

Unfolding the Challenges in Government Counterinsurgency Efforts in Nigeria: The Imperative for Enhanced Strategies

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Abstract

Insurgents' attacks on the Nigerian state are as old as the republic. Barely seven years after independence, the country went through a fratricidal civil war that lasted thirty months. Since then, Nigeria has witnessed one form of insurgency or the other, with the Maitatsine insurgency of Kano in 1981 and subsequent similar insurgencies across the country's regions, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). However, Nigeria witnessed the most devastating insurgent movement in 2009 with the coming of the BH insurgency, which transformed into a deadly terrorist movement. From the Nigerian civil war to the BH insurgencies, the country has adopted several counterinsurgency (COIN) measures to address each insurgency at every given time. The current COIN measures adopted by the Nigerian state do not yield the desired outcomes, as BH and its splinter groups have threatened the Nigerian state since 2009. The study aimed to explore and assess the challenges in government COIN efforts in Nigeria and the need for enhanced strategies. A mixed method is used to collect and analyze data. The study used a questionnaire to generate primary data from 351 respondents and secondary data to supplement the study. The study's findings revealed that government COIN is characterized by endemic corruption, human rights violations, disproportionate use of force, and non-trial of the insurgents that undermine its effectiveness and recommends an enhanced strategy to forestall the further escalation of the insurgency.

Keywords: Boko Haram: Insurgency: Counterinsurgency: Military Strategy: Non-military Strategy:

1. INTRODUCTION

The waning down of states' confrontations and the springing up of intrastate conflicts brought a new paradigm shift in global peace and security, leading to the emergence of various violent insurgent and terrorist groups that advocates religious, socio-economic, and political liberation. It is more evident on September 11, 2001, during attacks against the United States of America by Al-Qaeda, and the subsequent global effort of "war against terror" (Cocks, 2014; Owonikoko, 2022). Like many developing countries, Nigeria is plagued by numerous terrorist and insurgent challenges. These challenges include the Civil War of 1967, the Maitatsine rebellion of 1980, the Niger Delta Militants uprising of 2007 and 2010, and the Boko Haram (BH) insurgency, which has significantly impacted the state's progress and development, resulting in substantial human and material losses (Dim, 2017; Falode, 2019). The BH insurgency is widely regarded as the most devastating, primarily due to its significant impact on national

and global security. Originally a nonviolent Islamic sect, it gradually became an insurgency organization to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. The group launched a relentless and destructive campaign, targeting essentially private and public infrastructure, places of worship, and international community centers. These attacks further exacerbated the country's human welfare, food, health, and education insecurities. In addition, the sect has undermined state sovereignty by seizing and occupying large territories, as well as carrying out acts of violence such as killing and abducting students, professionals, and community leaders (Nkwede et al., 2015; Olanrewaju, 2015; Sampson, 2015).

Furthermore, the activities of the insurgents have severely undermined the country's Sovereignty and socio-economic and political structures. For example, in September 2010, approximately 700 prisoners were freed from Bauchi prison. The convoy of the Inspector General (IG) of the Nigeria Police and the United Nations compound in Abuja, the capital city, was targeted in suicide attacks in June and August 2011. The group also seized large territories, encompassing approximately 20,000 km (about 12,427.42 mi), in 2015 and established its authority, including imposing and collecting taxes from the local population in various parts of Borno and Yobe States. Furthermore, on April 14, 2014, the group abducted over 200 schoolchildren from the Chibok boarding school (Utibe, 2016; Dim, 2017; Gana et al., 2018a; Adela, 2021).

As a result, in 2014, the sect was classified as the world's deadliest terrorist organization, and Nigeria became the third most terrorized country after Afghanistan and Iraq in 2018. The insurgency has reportedly claimed the lives of over 100,000 people, internally displaced more than 2.4 million individuals, and destroyed properties worth over \$9 billion US dollars (Ajah et al., 2020; Maza et al., 2020; Adela, 2021; Alexander et al., 2021; Oriola et al., 2021).

In response to the group's activities, the government launched various COIN strategies to combat the situation, such as military operations that used conventional offensive military strategy and surveillance-related techniques to neutralize the insurgents and deter public support and sympathy. The involvement of private security companies (PSCs) and Civilians Joint Task Forces (CJTF) to strengthen the military capabilities and civil relations, the establishment of Multinational Joint Task Forces (MNJTF) across the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) countries (Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroun, Benin Republic) to checkmate the sect's rapid expansion and increasing border attacks across the LCB region. On the other hand, the government also adopted the non-military strategy such as the enactment of Counterterrorism (CT) law and the National Counterterrorism Strategy (NACTEST), dialogues, and peace negotiation initiatives, to mention but a few (Gana et al., 2018b; Ayima, 2019; Mohammed, 2020; Onuoha et al., 2020).

However, despite all these efforts by the Nigerian authorities, the attacks seem to persist, thereby making all the efforts either inadequate or ineffective. Against this backdrop, the article intends to interrogate the major challenges rendering the government COIN ineffective and suggesting the critical need for improved strategy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Insurgency as an internal uprising often aims to replace the existing power structure in its state for socio-economic and political goals. The BH insurgent began a violent movement to effect radical state changes by dismantling the government and its secular institutions. The campaign has undermined the government and caused massive loss of

lives and property. The government responded by launching multidimensional COIN action involving military and non-military strategies to defeat the insurgency.

The military action involved using conventional military strategy and surveillance-related techniques to neutralize the insurgents and deter public support and sympathy coercively. The strategy emerged in 2009 with the establishment and deployment of a special military task force, formerly known as Joint Task Force (JTF), comprised of the Military, Police, Department of State Security Service, and other paramilitary forces. It was reported that from 2008 to 2018, over 100,000 armed security personnel were deployed in the northeast; a state of emergency was also declared in Adamawa, Niger, Plateau, Yobe, and Adamawa. (Adela, 2021; Bukar, 2021; Yau, 2021)

Accordingly, to win the heart and minds of the local communities, the civilian joint tasks the government coopted forces in the COIN operation to aid the JTF with intelligence; their involvement has operationally aided the force in weakening the insurgent guerrilla tactics and mending the frayed relationship between the security forces and communities (Agbibo, 2020; Nwokeoma et al., 2020).

Similarly, to address the internationalization of BH activities in the LCB in 2014, the Nigerian government spearheaded the rejuvenation of multinational joint tasks force (MNJTF), which comprises troops from the neighboring states of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Benin republics to combat the insurgent group with the operational mandate of securing the area affected by the activities of the insurgent group, facilitating the implementation of stabilization programs and delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected areas in the region. The force was operationally successful by reclaiming Damasak, Gambori-Ngala, and Dikwa along the Chad borders in Borno state that the BH insurgent conquered, and over 675 members of the group were neutralized, 566 were arrested, and 32 training camps; IEDs factories dismantled, and 4690 hostages freed (Ayima, 2019; Adela, 2021; Salihu, 2021).

Additionally, the government procured the services of private military and security companies (PMSCs) from South Africa and the former Soviet Union as mercenaries to provide training and guide the force in their operations, an action that enabled the state to reclaim the lost territory and conduct the 2015 general election across the state and mitigated the ability of the sect to launch large-scale attacks (Varin, 2018; Kinsey & Krieg, 2021 Blackford, 2022).

On the other hand, in addition to the military efforts, the government employed a non-military COIN strategy involving comprehensive political, economic, social, legal, and psychological measures to contain the insurgency and address its root causes. Punitive efforts such as the Anti-Terrorism Legislation (ATL) law, the Money Laundering Prohibition Act (MPLA), and the National Counterterrorism Strategy (NACTEST) were enacted to aver the terrorist local and international financial support and ensure the lawful trial and punishment of the insurgents and their collaborators (Okunade & Ogunnubi, 2020; Salihu, 2021; Owonikoko, 2022).

The dialogue and negotiation strategy was adopted as part of the non-kinetic efforts. The Presidential Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of the Security Challenges in the North was established in addition to other unilateral conciliatory engagements by some stakeholders to accord peace between the government and BH; comprehensive plans were set, which included the amnesty for surrendered fighters, as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction of their central mosque and complex in Maiduguri and other places (Ajibola, 2015; Agbibo, 2017; Gana et al., 2018b).

Finally, the perception management program was also introduced by the Department of State security services to mitigate the extremism ideology of the group; the operation safe corridor (OPSC), among others, deradicalization programs to disengage the convicted, surrendered and arrested members of the group (Owonikoko, 2022).

However, despite all these efforts by the Nigerian authorities, the attacks seem to persist, thereby making all the efforts either inadequate or ineffective. Which therefore called for the interrogation of the major challenges rendering the government COIN ineffective and suggesting the critical need for improved strategy.

3. METHODS

The study adopts a mixed-method research design (exploratory sequential design). The method involved the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods for the broad purpose and depth of understanding and corroboration (Baškarada, S., 2018). The method also provides comprehensive information on a study (Fetters et al., 2013). The qualitative method is employed to explore and describe the challenges in government COIN efforts in Nigeria. While the quantitative method is to replicate, verify and validate the result findings of the study. Thus, a questionnaire was designed in five Likert scale response options, subjected to statistical analysis using the SPSS software.

Meanwhile, the study population comprised individuals living in the states mostly affected by BH insurgency in the country, which comprises the states of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Plateau, and Taraba, where COIN operation was conducted. Due to esoteric knowledge of the COIN effort, a purposive sampling technique was adopted to select only those familiar with government COIN and its associated consequences. In this light, the sample size for the study was statistically determined using Yamane's (1967: 886) formula stated below: $n = N / 1 + N (e)^2$. Where n is the sample size, N is the finite population, e is the level of precision (or limit of tolerable error), and 1 is unity (a constant). A 95% confidence level and $P = 0.05$ was assumed for the equation.

THE CHALLENGES IN GOVERNMENT COIN EFFORTS IN NIGERIA:

The persistent attacks and protracted nature of the BH insurgency in Nigeria represent a clear void in the state COIN strategy, which is attributed to the challenges and contradictions associated with it, including the following:

- a. **Corruption:** Corruption is considered the most challenging aspect of government COIN efforts. It involves the misappropriation and diversion of resources and logistics for combating the insurgency, extortion of motorists, and diversion of humanitarian aid by soldiers. These acts of corruption have further undermined the military's effectiveness, demoralized its personnel, and diminished its capacity to combat the insurgents effectively (Mosindi, 2018; Yau, 202). For instance, the United States, through the Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, and the International Crisis Group (ICG), identified corruption as the main obstacle to Nigeria's COIN operations, as the substantial defense budget allocation does not align with the operational progress made (Varin, 2018; Mohammed, 2020; Onah & Aduku, 2020). Furthermore, a deeper investigation revealed that defense administrators, prominent politicians, and high-ranking government and military officials had misappropriated a significant portion of the funds

allocated for the COIN operation. One prominent case involved the former National Security Adviser (NSA) under the Good luck Jonathan administration, who was implicated in diverting funds amounting to \$2.2 billion and N643 billion intended for arms procurement in the fight against insurgency. These funds were allegedly used to finance the ruling party's 2015 general election campaign (Vanguard, 2015; TNV, 2016; Foundation, 2022).

- b. Disproportionate Use of Force:** Another One major impediments that rendered the government's COIN strategy ineffective is the disproportionate use of force. It involved the offensive and indiscriminately use of force to destroy the insurgents and their collaborators through mass killings, arrests, and detentions without trials. However, the strategy resulted in declining the population's support, and undermining the military's access to valuable intelligence and cooperation in the fight against the insurgency (Sampson, 2015; Schlenoff, 2015; Gana et al., 2018a; Kinsey & Krieg, 2021).
- c. Human Rights Abuses:** The Nigerian COIN forces were involved in massive human rights violations. The human rights abuses are more intensified following the declaration of a state of emergency in 14 local governments across the four most affected states. According to a report by the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Program (NSRP), it was found that from 2010 to 2012, the COIN forces were responsible for a higher number of civilian casualties compared to the BH insurgents. It was further discovered that Nigerian military forces have extra judicially executed more than 1,200 people; arbitrarily arrested at least 20,000 people, mostly young men, and boys; and committed countless acts of torture. Other socio-economic abuses carried out by the COIN forces include the ban on motorcycle operations, imposition of curfews, suspension of fishing activities, and seizure of truckloads of goods. These acts of violence, human rights abuses, and socio-economic restrictions exacerbated the suffering of the affected population and undermined the credibility and effectiveness of the COIN efforts. (Sampson, 2015; Agbibo, 2017; Akanni, 2019; Agbibo, 2020; Yau, 2021).
- d. Non-trial of the suspected Insurgent:** The absence of fair trials and prosecution of insurgents under the law undermines the effectiveness of the COIN strategy and contributes to the glorification of insurgent activities. In the case of the BH insurgency, thousands of suspects have been arrested by the JTF and held in security detention centers without trial. This has resulted in a lack of confidence among the population and a reluctance to cooperate or provide necessary support and intelligence. For example, out of the 1,400 detainees in Maiduguri, Yola, and Damaturu, only 500 were recommended for trial, and ultimately, only 11 convictions were obtained. This lack of accountability not only denies justice to the victims of terrorism but also perpetuates a cycle of violence and hampers efforts to address the root causes of insurgency (Group, 2014).
- e. Underutilization of military technology:** Another major challenge is the underutilization of military technology due to the lack of technical capabilities and inadequate personnel resources. Effective COIN operations require modern equipment, surveillance systems, and advanced technologies to gather intelligence, track insurgent activities, and respond swiftly. However, the limited technical capabilities and insufficient resources hinder the

effective use of military technology, which impacts the operations' overall effectiveness.

- f. **The inability to address the root causes and tract the financial and military support of the insurgency:** The inability of the government to adequately address the root causes of the insurgency poses a significant challenge. Addressing the underlying socio-economic, political, and ideological factors that contribute to the rise of insurgency is essential for sustainable peace. Failure to tackle these root causes effectively prolongs the conflict and makes it difficult to achieve a lasting solution. Moreover, the unhindered flow of international financial and military support to the insurgency further aggravate the challenges (Onah & Aduku, 2020; Kinsey and Krieg, 2021; Tayimlong, 2021).

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Of the 384-questionnaire administered to assess the challenges in the government COIN effort against BH in Nigeria, 351 responded and returned accordingly. In contrast, 33 were not responded to or included in the estimation process. This questionnaire contained two sections. Section A asked about the respondent's background. At the same time, section B explores the challenges in the government COIN effort against BH in Nigeria. However, the information generated from the respondents was presented and analyzed using the SPSS software.

RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Table 1
Demographic information of Sample (N=351)

Items	Information	N	%	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	270	76.9	76.9	76.9
	Female	81	23.1	23.1	100.0
Age	18-27 years	105	29.9	29.9	29.9
	28-37 years	91	25.9	25.9	55.8
	38-47 years	87	24.8	24.8	80.6
	48-59 years	62	17.7	17.7	98.3
	60 years and above	6	1.7	1.7	100.0
Educational Level	No formal Education	5	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Primary education	30	8.5	8.5	10.0
	Secondary education	51	14.5	14.5	24.5
	Tertiary education	260	74.1	74.1	98.6
	Others	5	1.4	1.4	100.0
Socio-economic Status	Student	126	35.9	35.9	35.9
	Farmer	20	5.7	5.7	41.6
	Artisan	29	8.3	8.3	49.9
	Civil servant	18	5.1	5.1	55.0
	Public servant	158	45.0	45.0	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2023

From the survey, 351 respondents from different educational and occupational backgrounds responded to the questionnaire. The demographic information of the respondent is presented in Table 1. An absolute majority of the sample was Male (76.9%), with the majority of the respondents aged between 18-27 years (29.9%). Of the 351 respondents, 74.1% have a higher educational qualification and are predominantly Public servants (45.0%).

Table 2
What are the most significant obstacles to the COIN effort against the BH insurgency in Nigeria?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Corruption	231	65.8	65.8	65.8
	Underutilization of technology	46	13.1	13.1	78.9
	Non-trial of suspected BH members	32	9.1	9.1	88.0
	Human rights abuses	22	6.3	6.3	94.3
	Disproportionate use of force	20	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2023

In Table 2, it is observed that 65.8% of the respondents believed that corruption is the most significant obstacle to the COIN effort against the BH insurgency in Nigeria. This was followed by underutilization of technology, the non-trial of suspected BH members, human rights abuses, and disproportionate use of force, which constituted the lowest percentage at 5.7%.

Table 3
Do you agree that corruption significantly hampers the effectiveness of government COIN strategies in Nigeria?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	130	37.0	37.0	37.0
	Agree	165	47.0	47.0	84.0
	No opinion	21	6.0	6.0	90.0
	Disagree	21	6.0	6.0	96.0
	Strongly Disagree	14	4.0	4.0	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2023

This survey found that 84% of the respondents agreed that corruption hampers the effectiveness of government COIN strategies in Nigeria. On the other hand, 6% expressed disinterest in the notion, while 10% disagreed with it.

Table 4
Do government forces human rights abuses during COIN operations in Nigeria detrimental to the relations between the government and local communities?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	119	33.9	33.9	33.9
	Strongly agree	46	13.1	13.1	47.0
	No opinion	46	13.1	13.1	60.1
	Disagree	112	31.9	31.9	92.0
	Strongly disagree	28	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2023

In the above table, it is noted that most respondents agreed that human rights abuses committed by government forces during COIN operations in Nigeria are detrimental to the relations between the government and local communities. Specifically, 13% of the respondents had no opinion on the matter, while 39.9% disagreed with this viewpoint.

Table 5

Do you believe that the disproportionate use of force by government security forces in Nigeria negatively impacts the perception of the government's legitimacy among the population?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	102	29.1	29.1	29.1
	Strongly agree	109	31.1	31.1	60.1
	No opinion	53	15.1	15.1	75.2
	Disagree	63	17.9	17.9	93.2
	Strongly disagree	24	6.8	6.8	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2023

According to the survey conducted, it was found that 60.1% of the respondents agreed that the disproportionate use of force by government security forces in Nigeria harms the perception of the government's legitimacy among the population. On the other hand, 24.7% of the respondents disagreed with this viewpoint, while 15.1% remained neutral.

Table 6

Is the underutilization of technology in government COIN strategies in Nigeria hindering the effectiveness of intelligence collection, operational coordination, and overall success in countering insurgency?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	179	51.0	51.0	51.0
	strongly agree	102	29.1	29.1	80.1
	No opinion	8	2.3	2.3	82.3
	Disagree	28	8.0	8.0	90.3
	strongly agree	34	9.7	9.7	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2023

The above statistics illustrate that 80.1% of the respondents agreed that the underutilization of technology in government COIN strategies in Nigeria hinders the effectiveness of intelligence collection, operational coordination, and overall success in countering insurgency. Additionally, 8% of the respondents were undecided on the matter, while 8.8% disagreed with this viewpoint.

Table 7

Do you believe that the absence of fair trials and prosecution of insurgents contributes to glorifying insurgent activities?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	183	52.1	52.1	52.1
	Strongly agree	109	31.1	31.1	83.2
	No opinion	28	8.0	8.0	91.2
	Disagree	20	5.7	5.7	96.9
	Strongly agree	11	3.1	3.1	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2023

In Table 6, it is observed that 83.2% of the respondents believed that the absence of fair trials and prosecution of insurgents contributes to the glorification of insurgent activities. Meanwhile, 8.0% of the respondents remained neutral on this matter, while 8.8% disagreed with this impression.

Table 7
Do you believe there should be enhanced strategies to improve the effectiveness of the COIN effort?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	186	53.0	53.0	53.0
	Strongly agree	102	29.1	29.1	82.1
	No opinion	7	2.0	2.0	84.0
	Disagree	46	13.1	13.1	97.2
	Strongly disagree	10	2.8	2.8	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2023

In the table above, the survey revealed that 82.1% of the respondents believe there should be enhanced strategies to improve the effectiveness of the COIN effort. On the other hand, 15.9% of the respondents disagreed with this notion, and 2.0% remained undecided or had no opinion on the matter.

5. RESULT

The findings of the study, based on the survey conducted among the respondents, reveal a parallel view regarding the challenges in government COIN efforts in Nigeria and the need for enhanced strategies. Most respondents (84.0%) agreed that certain challenges hinder the effectiveness of government COIN efforts'. They identified corruption (65.8%) and underutilization of technology (13.1%) as the primary setbacks, followed by non-trial of suspected members (9.1%) human rights abuses (6.3%), and disproportionate use of force (5.7%). The misappropriation and diversion of resources and logistics for combating the insurgency, extortion of motorists, and diversion of humanitarian aid by soldiers have undermined the military's capacity to combat the insurgents effectively and prolonging the war. One prominent case involved the NSA revealed that funds amounting to \$2.2 billion and N643 billion intended for arms procurement in the fight against insurgency. The underutilization of military technology due to the lack of technical capabilities and inadequate personnel resources hinder the effective use of military technology, which impacts the operations' overall effectiveness. The military are technologically unequipped to surveillance, and gather intelligence to swiftly track the insurgent activities leaving their international financial, weaponry, training channels unconstrained. The absence of fair trials and prosecution of insurgents under the law undermines the effectiveness of the COIN strategy and contributes in glorifying the insurgent activities. Number of suspects arrested by the JTF are detained without trial. This has resulted in a lack of confidence among the population and a reluctance to cooperate or provide necessary support and intelligence. Human rights abuses has also exacerbated the war against the insurgency and deterred public support and undermining the military's access to valuable intelligence. For example, out of the 1,400 detainees in Maiduguri, Yola, and Damaturu, only 500 were recommended for trial, and ultimately, only 11 convictions were obtained. The According to a report by the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Program (NSRP), it was found that from 2010 to 2012, the COIN forces were

responsible for a higher number of civilian casualties compared to the BH insurgents. It was further discovered that Nigerian military forces have extra judicially executed more than 1,200 people; arbitrarily arrested at least 20,000 people, mostly young men, and boys; and committed countless acts of torture. This is normally arises from the disproportionate use of force tends to result in property destruction, human rights violations, and a loss of support from the general population. Consequently, the findings highlight the importance of addressing these issues to improve the effectiveness of COIN strategies in Nigeria.

THE IMPERATIVE FOR ENHANCED STRATEGIES

Recent concerns raised by the Borno State government, such as BH's continued control of Abadam and Guzamala local government areas, as well as the brazen attack on the Tukur Buratai Institute for War and Peace by ISWAP, further underscore the need for improvement and redesigning of the country's COIN strategy. The theoretical and empirical evidence supports this argument. Therefore, for a successful COIN operation, the following measures need to be adopted:

Corruption is endemic in Nigeria; it is said to have permeated all levels of the Nigerian public service. However, its impact is more devastating when allowed to persist in the security circle because no human activity can be possible without security. Many of the theater commanders were accused of diverting funds allocated for the troops to their accounts. Therefore, a prompt a public prosecution action should be applying of any public servant found to have embezzled COINfunds this will deter potential sleaze.

The highhandedness and disproportionate use of force, such as arbitrary arrest and search, detention without trial, restriction of movement, and attrition tactics that have diminished the population's support and cooperation, must be thoroughly reviewed. To effectively counter BH, the government must identify the sources of the group's funding, weapons, recruitments, and affiliations that persistently replenish the group. Above all, population-centric, community-based, and intelligence-driven approaches must be adequately supplemented.

Human rights abuses are tackled through an improved and transparent strategy that holds the military and the civilian joint task force accountable for their action: The activities of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) need to be reviewed in line with modern community policing principles to curb excesses and abuses.

On the non-trial of suspected members, justice delayed is said to have been justice denied. Failure of the Nigerian government to send suspected insurgents to court for possible prosecution has a double impact on society. In the first place, the victims' relatives are kept in suspense as to when justice will be done. On the other hand, the families of the suspected insurgents are also kept in the same scenario. In the end, the government's credibility is questioned regarding the sincerity of the state officials in dispensing justice. Some insurgents that escaped the Kuje prison in 2022 were largely believed by Nigerians to be deliberately allowed to go free by the government in exchange for the Abuja Train attack. Therefore a prosecution and execution of suspects and those found guilty. This will restore, to a large extent, the confidence of the citizenry as well as the international community in the Nigerian government's seriousness in bringing an end to the endemic insurgency

Thirdly the government must adopt a comprehensive grand strategy beyond kinetic and non-kinetic approaches to include a comprehensive policy framework to

address the root causes of the insurgency and its repercussions. This includes rehabilitating and reconstructing damaged infrastructure, reconciliation and compensation for aggrieved parties, deradicalizing surrendered insurgents, and relocating displaced persons to their respective communities.

The government needs to maximize modern technology, such as predictive analytics and unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), to survey, locate, eliminate, and overcome the terrorists' capabilities. This will help to effectively manage and prevent the influx of terrorists and the transnational and national trafficking of arms and weapons, which aid the group's operations across the Lake Chad Basin region.

In addition to utilizing modern technology, the Multinational Cooperation Joint Task Force (MCJTF) must be restructured, strengthened, funded, and equipped with modern facilities. This will promote more cooperation and intelligence sharing among the cooperating states, breaking the sect's global links and connections.

Inter-agency Cooperation: Lack of collaboration between the multiple agencies involved in the campaign against BH insurgents has hindered the state's successful COIN strategy. The agencies have worked to undermine and outdo each other. Therefore, a common framework must be provided that delineates the role and function of each agency in tactical and strategic operations. The spirit of policy cooperation, information sharing, and intelligence gathering and sharing must be fostered and considered in the operation and strategy.

The government must utilize maritime powers to complement its operations by establishing a naval base around the Baga and Lake Chad axis. This will further increase its capability and defensibility against insurgent arms smuggling, kidnapping, robbery, and attacks.

6. CONCLUSION

Since the emergence of the BH insurgency, the Nigerian government has implemented various COIN strategies, including offensive military operations and non-military approaches, to address the insurgency. However, the insurgents have persistently undermined state sovereignty, highlighting a significant gap in the COIN strategy. Therefore, this study aims to explore and assess the challenges in government COIN efforts in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for enhanced strategies. The study's theoretical section discusses corruption's role in procuring operational equipment, fund diversion, and compromise of intelligence information. Additionally, the study highlights the grave human rights abuses resulting from the disproportionate use of force, non-trial of suspected members, and underutilization of modern technology in counterinsurgency's tactical and operational aspects. These factors contribute to the ineffectiveness of the strategy. Therefore, the study recommends adopting an enhanced strategy to address the root causes and tackle the insurgency activities.

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