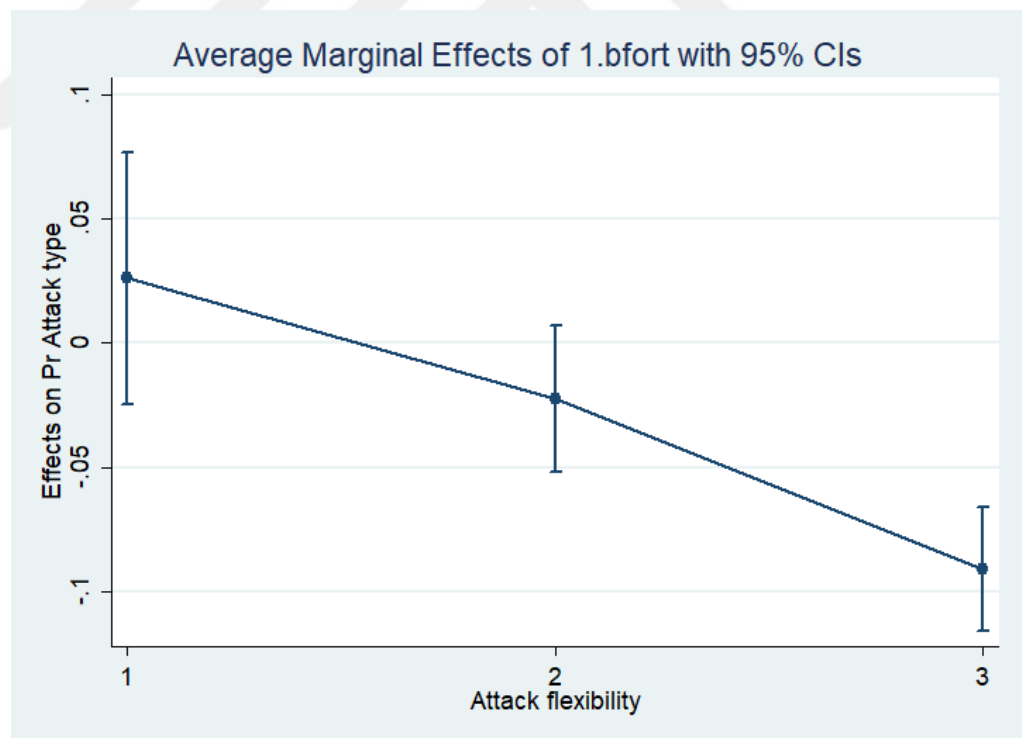


Figure 8: Marginal effect - H2 (attack type)

In brief, figure 7 shows that for VNSAs with the highest tactical flexibility there is a significant decrease from about 88 to 79 percent in the likelihood of applying

irregular attacks when fortification takes place, while groups with low attack flexibility slightly increase their use of irregular attacks by 3 percent. Figure 8, to complement, indicates that the marginal effect is only significant at the highest level of attack flexibility. Figure 9, covering weapon type, on the other hand, suggests that groups with the highest weapon flexibility increase their use of irregular weapons from 16 to 58 percent with the presence of border fortification, while groups with the lowest weapon flexibility decrease their use.

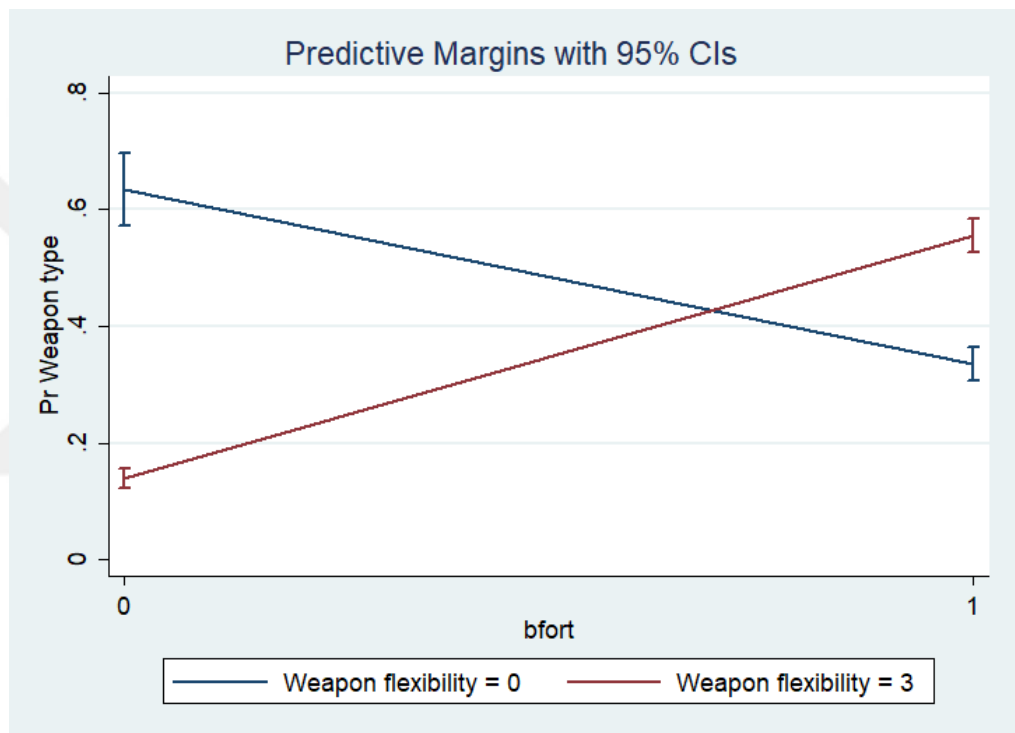


Figure 9: Predicted probability- H2 (weapon type)

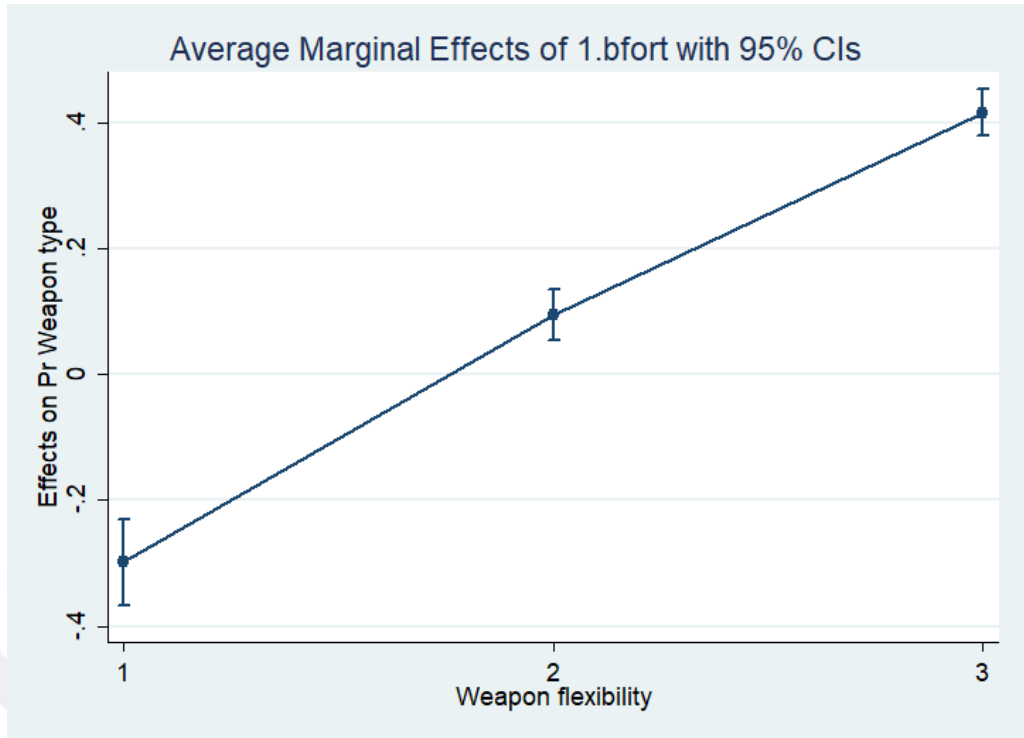


Figure 10: Marginal effect - H2 (weapon type)

H3: VNSAs are more likely to apply selective targeting when exposed to border fortification conditioned on indiscriminate regime violence.

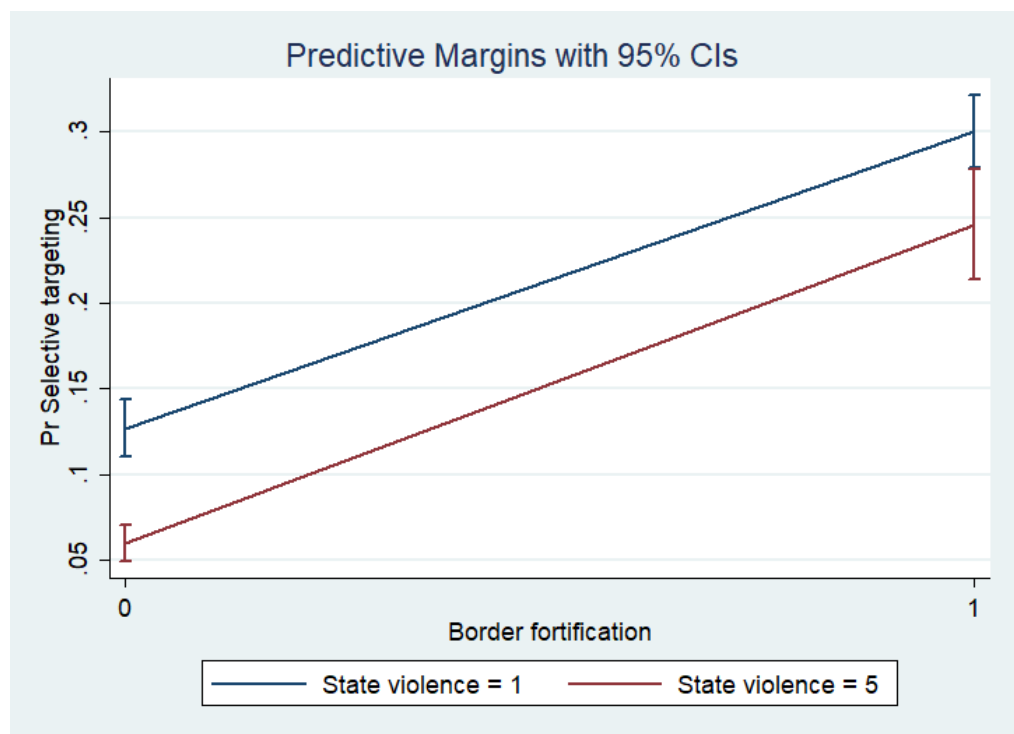


Figure 11: Predicted probability – H3

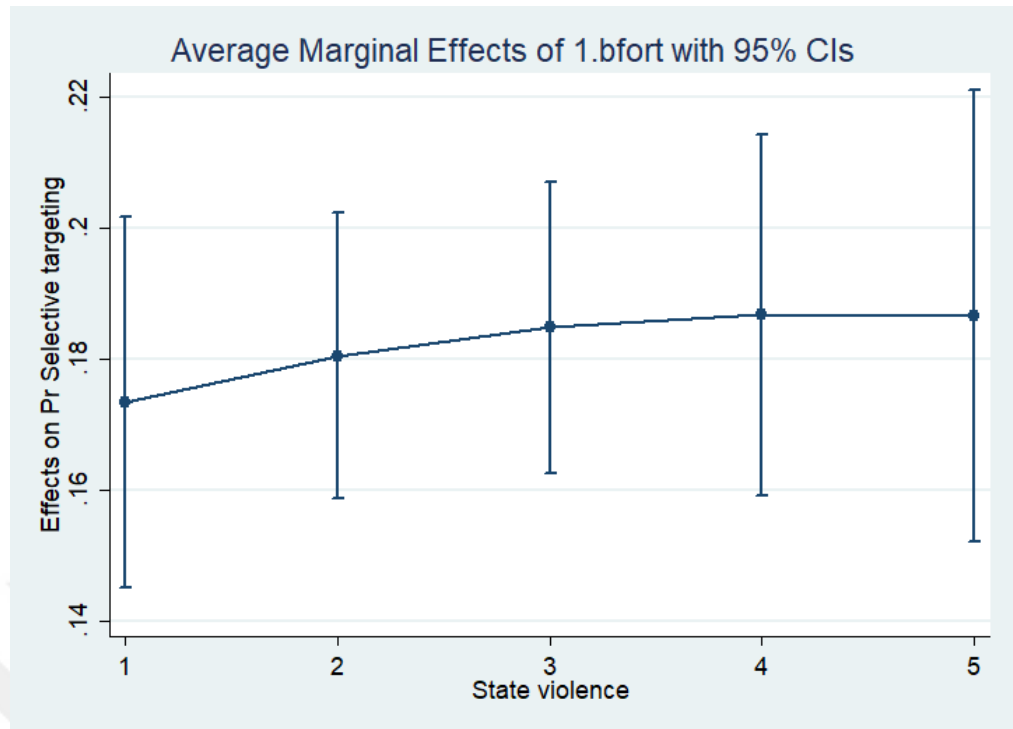


Figure 12 Marginal effect – H3

Figure 11 indicates that there is substantial increase in VNSAs' tendency for selective targeting at both the lowest and highest level of state violence. Yet, interestingly not only at the highest level but at all levels of state violence (figure 12) is there a positive and significant marginal effect of state violence on selective targeting. Hence, although I find support for H3, the relation is not straightforward.

H4: VNSAs are more likely to target civilians when exposed to border fortification conditioned on governance efficiency.

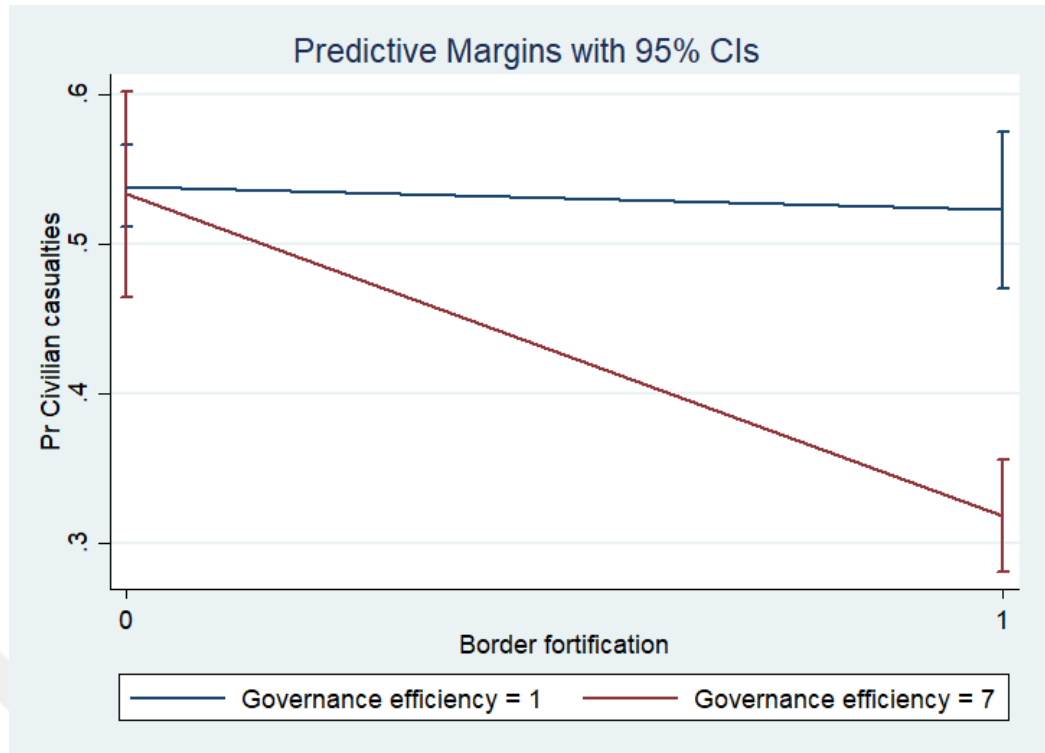


Figure 13: Predicted probability – H4

Figure 13 and 14 deliver the results that VNSAs that are exposed to border fortification in an environment of high governance efficiency decrease their tendency for civilian targeting from 54 to 32 percent, while low (1) governance efficiency has no significant marginal effect. I will discuss my findings, their broader implications, and the limitations of my research in the next chapter.

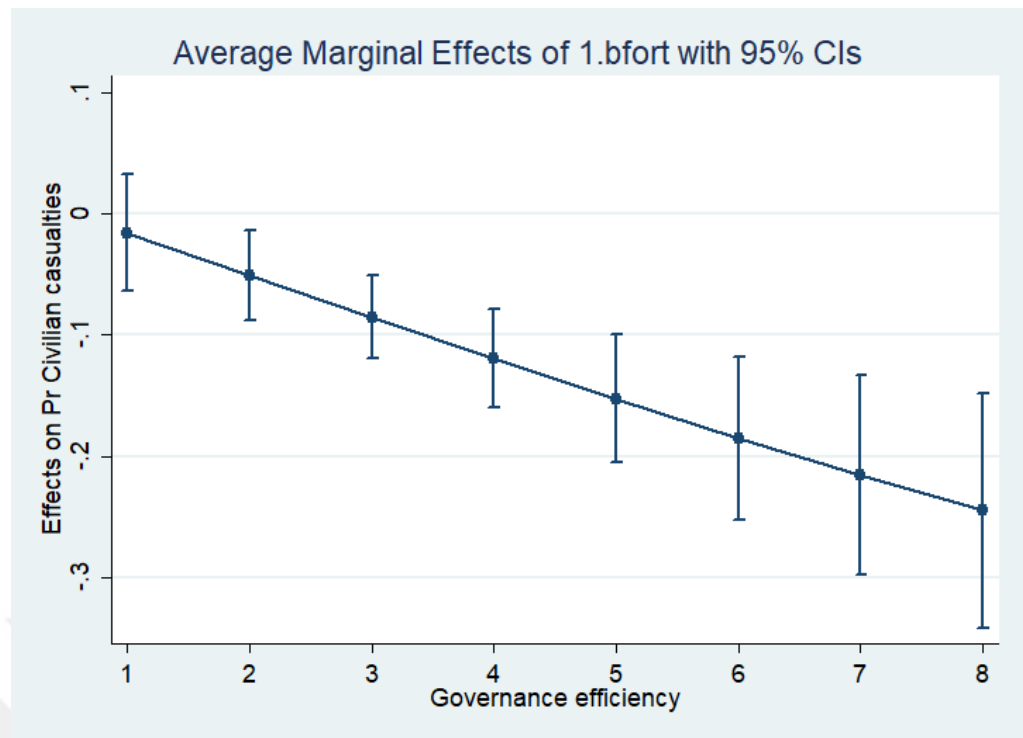


Figure 14: Marginal effect – H4

Table 8: Table of hypotheses with expected and real outcomes

Hypothesis	Expected outcome	Result
H1a: VNSAs are more likely to target civilians when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their receipt of foreign funds.	The coefficient for the interaction between border fortification and foreign funds should be positive and statistically significant.	The coefficient is statistically significant and in the expected direction, providing support for H1a.
H1b: VNSAs are more likely to apply irregular tactics when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their receipt of foreign funds.	- The coefficient for the interaction between border fortification and foreign funds should be positive and statistically significant (<i>attack type</i>). - The coefficient for the interaction between border fortification and foreign funds	- The relevant coefficient is negative and insignificant. - The relevant coefficient is in the expected direction and statistically significant.

	should be positive and statistically significant (<i>weapon type</i>).	I find partial support for H1b .
H2: VNSAs are more likely to apply irregular tactics when exposed to border fortification conditioned on their tactical flexibility.	1. The coefficient for the interaction between border fortification and attack flexibility should be positive and statistically significant (<i>attack type</i>). 2. The coefficient for the interaction between border fortification and weapon flexibility should be positive and statistically significant (<i>weapon type</i>).	1. The relevant coefficient is negative and insignificant. 2. The relevant coefficient is in the expected direction and statistically significant. (Yet, its substantive effect is insignificant) I find partial support for H2.
H3: VNSAs are more likely to apply selective targeting when exposed to border fortification conditioned on indiscriminate regime violence.	The coefficient for the interaction between border fortification and state violence should be positive and statistically significant.	The coefficient is in the expected direction and statistically significant, consistent with H3 .
H4: VNSAs are more likely to target civilians when exposed to border fortification conditioned on governance efficiency.	The coefficient for the interaction between border fortification and governance efficiency should be positive and statistically significant.	The coefficient is statistically significant but in the negative direction. The empirical analysis does not provide evidence in support of H4 .

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The global rise in border wall construction is driven by diverse objectives, including political economy motivations and tangible security concerns. While extensive research has been conducted on the reasons affluent nations fortify their borders and the outcomes thereof, there is a significant gap in understanding this phenomenon in developing countries. This study aims to fill that by exploring the effects of border fortification on transnational militancy. Building on previous research that links fortification to shifts in insurgent strategies and tactics, I seek an answer to why certain violent non-state actors alter their behaviour in response to these barriers while others remain robustly unchanged.

A comprehensive study responding to this question is not provided by the existing literature. Previous research either focuses on specific actors' response to fortification (Blair, 2022a; Nanes & Bachus, 2021) or examines its impacts within an individual country (Ali et al., 2021; Arslan et al., 2021). Not only are these studies fragmented, but there are also incongruities regarding the effectiveness and direction of the impact of border fortification. This disparity, as well as the mere existence of individual micro-level studies without a general framework, lead to a neglect of the potentially paradoxical effects of the rising fortification trend with regard to VNSAs. To address this unexplored sphere, I attempt in this study to provide more

generalizable behavioural patterns that emerge as a response to the border fortification trend in the developing world.

Portraying a “theory of change” in my thesis, I argue that VNSAs do not necessarily modify their strategies and tactics when exposed to border fortification alone, but that there are variables moderating this relationship. To create my dependent variables for my hypotheses in line with this theoretical framework, I borrow data from the Global Terrorism Database, which allows me to differentiate between selective and indiscriminate targeting, irregular weapons or attacks and conventional ones and measure the tendency for civilian targeting. For these binary dependent variables, I computed standard logit models with interactions and examined the relevant predicted probability levels and marginal effects to capture a sight of the substantive effects. My findings from these analyses deliver support and evidence for some hypotheses, while only partial or no support is found for others.

5.1 Summary of my findings

Through the logit models with interactions, I found empirical evidence that the interaction between border fortification and foreign support is significantly associated with an increase in the tendency for civilian targeting and in the likelihood of using irregular weapons, while it is not decisive on applying irregular attacks. Hence, the results are in the positive direction for H1a and I find partial support for H1b. Consistent with H1a, VNSAs increase their tendency for civilian targeting when they are exposed to border fortification. Yet, as I explained in Chapter 2, I expect VNSAs to remain indifferent in the long term, which I do not capture in this study.

To continue, I found mixed results for H2, as VNSAs tend to increase their use of irregular weapons after border fortification when they have weapon flexibility, while their use of irregular attacks seems to be unaffected. I should note here that although I found theoretical support for the interaction capturing weapon type, the substantive effect of it is insignificant. I also found that the interaction between fortification and state violence is statistically significant and in the expected direction, in compliance with H3. That is, VNSAs are more likely to apply selective targeting when exposed to border fortification conditioned on indiscriminate regime violence. Regarding H4, my analysis does not provide evidence in support of it. Although the interaction between fortification and governance efficiency is statistically significant, it is not in the expected direction, suggesting a negative effect of the interaction on the tendency to target civilians.

5.2 Implications and assessment

The broadest implication of my study is that although fortification may create a significant effect on its own on the behavioural tendency of VNSAs, its interaction with intra- and extra-group factors remains significantly decisive on the outcome. Aligning with previous studies, the implication that receiving foreign funds decreases the dependency of VNSAs on civilians is once more revealed in my study. Hence, groups whose resources are embedded in foreign actors or foreign soil are likely to target civilians when they face barriers that are supposed to limit their resources. Although I did not apply a longitudinal analysis, I believe that further research may reveal that these groups will follow their original behavioural patterns in the long term as they will compensate for the loss delivered by fortification. Another basic implication my study underlines is that the type of attack is not significantly impacted

by fortification or the moderating variables, while weapon type gets affected and VNSAs experience an increased tendency for comparatively cost-effective weapons.

Extra-group factors in the research demonstrate that state behaviour has the potential to be a complementary or undermining factor of border fortification as a counterinsurgency measure. That is, once states have a tendency for indiscriminate violence, VNSAs are more likely to vacuum this gap by applying selective targeting (mostly excluding civilians) when they encounter a barrier like fortification. On the other hand, I expected that with high governance efficiency, VNSAs would be more prone to target civilians. However, the study implies that effective governance limits the capabilities or tendency of VNSAs to target civilians, even in cases of fortified borders.

5.3 Limitations

Although I found evidence in support of my theory and hypotheses, my research also has its limitations. First of all, because my hypotheses involve multiple interactions across various factors, isolating the core predictor of strategic and tactical tendencies in VNSA behaviour due to border fortification remains challenging. While my analyses reveal both micro and macro-level implications, further work is needed to identify statistically and substantively significant relationships with the context of fortification trends in the developing world and transnational militancy.

Another critical limitation throughout my research was the absence of specific data, as mentioned previously. The thesis suffered from two different limitations regarding data. First, the literature suggests that multiple other factors (e.g., central command) have the potential to be decisive in behavioural shifts. The inclusion of data

concerning these factors could have elevated the comprehensiveness of the study. Datasets such as the Non-State Actor Data (D. E. Cunningham et al., 2013) cover additional information regarding groups; however, these did not align with my primary dataset either in terms of temporal frame or scope, leaving merely room for weak and invalid analysis even after merging them. The second limitation regarding data was the hardship of working with existing data. Although I relied on the best available data considering my scope and area of research, I encountered problems like intensely uneven distributions of observations or measurement issues.

5.4 Future endeavours

Despite its limitations, my thesis addresses a crucial gap by engaging with the literature on fortification trends and counterinsurgency policies in a manner that, to the best of my knowledge, is unprecedented in its comprehensiveness. As the trend of fortifying borders is likely to remain prominent in the near future, understanding the effects of post-construction is highly significant. This is especially significant in the developing world, where there are motives different from those of the developed world concerning fortification policies, as it has been far too understudied and promises a fruitful avenue for future endeavours.

Beyond the immediate tactical adjustments of insurgents, this research seeks to shed light on the broader implications of border fortification. Future studies can, in parallel, analyse the strategic shifts and adaptations over time. Hence, one suggestion for future endeavours is to transform similar analyses into longitudinal ones to capture not only immediate tendencies but also tangible shifts in the long term. Within my study, I looked for implications of such shifts (e.g., from conventional to irregular

tactics), yet the models I applied and my computations only provide evidence for increases or decreases in tendencies without drawing a longitudinal frame.

Another interesting field of examination is the exploration of how fortification affects inter-group dynamics. My research focuses on intra- and extra-group dynamics to explain VNSAs' behaviour in terms of targeting either civilians or the target state. However, the question of how a barrier like fortification affects inter-group relations, tendencies, or aggression falls outside its scope.

All these endeavours, including mine, promise, apart from contributions to theoretical development and empirical analyses, to add value for policymakers and policymaking because the examination of the ages-old yet surprisingly new phenomenon of fortifying borders has the potential to reveal the dilemmas of counterinsurgency methods that trigger tactical and strategic shifts perhaps allowing the survival of the fittest in an immunised manner.

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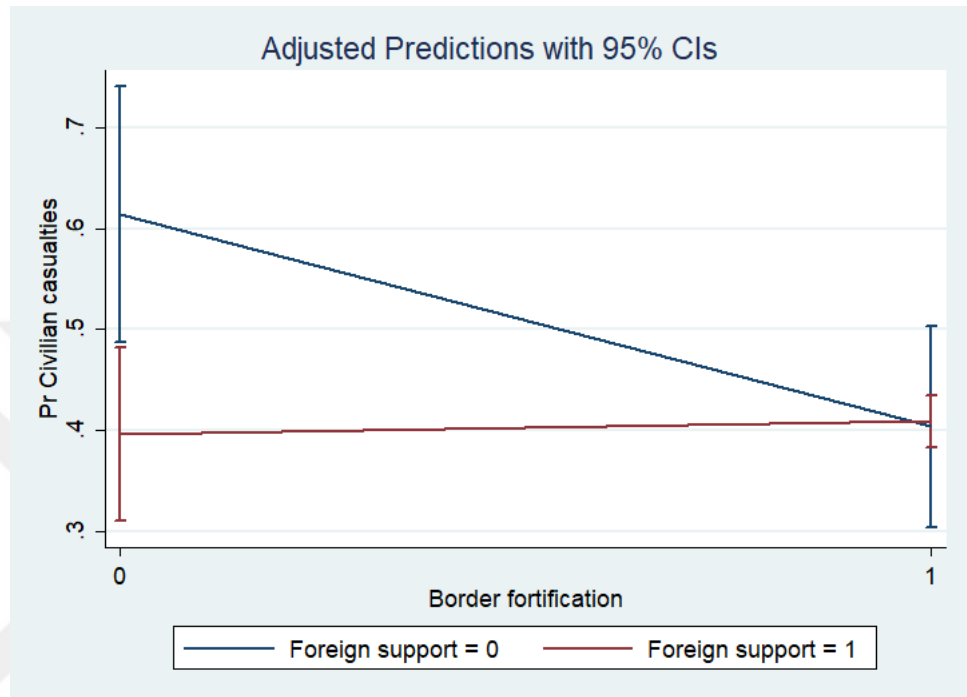
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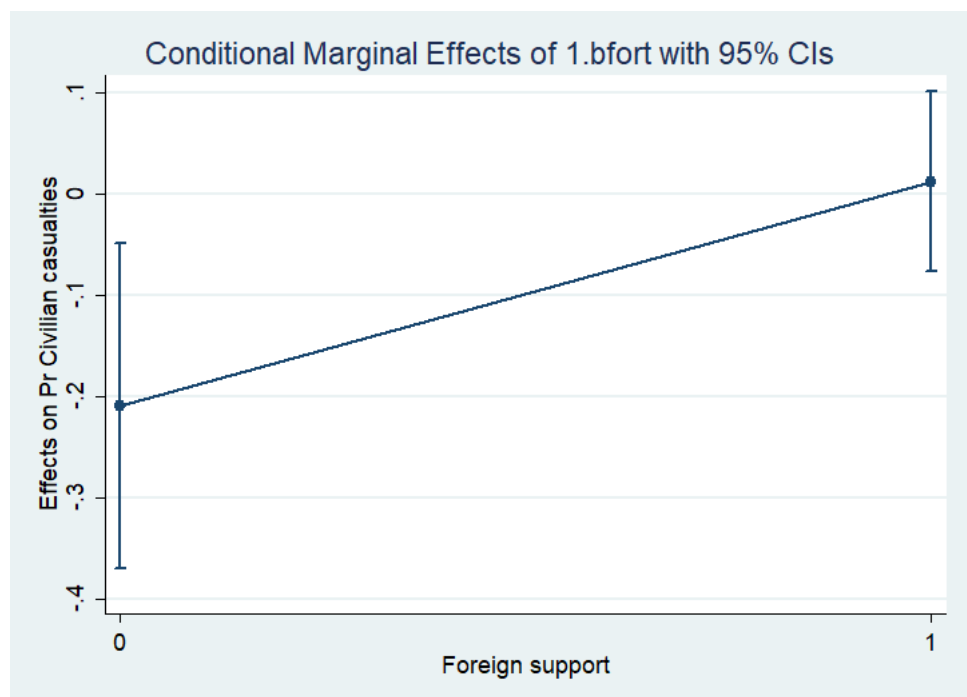
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APPENDICES

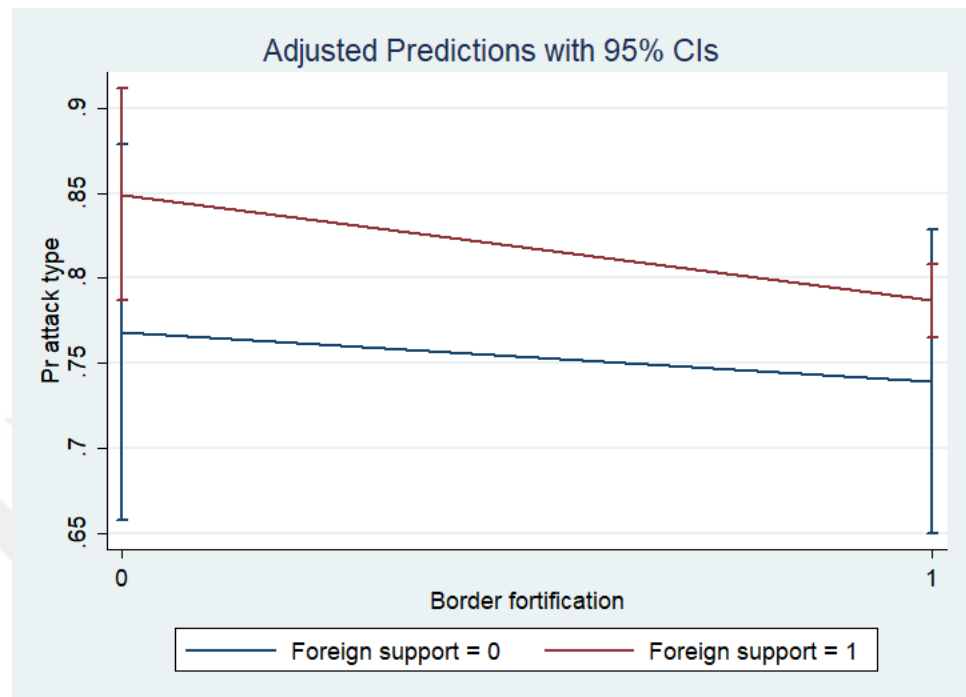
Appendix A: Predicted probability- H1a (naïve model)



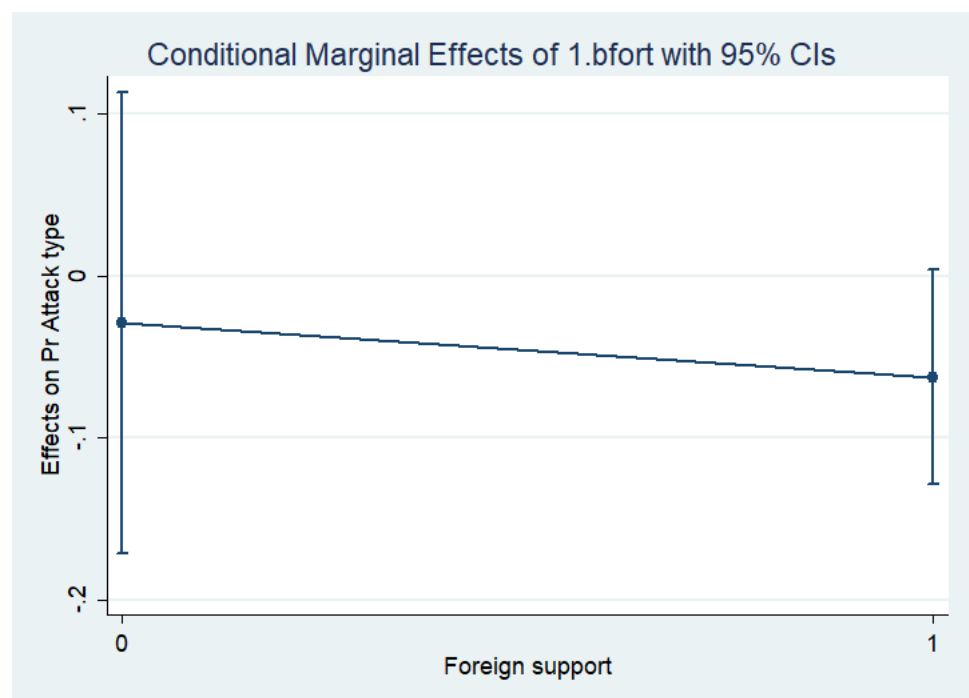
Appendix B: Marginal effect – H1a (naïve model)



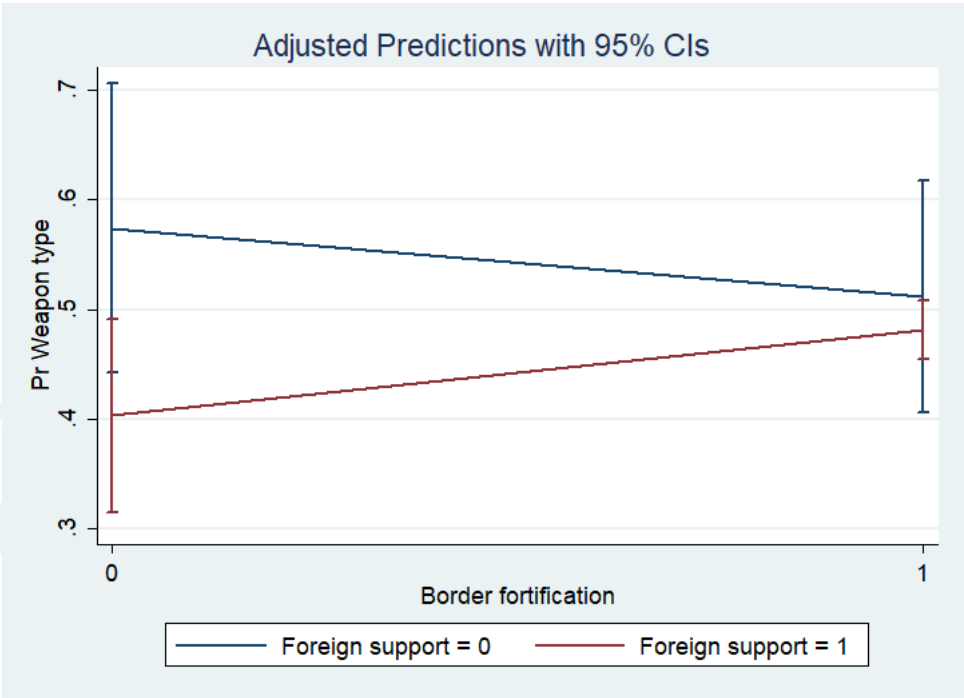
Appendix C: Predicted probability (attack type) - H1b (naïve model)



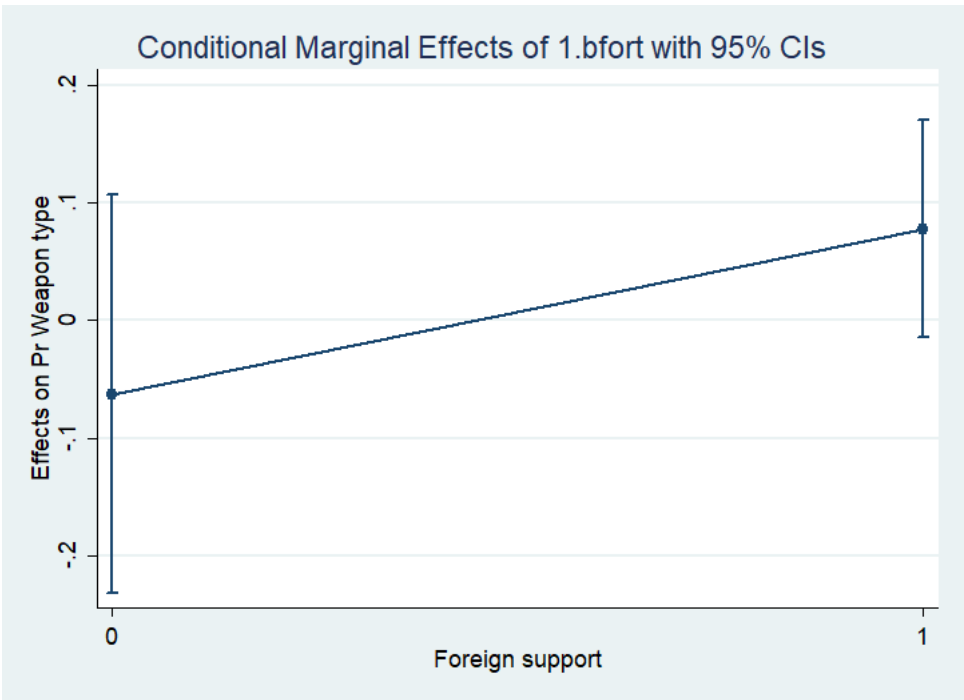
Appendix D: Marginal effect (attack type) – H1b (naïve model)



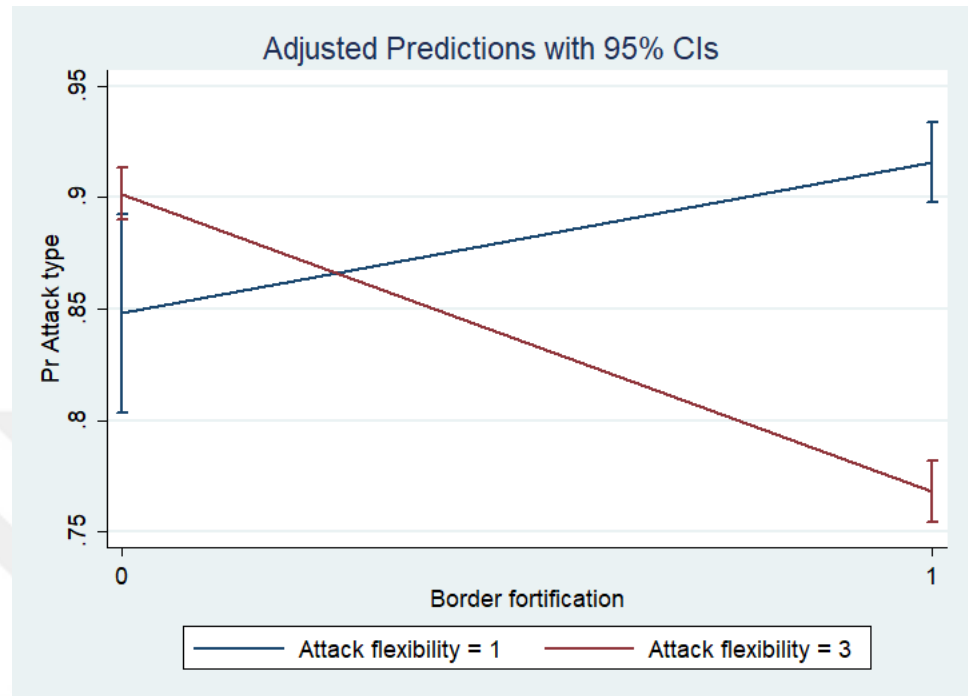
Appendix E: Predicted probability (weapon type) - H1b (naïve model)



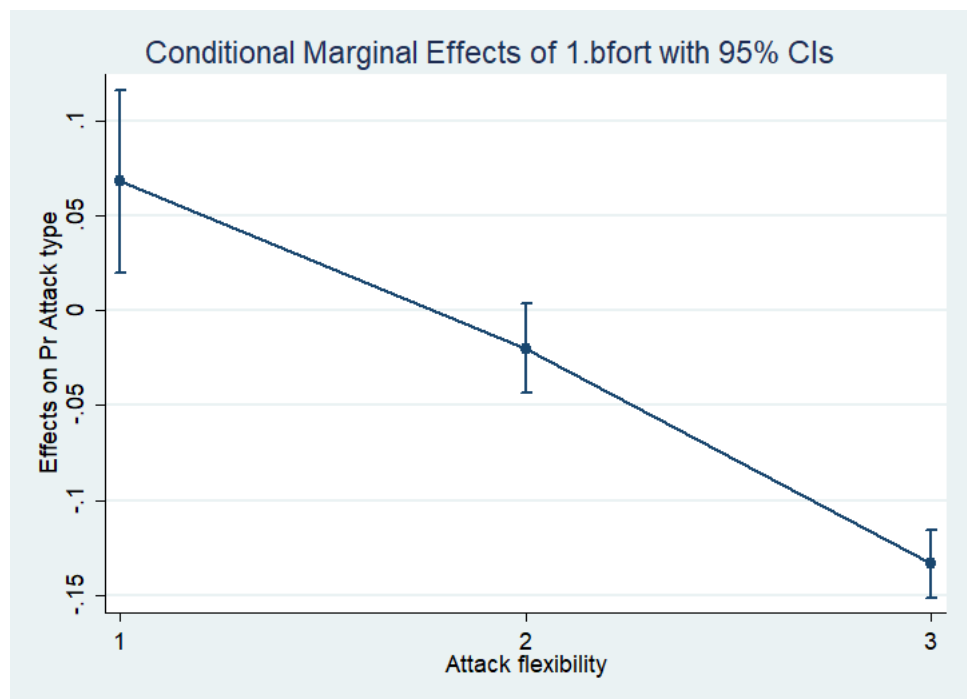
Appendix F: Marginal effect (weapon type) – H1b (naïve model)



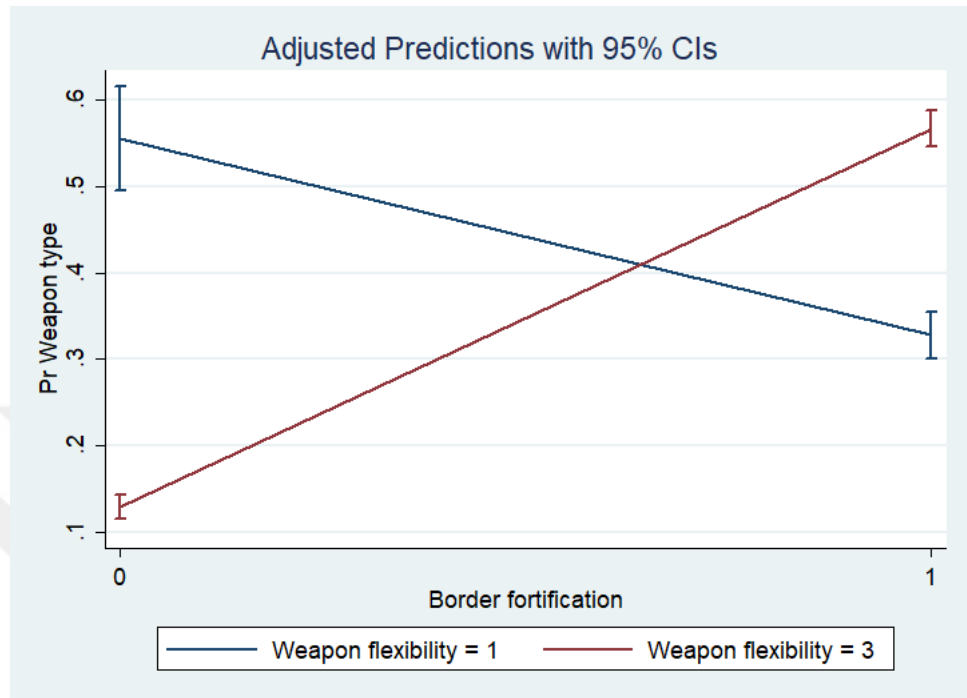
Appendix G: Predicted probability (attack type) – H2 (naïve model)



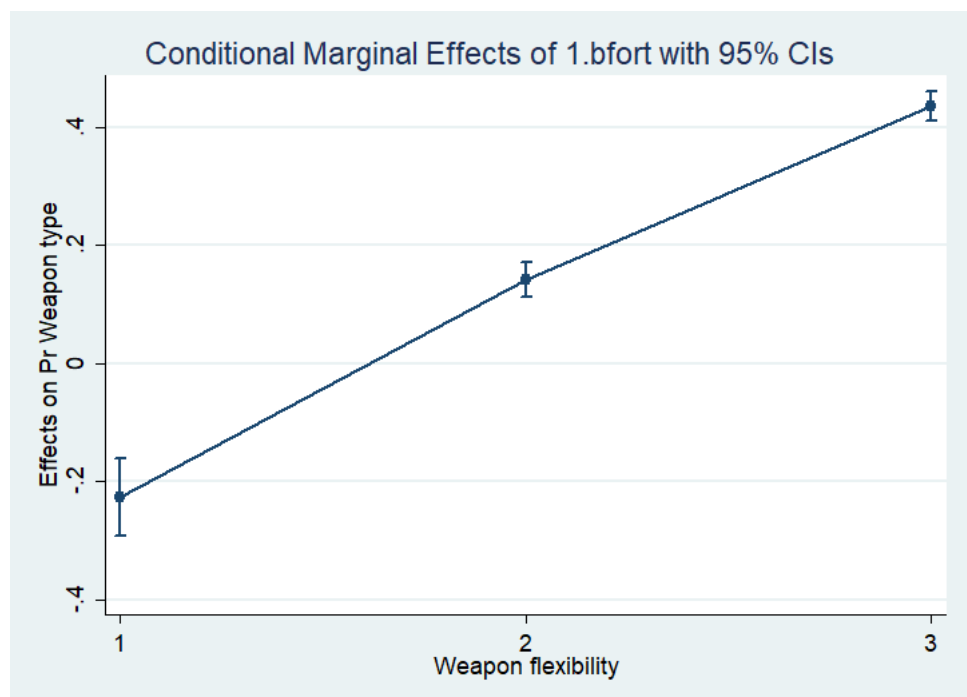
Appendix H: Marginal effect (attack type) – H2 (naïve model)



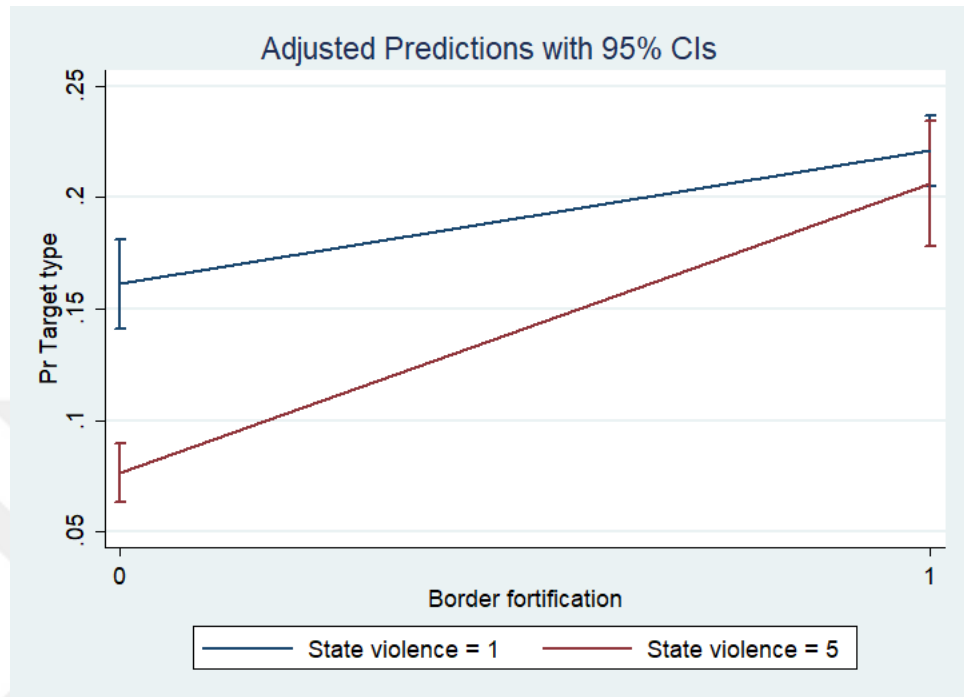
Appendix I: Predicted probability (weapon type) – H2 (naïve model)



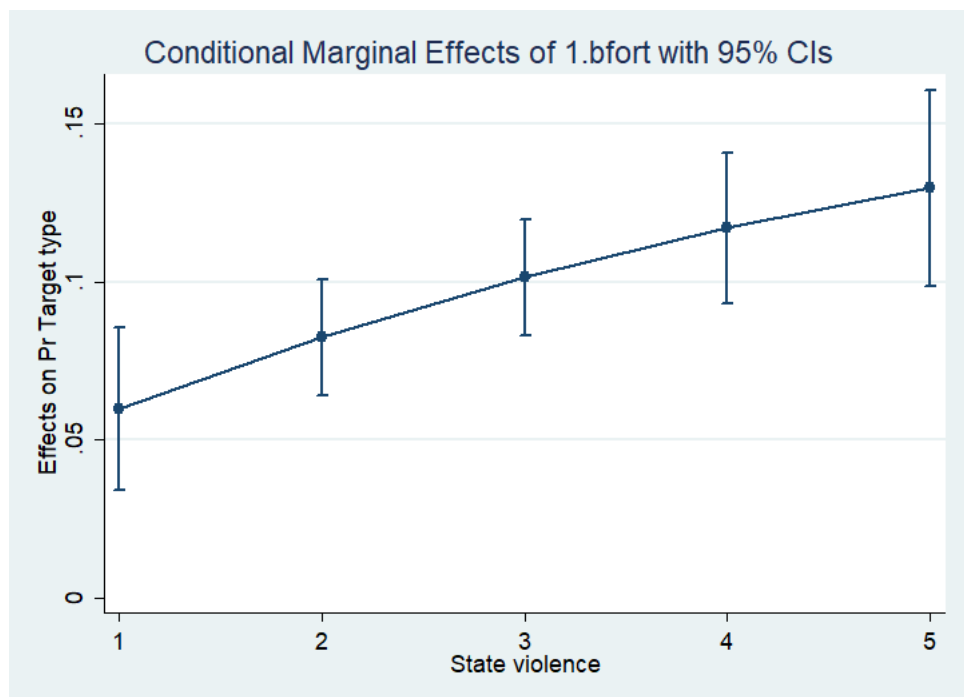
Appendix J: Marginal effect (weapon type) – H2 (naïve model)



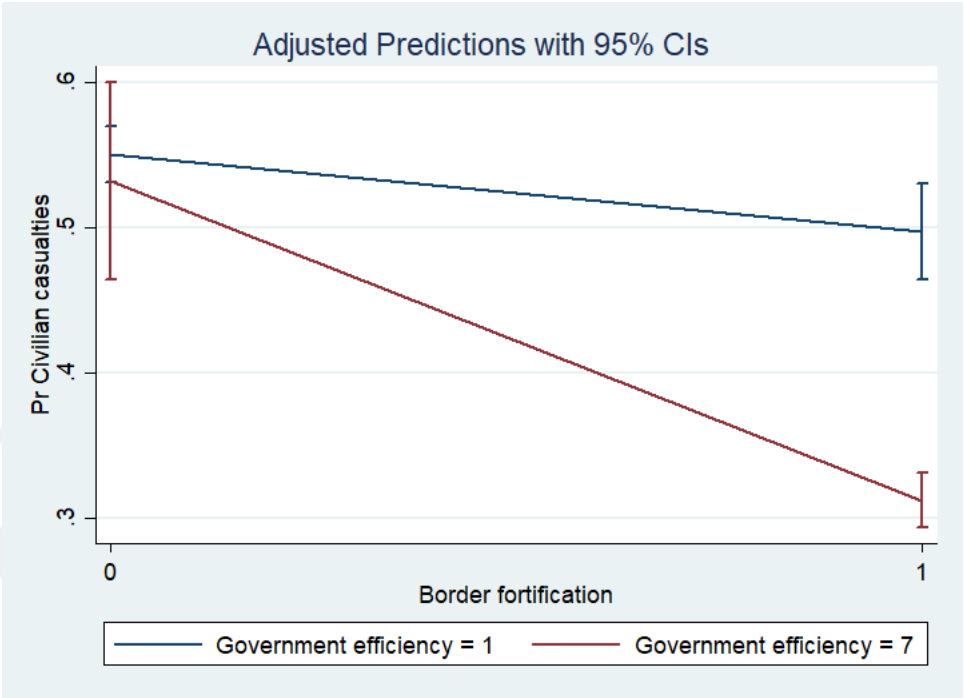
Appendix K: Predicted probability– H3 (naïve model)



Appendix L: Marginal effect – H3 (naïve model)



Appendix M: Predicted probability– H4 (naïve model)



Appendix L: Marginal effect – H4 (naïve model)

