COUNTER- INSURGENCY APPROACHES AND INSURGENTS' RECIDIVISM IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

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Abstract

Insurgency has caused tremendous catastrophe in the Lake Chad Basin The military in conjunction with civilian operatives embarked on forays and made several arrests. The apprehension and detention of thousands of Boko Haram and Islamic State West African Province members, necessitated the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) effort in the Lake Chad Basin. This was adopted from an appraisal carried out by the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) between July, 2020 and March, 2021. The objectives of the study are: to conduct an evaluation of the counter-insurgency approaches, identify the causes of /catalyst for recidivism of insurgents and discuss the challenges of the counter-insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin. Hybridity Bout theory was adopted and primary data (quantitative and qualitative) was used. The study recommends that there must be a deliberate overhaul of the security governance in Nigeria. A multi-stake-holders approach should be adopted, feedback, monitoring and tracking mechanisms should be put in place. This helps to measure compliance or otherwise of the rehabilitated and reintegrated ex-combatants and evaluate the success or otherwise of the programme, a more robust hybrid approaches, kinetic and non-kinetic, multi-stakeholders' engagement in prosecuting the war against insurgency in Lake Chad Basin should be a policy and be implemented to the latter. It concluded that the devastation insurgency has caused in the Lake Chad Basin is immeasurable with human and infrastructural casualties. However, the resurgence in attacks by insurgents established the case of recidivism in the Lake Chad Basin.

Keywords: Counter Insurgency, Recidivism, Insurgent

Introduction

Insurgency over the years has taken its toll on the stability, peace and wellbeing of the Lake Chad Basin. The insurgents embarked on wild attacks, dislodging settlements, killing, kidnapping maiming, implanting/detonating Improvised Explosive Device (IED). These modes of operations result in huge number of deaths, destruction of private and public properties worth billions of Nigeria and create tremendous internal displacement of persons in the Lake Chad Basin. The group has been rated one of the top five deadliest terrorist groups in the world.

Owing to the huge attack in 2009, a counterinsurgency exercise was launched which involved Armed forces and para-military. This enables the counter insurgents a wider coverage of security agents to get involved. It helped in countering the insurgents with the help of Operation Flush in 2009, Operation Lafiya Dole to the several subsequent code- named operations; have recorded some level of success though with little attendant failures.

The devastation caused by insurgents in the Lake Chad Basin required some far-reaching actions by both states and non-state actors at the levels of national, sub-regional, and regional levels to counter the operational potency of insurgents to admit new members and launch attacks. At the national level, the state has been engaging in various administrative, legislative, inter-agency synergies, joint activities between local and international agencies to counter the activities of insurgents.

According to Section 217(c) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended requires the President to call upon the Armed Forces to be engaged in quailing insurrection or any other internal security shocks. As a result, the military had to muzzle Men, Machines and Money available to support internal security operations under the auspices of Operation MESA. The main objective of this arrangement is to generate a tranquil society which will guarantee the freedom of the people to carry out their daily activities. Operation Lafiya Dole was established to provide more impactful forays capable of decimating the insurgents in the Nigeria's Lake Chad Basin.

For a very long-time countering insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin had been by kinetic measures which was meant to degrade strongholds, consumable supply chains and frustrate their plans using cordon and search, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. In the process of military operations, apprehended or renounced insurgents are hardly detained. As a result, they become candidates for de-radicalization. This is designed to disabuse and dissuade them from violent activities and skewed belief of the spurious ideology. This gives way for re-integrating them into the society. However, incarceration has proven to be significant to de-radicalization processes.

Nigeria established and inaugurated The Operation Safe Corridors (OSC) as its de-radicalization programme. The objective was to receive willing repentant Boko Haram extremists. The established OSC came into being, having been aware that defeating Boko Haram would be a herculean task using Kinetic approach. The programme, aside de-radicalizing the

repentant insurgents and subsequently reintegrating them into the society/ communities, they are to access de-radicalization exercises, engage in civic programmes, and undertake skill acquisition in order to be valuable citizens of their communities. The establishment of OSC in 2016(de-radicalization, rehabilitation, and reintegration, DRR) was as a result of the successes of the "soft power" approach for counterterrorism used in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan, Indonesia, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.

The strategies have proved being enmeshed in pervasive shortcomings. This made the large population to be displaced with attendant consequences of social dislocation, loss of livelihood and food insecurity. This is suggestive of the fact that DRR strategies are ineffectual enough to counter insurgency in the North East Nigeria.

The government's adopted strategies to curb insurgency activities in north-eastern Nigeria has not yielded tangible results. Rather, the approaches have birthed a new generation of radicalized youths and the case of recidivism is rife as those termed to have been de-radicalized have gone back to status quo.

The approaches of Soft and Hard Power/Kinetic and Non-Kinetic remain portend tools in the hands of the Nigerian State. The use of military forays, De-radicalization programme, Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration simultaneously become non optional counterinsurgency measure in the Lake Chad Basin. Fighting ideological/extremism war with the employment of military foray only can result to backlash. However, the non-state actors like the Christian Religious Institutions and Islamic Religious Institution, Civil Society Organizations have been contributing their quota to countering insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin.

The activities of BH are catastrophic (nationally and sub-regionally). A large number of deaths, destruction of property, kidnapping, maiming and other forms of atrocious acts are routinely committed.

A more robust counter insurgency measure had to be put in place. The counter insurgents have made frantic efforts to change the trends. The necessities for a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) strategy were harped but federal government's efforts were not intense. Some State governments made efforts in setting up minor rehabilitation scheme for middle class fighters, not too hardened women and children previously associated with Boko Haram. The program lacks efficiency as it is not wholly transparent, and the standard the military uses for screening detainees are not clear. This has made thousands of suspects to remain in military detention without trial or charge.

Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) as a soft counterinsurgency approach, is saddled with de-radicalization programmes in Nigeria's counterinsurgency campaign against terror cells of BH and ISWAP, it targets de-radicalizing the behaviour of those undergoing de-radicalisation programmes. Observations have shown that

majority of those undergoing the programmes are majorly those taken up during military raids. The narrowness of the OSC could be seen in the gap that exists between the military and the communities to host the de-radicalised "client". Such narrowness also transmits the inability of OSC to entice combatants to voluntarily defect. The success ratio of the OSC could be hampered by its lack of inclusion of other security agencies particularly paramilitary engagement, flawed implementation, and vague reintegration strategies amongst other challenges (Obatoyinbo, Zamani, Adedokun & Onibiyo,2023). Another albatross of the OSC, is, the inability of the programme to state precisely the criteria used for categorizing or classifying "low-risk" versus "high-risk," individuals. This places uncertainty in the minds of potentials repentant Boko Haram members as to whether they would be classified for rehabilitation or considered high risk and incarcerated. There are cases of human rights abuses where the military are accused of indiscriminate arrest of community dwellers in places suspected to inhabit Boko Haram fighters. This further creates a gulf between the communities and the military.

The ex-insurgent who are reintegrated in their communities after undergoing OSC's exercise, the communities get frightened. With the palpable position that the majority of graduates of OSC are coerced into Boko Haram and got involved lightly in the violence, the DDRR is made simpler. Community acceptance becomes difficult as it casts a shadow on the success of the programme. Violent extremism risk assessment analysis on the possibility of relapse appears not efficacious hence the case of recidivism. The counter insurgent seemed to understanding the insurgent wrongly and so applying wrong strategy. Understanding **Salafism as an apocalyptic ideology gives a way forward.**

Objectives of the Study

i. To conduct an evaluation of the counter-insurgency approaches in the Lake Chad Basin.

ii. To identify the causes of /catalyst for recidivism of insurgents in the Lake Chad Basin.

iii. To discuss the challenges of the counter-insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin.

iv. To proffer far reaching recommendations that can mitigate insurgents' recidivism in the Lake Chad Basin

Conceptual Discourse

Counter Insurgency

U.S. Government (2009) defines COIN as comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency while addressing its root causes. According to Scott (n.d.), counterinsurgency is an integrated set of political, economic, social and security measures intended to end and prevent reoccurrence of armed violence, create and maintain stable political, economic and social structures, and resolve the underlying causes of an insurgency in order to establish and sustain the conditions necessary for lasting stability.

However, COIN is a multi-stakeholder effort with the use of military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civil society actions carried out to fight insurgency.

Recidivism

It is an act by an offender who fails to meet up expectation of the people in the society and fails to stay out of trouble as he or she keeps relapsing into infractions. It is a case of reoccurrence of bad act or behaviour.

The recidivist is perceived as being a person who is not rehabilitated but who falls back, or relapses into former behaviour patterns by habitually committing more crime (Maltz, 2001, p.54).

Recidivism is an act of being a repetitive or pathological offender and it is putting up a pro-criminal lifestyle. Recidivist is a person who continuously commits criminal acts after conviction.

Theoretical Framework

Hybridity Bout

The overcoming of asymmetric warfare cannot be an easy win. Fighting ideologically motivated insurgency leaves a daunting task to be carried out by the Counter-insurgents. The treatise on Hybridity(binary) Bout presupposes the usage of Armed forces and the Civil Society, and Kinetic and Non-kinetic Approaches. The two- pronged approaches engage the functionaries in the society. What remains significant in the fight against insurgency is allowing all and sundry to be part of the bout. Multi Stakeholder and Multi-level on one hand, Armed forces and Civil Society on the other hand. The exclusion of one stakeholder will reduce the fecundity of the bout. The stakeholders from the locality must be vetted. They must pass integrity test as there is the chance to engage interest parties or sympathizers of insurgents in counter insurgency. Leakages of intelligence and strategy come from within the troops (Joint Task Force)-insider abuse. The following are necessary in Hybridity Bout:

i. Kinetic- using of fire power to subdue and obliterate the enemy is significant. The instrumentality of Air bombardment should be utilised. Leveraging reconnaissance, drone surveillance and signal intelligence (SIGINT).

ii. Non-kinetic- Wining Hearts and Minds. Engagement with the locals must be incentivized to allow for volunteering useful information for counter insurgency.

iii. All un-attacked towns and still standing must be probed for their exclusion from attack by the insurgents. Communities not attacked can be owing to oath of allegiance to insurgents.

iv. The existing illicit economy created- over invoicing, ghost soldiers' payroll, war consumables, go -in-between and food fraud, are capable of protracting the insecurity.

v. Exclude interest parties in the theatre of war, especially soldiers and civilian operatives who are indigenous to that area. They're most likely not going to fight their own but to scuttle gains in counter insurgency.

vi. Demobilization, Disarmament, Rehabilitation and Reintegration cannot reform ideologically imbibed members. So, amnesty cannot be an option but justice.

vii. The ex-combatants are not fit for engagement in State Armed Group.

viii. Community leaders must be called to account. Insurgents live in communities and their identities are known but concealed from counter insurgents.

ix. Identifying and blocking insurgency funding channels. This frustrates the replenishment of resources for operations. This means the breather is taken off and de-oxygenated.

x. Adjudication remains an efficacious mechanism to be employed in counter insurgency; to prosecute non state armed group members and infiltrators. Complicity (insider abuse) must be punished according to extant laws.

Dealing with the insurgency like the kind in the Lake Chad Basin requires combined efforts involving multi-stakeholders and multi-level governance (Local, State and National and Regional Levels). The Armed Forces and the Civil Society joint efforts.

Community leaders (religious, women, youth and traditional) must be called to account. Insurgents feed on the concealment of their identity by community members. Civilian Joint Task Force must be vetted for integrity for them to be included in operations.

Literature Review

State Actor and Counter Insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin

Administrative Mechanisms

The administrative mechanisms used by the state included: the multi-track approach, Presidential Committee on the North-East Initiative and Operation Safe Corridor. Nigeria became part of the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa following understanding the fact that terrorism has funding from within and outside the country.

At the National Assembly (legislative level), the 2011 Terrorism (Prevention) Act was passed. It also increased the capacity of institution to prosecute terror-related activities. It further strengthened the Money Laundering Prohibition Act of 2011 which influenced the establishment of the National Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU).

Military Operations

Military Operations: Nigeria Army Component

Aligned Communication and Information Management

This is the leveraging of might of the media and psychological exercises in the period of military operations. These operations are meant to neutralize and infiltrate enemies and potential foes. The Nigerian Army has been embarking on a deliberate and conscientious media task that are responsive and result oriented.

Media Campaign Centre

There has been an established Media Campaign Centre. The launching of Operation Lafiya Dole radio station (Frequency Modulation) helped in the outreach, especially that programmes are aired in English, Kanuri, Hausa and other widely spoken languages within the precincts. This has been instrumental in winning 'Hearts and Minds' of the community members and potential insurgents.

The use of Psychological Operations: The military uses the Psychological Operations. This is centred in creating the necessary buy-in by a target population to accept efforts made by government, its policies and programmes that will be beneficial to them. It is a form of dissemination of information meant to influence their motives, emotions and perceptions in order to create that currency of activities of government.

Utilization of Cyber Operations: The insurgents use the resources of internet, phones, computer and other wireless means of communication to gather intelligence for the prosecution of their deadly activities. The military have to use same to identify their location and incapacitate or freeze their fluid communication. This has helped in capturing key insurgents' kingpins.

Exploitation of Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) and Human Intelligence (HUMINT): Monitoring of groups' conversations on social media platforms using the instrument of lawful interception. HUMINT is expressed through covert and infiltration operations. Using pseudo personality, appearances and disguising to be part of them.

Cordon and Search: These are operations carried out by Nigeria Police. This is conducted following intelligence reports involving insurgent members in specific locations. The operations have led to successes in many instances. It leverages the use of intelligence instruments.

Military Operations: Nigeria Air Force Component

Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)

Intelligence gathering with the use of remote sensing gadgets to pick images of the activities of adversaries or insurgents. This gathers information on their hideouts, sanctuaries and swatches arrogated to themselves as territories. Aerial surveillance and reconnaissance remain critical tools in air power. It is what limits the operations of the insurgents as they do not have access to acquiring aircrafts. It gives the Air Force veritable edge over the insurgents whose fight is strictly on the ground.

Foray by Aerial Bombardments (AB)

With the capacity of Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) used by Nigerian Air Force (NAF), the fire power of the Nigerian military combat readiness and bombardment of insurgents is enacted. As ISR is being utilized, bombardment takes place simultaneously. NAF has recorded tremendous gains in its foray.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Boko Haram

Disarming civilian populations is one of the counter insurgency instruments that the state uses. Disarmament, Demobilzation and Re-integration (DDR) has been employed by state where the insurgents were disarmed by coercive means or voluntary and taken to DDR Centre in Gombe state.

De-Radicalization

One of the factors that is sustaining the existence and recruitment of insurgents in the Lake Chad Basin is indoctrination of unsuspecting youth, brainwashed and swayed to believe misinterpretation of the Islamic injunctions. This act keeps the turnover of the number of the insurgents to revolve. The resurgence being experienced in the LCB lays credence to this factor.

Sub-Regional and Regional Mechanisms

The regional efforts and mechanism have been in form of partnership as follows:

Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP)' and the Islamic Military Alliance (IMA)

Nigeria initiates frantic engagement of both states and non-state actors in foreign nations to counter Boko Haram strategies of brainwashing, propaganda and ideologies used to recruit members.

The Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery, and Resilience (RSSRR).

This program was launched in the locations with highest preponderance of activities of the insurgents by the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The program was supported by the African Union, United Nations, and other non-state actors. The program provides a multilayered mechanism which makes state and non-governmental organization to further strengthen the institutional capacity to counter insurgency within its precincts.

There has been collaboration of nations of the Lake Chad Basin Commission under the auspices of MNJTF has achieved tremendous gains. The re-capturing of Baga is one amongst many.

Non-State Actors and Counter Insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin

Faith Based Organizations (Muslim and Christian), Coalition of Civil Societies, Religious clerics utilize their knowledge of the true doctrinal principles to dissuade many from the belief of Boko Haram.

There is an initiative meant to strengthen the Coping Capacity, Resilience and Re-integration of Women and Children. Propagate the tenet of peacebuilding in areas affected by insurgency. Areas of synergy between neighbourhood watch/vigilantes and security agents are promoted by the non-state actors.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided the rural dwellers' needs in order to counter the strategy of Boko Haram that has been gaining support of local community by providing them with wells, farms inputs as the focus their attacks on state assets. Other community need especially to those most at risk or susceptible to recruitment by Boko Haram was addressed.

The Neem Foundation synergy is a United Nations funded scheme named "Yellow Ribbon." This aims to reintegrate male and young adults who would have been indoctrinated or forced by Islamist militant leaders, and therefore pledging allegiance to the syndicate (Salihu, 2015).

The efficacy of Counter Insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin

Close to 2015 general elections in Nigeria, a reinforced military offensive began to make headway against the group. After repeated delays, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNTJF), a loose coalition of troops from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria seized back most of the territory previously held by Boko Haram.

Counterinsurgency operations triggered new waves of displacement as civilians were pushed from the countryside into military-controlled camps in urban centers (International Peace Institute,2010). The coalition which involved neighboring nations expanded the military operations. The assumption of office in 2015 of Buhari as President re-enacted working relations between the Nigeria and Western world. This influenced the issuance of assistance and sale of fighter aircrafts.

The Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration program targets ex-combatants or associates classified as qualified for being reintegrated. The national programs are:

A. Operation Safe Corridor DDRR program for low-risk men who have renounced Violent Extremism Organization. This is in Gombe State.

B. Bulumkutu Centre (for women and children) situated in Maiduguri, Borno State.

C. Shokari Centre (for men) situated in Maiduguri, Borno State.

The catalyst for Recidivism in Lake Chad Basin

The Lack of Monitoring of Worship Centres. Some cleric preaches inciting messages and spreading religious indoctrinatory messages in mosques, open space and prisons. The lack of monitoring religious messages allows those gullible people swayed and misguided.

The insurgents have always tried to provide some essentials of living. With the BH-ISWAP having the initiative to win over the locals by ditching out some amenities and materials like water, farm inputs and pittance, then it sustains the concealment of insurgents' identities by the locals in a firm manner.

Stigmatization of ex-combatant is an element that can reverse them to former status. Stigmatization affects ex-combatants adversely. It also robs on their kith and kin. In this case in order to come and suffer stigmatization, some would rather remain being insurgents.

The non-usage of the instrument of infiltration by counter insurgents in camps and communities where the insurgents reside while the insurgents infiltrate the circle of both state and state actors counter insurgent.

The 'error'/'deliberate' involvement of interest parties in state actors and MJTF in

counter insurgency. The several failures of intelligence that result in the overrunning of both military camps and ambushes suggest the existence of insider abuse leaking the information to the enemy.

Ungoverned/Misgoverned Spaces the large expanse of area where governance and government are absent enables the insurgents to create swatches of enclaves and sanctuaries. The communities in the hinterland are misgovernment as the presence of government is only felt during electioneering campaigns. This leaves the community dwellers to be susceptible

The Challenges of COIN in the Lake Chad Basin

iLate Assistance of Donor Agency

Expertise is needed in countering insurgency as well financial assistance. Insurgency attacks come spontaneously. As a result, Donor Agencies are expected to be responsive with such calls for support.

Insurgents' Built Bonding with the Community Members

The insurgents have succeeded in establishing friendly and mutually beneficial relationship with the community dwellers. The locals are assured of safety and in reciprocation, they conceal the insurgents' identity. The provision of social amenities, food and farm inputs further strengthens such bond.

The Fluid Recruitment of Boko Haram Members

It takes the insurgents little efforts to recruit. With the issuance of pittance, provision of daily need and indoctrination they join in the fray.

Methodology

The inquiry employed descriptive survey design with the use of primary (quantitative and qualitative) data collection of questionnaire and interview. The researcher used structured interviews towards gathering information from respondents and distribution of questionnaire to respondents. The respondents interviewed were Security Agents, Community Leaders, Religious Leaders and Civil Society Organizations' Practitioners.

The study adopted purposive sampling technique (non-probability sampling method) which provided the researcher the direct and critical choice of sampled population hence the choice of the respondents.

Two Hundred (250) Questionnaires were distributed across Gombe, Yobe and Borno states, and Abuja, Federal Capital Territory. 213 questionnaires were retrieved and 200 was decided to be used for the inquiry. Simple percentage/statistical table was used to present the data collected and from where analysis was made. Interview was conducted on 8 persons (Abuja, Gombe, Yobe and Borno with 2 each).

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Questionnaire:

Table 1: Evaluation of the counter-insurgency approaches in the Lake Chad Basin

Evaluation of the counter-insurgency approaches in the Lake Chad Basin	Strongly Disagree (SA)		Disagree (A)		Undecided (UD)		Agree (D)		Strongly Agree (SD)		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	Total	%
Operation Safe Corridors (OSC) no kinetic approach as a counterinsurgency approach is is eff	100	50	68	34	8	4	14	7	10	5	200	100
Counter Insurgents Intelligence Gathering is strong	86	43	36	18	2	1	54	27	22	11	200	100
Insurgents have strong ability to infiltrate troops organization	58	29	50	25	0	0	52	26	40	20	200	100
Counter-Insurgency has won Hearts and Minds of Community dwellers	112	56	52	26	0	0	24	12	12	6	200	100
Can a hybrid counter-insurgency be state and non-state actors(non-kineti efficacious	36	18	32	16	2	1	58	29	72	36	200	100
Kinetic approach-military foray/raic more instrumental in counter insurg in Lake Chad Basin	68	34	32	16	0	0	42	21	58	29	200	100

Source: Survey 2025

Table 1: Evaluation of the counter-insurgency approaches in the Lake Chad Basin

Operation Safe Corridors (OSC) non-kinetic approach as a soft counterinsurgency approach is effective: SD 100 respondents which accounts for 50%, D with 68 respondents which accounts for 34%. The UD 8 frequency accounts for 4%. A, 14 frequencies which accounts for 7% while SA 10 accounts for 5%. It presupposes that OSC no-kinetic approach is not effective.

Counter Insurgents Intelligence Gathering is effective: SD 86 respondents which accounts for 43%, D with 36

respondents which accounts for 18%. The UD 2 frequency accounts for 1%. A, 54 frequencies which accounts for 27% while SA 22 accounts for 11%. COIN intelligence gathering is not wholly effective going by score.

Insurgents have strong ability to infiltrate troops organization: SD 58 respondents which accounts for 29%, D with 50 respondents which accounts for 25%. The UD 0 frequency accounts for 0%. A, 52 frequencies which accounts for 26% while SA 40 accounts for 20%. The result shows a secret incursion into the counter-insurgents group. This is where leakages of troops decisions and movements are leaked.

Counter-Insurgency has won Hearts and Minds of Community dwellers: SD 112 respondents which accounts for 56%, D with 52 respondents which accounts for 26%. The UD 0 frequency accounts for 0%. A, 24 frequencies which accounts for 12% while SA 12 accounts for 6%. This shows that wining hearts and minds of community has ot been possible.

Can a hybrid counter-insurgency between state and non-state actors(non-kinetic) be efficacious: SD 36 respondents which accounts for 18%, D with 32 respondents which accounts for 16%. The UD 2 frequency accounts for 1%. A, 58 frequencies which accounts for 29% while SA 72 accounts for 36%. Hybridity in counter insurgency produces results.

Kinetic approach-military foray/raid is more instrumental in counter insurgency in Lake Chad Basin: SD 68 respondents which accounts for 34%, D with 32 respondents which accounts for 16%. The UD 0 frequency accounts for 0%. A, 42 frequencies which accounts for 21% while SA 58 accounts for 29%. It depicts that military foray can be effective but not fully.

Table 2: The causes of /catalyst for recidivism of insurgents in the Lake Chad Basin.

The causes of /catalyst for recidivism of insurgents in the Lake Chad Basin.	Strongly Disagree (SA)		Disagree (A)		Undecided (UD)		Agree (D)		Strongly Agree (SD)		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	Total	%
The lack of monitoring/regulation of public preaching allows for spreading inciting religious indoctrinatory messages.	14	7	26	13	2	1	48	24	110	55	200	100
Stigmatization is an element that can reverse the ex-combatant to former status.	140	70	36	18	2	1	22	11	0	0	200	100

Availability of funding insurgency is a critical facilitating factor for relapse of insurgents after rehabilitation and re-integration.	23	11.5	16	8	1	0.5	58	29	102	51	200	100
Lack of prosecution of insurgen makes for the festering of insur	28	14	16	8	8	4	50	25	98	49	200	100
Politicizing the Demobilization, Disarmament, Rehabilitation and Reintegration retards desired result.	42	21	20	10	2	1	44	22	92	46	200	100

Source: Field Survey 2025

Table 2: The causes of /catalyst for recidivism of insurgents in the Lake Chad Basin.

The lack of monitoring/regulation of public preaching allows for spreading inciting religious indoctrinatory messages: SD 110 respondents which accounts for 55%, D with 48 respondents which accounts for 24%. The UD 2 frequency accounts for 1%. A, 26 frequencies which accounts for 13% while SA 14 accounts for 7%. The in ability of concerned authorities to censor inciting and indoctrinatory laden preaching, give leverages to belief insurgents hold and innocents people have.

Stigmatization is an element that can reverse the ex-combatant to former status: SD 140 respondents which accounts for 70%, D with 36 respondents which accounts for 18%. The UD 2 frequency accounts for 1%. A, 22 frequencies which accounts for 11% while SA 0 accounts for 0%. That means the former insurgents would prefer to go back to status quo ante than to suffer stigmatization.

Availability of funding insurgency is a critical facilitating factor for relapse of insurgents after rehabilitation and re-integration:

SD 23 respondents which accounts for 11.5%, D with 16 respondents which accounts for 8%. The UD 1 frequency accounts for 0.5%. A, 58 frequencies which accounts for 29% while SA 102 accounts for 51%. It depicts that this is germane as inflow of funds oxygenate insurgents' operation and creating avenue for ex-combatants to return to insurgency operations.

Lack of prosecution of insurgents make for the festering of insurgency

SD 28 respondents which accounts for 14%, D with 16 respondents which accounts for 8%. The UD 8 frequency accounts for 4%. A, 50 frequencies which accounts for 25% while SA 98 accounts for

49%. This shows that justice if not served on insurgents they are not deterred.

Politicizing the Demobilization, Disarmament, Rehabilitation and Reintegration retards desired result.

SD 42 respondents which accounts for 21%, D with 20 respondents which accounts for 10%. The UD 2 frequency accounts for 1%. A, 44 frequencies which accounts for 22% while SA 92 accounts for 46%. This a reflection of the fact that politics is a factor in the DDRR program.

Table 3: The challenges of the counter-insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin.

The challenges of the counter-insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin.	Very Great Extent	Great Extent	Low Extent	Neutral	Not at All
The Fluid Recruitment of insurgents' member	✓				
Insider Abuse	✓				
Politicization of Counter Insurgency	✓				
Community Concealment of Insurgents' Identity		✓			
Lack of Prosecution of Insurgents	✓	-			
Built Bonding between the insurgents and the Community Members	✓				

Source: Field Survey 2025

The Fluid Recruitment of insurgents' members: Very Great Extent presupposes that recruitment of insurgents is done effortlessly.

Insider Abuse: Very Great Extent show that compromises within the Counter insurgents

Politicization of Counter Insurgency: Very Great Extent shows that vested interest where funds are mismanaged, faceless repentant insurgents, lack of categorization insurgents and proper profiling.

Community Concealment of Insurgents' Identity: Great Extent

It indicates that communities shield the insurgents.

Lack of Prosecution of Insurgents: Very Great Extent

Insurgents have not been prosecuted.

Built Bonding between the insurgents and the Community Members: The community dwellers have built bonds via the provision of food items and cash. They also use threats of killing those who do not accept their violent acts.

Interviews

i. What is your evaluation of the counter-insurgency approaches in the Lake Chad Basin?

The counter insurgency has been on for years now and little has been achieved hence the continues violence by the non-state armed group (whether Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) or Boko Haram). Experiences and happenstances have shown that the insurgents are yet emboldened. The use of kinetic and non-kinetic leave observer to assess their efficacy. The kinetic approach shows a lack of political capital to prosecute the war. With the fire power of aerial assault by the Airforce little has been gained as the insurgents still run riots. Wining the hearts and minds of both locals to work covertly with the counter insurgents, has been difficult. There appears to be pledging of loyalty to the insurgents than the nation and the security agents.

It has been confirmed that some village dwellers offer themselves to be members of the insurgent group for assurance of safety. Most villages at the fringes of urban and semi-urban areas are a medley of insurgents and locals who conceal insurgents' identity.

ii. What are the causes of /catalyst for recidivism of insurgents in the Lake Chad Basin?

War against violent extremism can't be an easy win but appreciable mileage in terms of curtailing the insurgents' excesses can be attained. The state is the first enemy of the insurgents. Any other is secondary. So, the state must deploy all its might and sophisticated military assets to combat the terrorists.

The repentant boko haram and ISWAP who were rehabilitated and re-integrated by Operation Safe Corridors, have rejoined the combatants still owing to lack of proper tracking mechanism to ascertain retention of status quo or relapse.

Some feign repentance and that was why it was easy to go back to violence. The drive of ideology is a mindset issue just as identity cannot be detached from one.

With the kidnap for ransom, funding from conflict entrepreneurs, alliances with international terrorists' groups, the command influence on their members anywhere they are.

iii. Is the Rehabilitation carried out thoroughly to stop them from rejoining the insurgents?

The programme is well thought out but politicized. A programme that is enclosed and not made open for public scrutiny has integrity deficit. The profiling process of who were truly repentant cast doubt on the competences of the operators. The medleying of those who were caught during cross fire, raid and those who abdicated themselves willingly caused cross fertilization and influence of ideology. The

camp had no categorization of 'repentant' insurgents, so that each category will be fielded on a peculiar framework of rehabilitation. The adoption of 'one cap fits all' became a backlash on expected and desired outcome.

Measuring tools for reversing ideologically driven behaviour and tendencies can only be left to fate but cannot be subjected to scientific methodology. The activities of insurgents are ideologically and socio-economically laced and in dealing with this a well-crafted measuring tool must be employed so that those who exhibit tendencies for relapse would be made to face adjudication. This was absent as the number of people that were brought, so was the number that were set out of the rehabilitation camp.

iv. What are the underlined challenges of the counter-insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin?

The approaches to the counter insurgency in Nigeria are largely kinetic. That limits community engagement with the state to win hearts and Minds.

Assurance of safety for infiltration of the military personnel in communities suspected to be harbouring insurgents. The entry of undercover operatives is sometimes not completely covert hence one is an outsider. It is easily known that the stranger who is an operative there must be working for the state and so becomes vulnerable to leakages of his status and assignment in the community.

The loyalty of the locals to the insurgents presents a serious challenge to COIN in the Nigeria's Lake Chad Basin. The insurgents provide stipends, food items and freely engages in indoctrination and subsequent recruitment. When the state is far from the people and the there is no distance between the insurgents and the people, the locals' loyalty is rendered to insurgents. This is the situation in most communities that have not been overrun by Boko Haram/ISWAP. In these communities they have collaborators, informants, Spies and sympathizers.

Established illicit economy in COIN. The issue of logistics contracts over-invoicing, ghost soldier payroll, diversion of operational funds, arms and ammunition theft and resale are norms. This makes for the protractedness of the war.

v. Recommend ways or models that can mitigate insurgents' recidivism in the Lake Chad Basin.

There must be a deliberate overhaul of the security governance in Nigeria. A multi-stake-holders approach should be adopted. This is where more drastic decision will be taken to fiercely engage the violent extremists.

Labelling, Blaming, Naming and Shaming should be a strategic tool to be used. The ethnic group that is predominantly found to engage in insurgency be labelled, named, shamed and blamed. This will make their elites, community leaders and other stakeholders to throw their weight on the fight against bestialism. The mentioning of Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, Krahn, Gio, Mano, and Mandingo in Liberia was not to stereotype or vilify Hutu in the Genocide in Rwanda and Krahn ethnic group in Liberia but to point out the actual ethnic group involved in the misdeeds. In this clime it is termed criminalization of ethnic group.

It is an aberration to engage an interest party in COIN. Nigeria is a nation where its citizens cannot go against those who are in the same religion and ethnic group. Sabotage cannot be an enigma in COIN when locals with sympathy for insurgents are engaged to fight insurgents.

The rehabilitation of the 'repentant' insurgents has proven that it has failed as that has not reduced the intensity of the violence. Villages are being overrun, abductions and summary execution are taking place, ambushes and destruction of military camps with experienced scores of deaths that keep occurring. Therefore, adjudication should be employed. Where insurgents are arrested, they should face prosecution according to extant provision in the National Counter Terrorism Act.

vi. Are the repentant Boko Haram eligible for enlistment into Nigerian security agencies?

They are not fit to be part of the state security actors. Their allegiance can still be in doubt. It takes a lot reverse extremism as the mind is brainwashed. Should the repentant boko haram be enlisted into Nigerian security service, it amounts to recycling of terrorism or introduction of terrorists into Nigeria security architecture. This can only result in infiltration of counter insurgent.

Lack of proper scrutiny of intakes into state security agencies from the axis fraught with terrorism, can create an inroad into erroneous recruitment of terrorist into mainstream security.

vii. Were self-reintegrated insurgents identified and profiled as rehabilitated insurgents?

Some insurgents disguised as part of the rehabilitated insurgents and are living the community. It is discovered. The lack of accompaniment of the rehabilitated insurgents to their former places of residence distorts records and tracking. Some did not go back to their former destination rather re-join the group of fighters.

viii. Is there a monitoring and feed-back mechanism of rehabilitated insurgents?

This is no monitoring mechanism to ascertain compliance by the rehabilitated insurgents. Feedback and tracking are very important evaluating the success or otherwise of the programme. This has gone to show that it is not working. This situation can only birth relapse into non state armed combatant.

Discussion of Findings

The findings presuppose that OSC non-kinetic approach is not effective. With the resurgence of violence by the Boko Haram, it relates the kind of shortfalls in the DDRR programme. If over 3,000 were, as recorded, rehabilitated and actually repented, it means reducing the activities of the insurgents to the barest minimum.

The study finds that COIN intelligence gathering is not wholly effective. The various failures of intelligence have reduced the gains of COIN. Breaking the circles of community dwellers to avail information result in backlash most times.

The rural dwellers fear being fingered as the revealer of their identity as the penalty for anyone caught standing as an informant to the Counter Insurgents, is death.

The study discovers that there's a secret incursion into the counter-insurgents group. This is where leakages of troops decisions and movements are leaked. A case of insider abuse and compromise. Most failed foray are attributed to counter-intelligence and leakages of classified information. This has caused a lot of ambushes launched on Counter insurgents' troops.

The investigation reveals that wining hearts and minds of community has not been successful. Winning 'hearts and minds' is critical in any form of COIN. To succeed in counter insurgency, getting the cooperation, understanding and collaborative participation of communities' dwellers is the gateway to successful COIN. It provides the counter insurgents with hands on happenings in and around the communities.

This depicts that Hybridity in counter insurgency produces results. Using soft and hard power are portend to successful COIN. With the involvement of community leaders, NGOs and the military,

It depicts that military foray can be effective but not fully. Therefore, Joint fight against insurgency most preferred as all and sundry is involved bringing expertise to bear.

The study finds out that the non-monitoring preacher who preach inciting and indoctrinatory laden messages, give leverages to belief insurgents hold and innocent people have.

That the former insurgents would prefer to go back to status quo ante than to suffer stigmatization. The insurgents try as much as possible to conceal their identity. Here is a situation where those who underwent DDRR are expected to reintegrate into their former communities. That label of ex-insurgent/rehabilitated insurgent is held in peoples' mind on their status as former Boko Haram. Relating with them is a difficult thing to some rural dwellers. So, they would rather ignore living in former communities.

The study finds out that the availability of funds oxygenates insurgents' operation and creating avenue for ex-combatants to return to insurgency operations. The insurgents have an un-interrupted flow/channels of logistics and funds supply. The mechanism has been the pillar that festers their operation.

Thie study offers that when those committing violence on people must be prosecuted. Justice must be served on insurgents so as to deter them from further committal of violence.

It is found out that the DDRR program is politicised. The lack of thoroughness in the processes of the programme. Vested financial interest over shadow pursuit for excellence in delivering the goals of the programme.

The interrogation finds out that there are compromises and betrayal within the Counter insurgents. Such has caused the counter insurgents colossal damage of loss of lives, military hardware and disrupts operations.

The case of vested interest where funds used do not commensurate with the outcome of the programme. faceless repentant insurgents, lack of categorization insurgents and proper profiling reduced the fecundity of the programme as it appears a one- off exercise.

The study finds out that when those who commit violence are not punished, the violence continues.

The study finds out that the community dwellers have built bonding via the provision of food items and cash. They also use threats of killing those who do not accept their cause/ acts.

Interviews

The study reveals that counter insurgency has been on for years now and little has been achieved hence the continues violence by the non-state armed group (whether Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) or Boko Haram). Experiences and happenstances have shown that the insurgents are yet emboldened. The kinetic approach shows a lack of political capital to prosecute the war. With the fire power of aerial assault by the Airforce little has been gained as the insurgents still run riots. Wining the hearts and minds of both locals to work covertly with the counter insurgents, has been difficult. There appears to be pledging of loyalty to the insurgents than the nation and the security agents.

Some village dwellers offer themselves to be members of the insurgent group for assurance of safety and thereby concealing insurgents' identity.

War against violent extremism (religious ideologically driven non-state armed group) can't be an easy win but appreciable mileage in terms of curtailing the insurgents' excesses can be attained.

The repentant boko haram and ISWAP who were rehabilitated and re-integrated by Operation Safe Corridors, have rejoined the combatants still owing to lack of proper tracking and monitoring mechanism to ascertain retention of status quo or relapse.

With the kidnap for ransom, funding from conflict entrepreneurs, alliances with international terrorists' groups, the command influence on their members anywhere they are.

The study finds out that the programme was well thought out but politicized. A programme that is enclosed and not made open for public scrutiny, has integrity deficit. The profiling process of who were truly repentant cast doubt on the competences of the operators. The medleying of those who were caught during cross fire, intelligence, raid and those who abdicated themselves willingly caused cross fertilization and influence of ideology. The camp had no categorization of 'repentant' insurgents, so that each category will be fielded on a peculiar framework of rehabilitation. The adoption of 'one cap fits all' became a backlash on expected and desired outcome.

The study discovers that the measuring tools for reversing ideologically driven behaviour and tendencies was only left to fate but not subjected to scientific methodology. The activities of insurgents are ideologically and socio-economically

laced and in dealing with this, a well-crafted measuring tool must be employed so that those who exhibit tendencies for relapse would be made to face adjudication. This was absent as the number of people that were brought, so was the number that were set out of the rehabilitation camp.

The approaches to the counter insurgency in Nigeria are largely kinetic. That limits community engagement with the state to win hearts and Minds.

It is found out that the loyalty of the locals to the insurgents presents a serious challenge to COIN in the Nigeria's Lake Chad Basin. The insurgents provide stipends, food items and freely engages in indoctrination and subsequent recruitment. When the state is far from the people and there is no distance between the insurgents and the people, the locals' loyalty is rendered to insurgents. This is the situation in most communities that have not been overrun by Boko Haram/ISWAP. In these communities they have collaborators, informants, Spies and sympathizers.

Also, the established illicit economy in COIN. The issue of logistics contracts over-invoicing, ghost soldier payroll, diversion of operational funds, arms and ammunition theft and resale are norms. This makes for the protractedness of the war.

The study finds out that are not fit to be part of the state security actors. Their allegiance can still be in doubt. It takes a lot to reverse extremism as the mind is brainwashed. Should the repentant boko haram be enlisted into Nigerian security service, it amounts to recycling of terrorism or introduction of terrorists into Nigeria security architecture. This can only result in infiltration of counter insurgent.

Lack of proper scrutiny of intakes into state security agencies from the axis fraught with terrorism, can create an inroad into erroneous recruitment of terrorist into mainstream security.

It found out that some insurgents disguised as part of the rehabilitated insurgents and are living in the community. The lack of accompaniment of the rehabilitated insurgents to their former places of residence distorts records and tracking. Some did not go back to their former destination rather re-join the group of fighters.

The inquiry finds out that there is no monitoring mechanism to ascertain compliance by the rehabilitated insurgents. Feedback and tracking are very important in evaluating the success or otherwise of the programme. This has gone to show that it is not working. This situation can only birth relapse into non state armed combatant.

Conclusion

The approaches to Counter Insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin has experiences a daunting task of DDRR and combating the insurgents. Kinetic (military foray) and non- kinetic with the use of intelligence, persuasion and peace campaigns. The non-state actors for instance religious group and Civil Society Organizations, International Non-Governmental Organizations use the mechanisms of religious persuasions and CSO offer advocacy, skill acquisition, humanitarian intervention and dissuasion. The devastation insurgency has caused in the Lake Chad Basin is immeasurable with

human and infrastructural casualties. Waylaying commuters and subsequent abduction, implanting bombs, ambush and over-running counter insurgents' camps and communities. While counter insurgency has challenges like infiltrations by insurgents in the cycle of counter insurgents, availability of funding of insurgency, The Fluid Recruitment of insurgents' members, Insider Abuse, Politicization of Counter Insurgency, Community Concealment of Insurgents' Identity, Lack of Prosecution of Insurgents, Built Bonding between the insurgents and the Community Members and Established illicit economy in counter insurgency. However, the resurgence in attacks by insurgents established the case of recidivism in the Lake Chad Basin.

Recommendations

It is recommended that there must be a deliberate overhaul of the security governance in Nigeria. A multi-stake-holders approach should be adopted. This is where more drastic decision will be taken to fiercely engage the violent extremists.

Feedback, monitoring and tracking mechanisms should be put in place. This helps to measure compliance or otherwise of the rehabilitated and reintegrated ex-combatants and evaluate the success or otherwise of the programme.

Labelling, Blaming, Naming and Shaming should be a strategic tool to be used. The ethnic group that is predominantly found to engage in insurgency be labelled, named, shamed and blamed. This will make their elites, community leaders and other stakeholders to throw their weight on the fight against bestialism. The mentioning of Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, Krahn, Gio, Mano, and Mandingo in Liberia was not to stereotype or vilify Hutu in the Genocide in Rwanda and Krahn ethnic group in Liberia but to point out the actual ethnic group involved in the misdeeds. In this clime it is termed criminalization of ethnic group.

It is an aberration to engage an interest party in COIN. Nigeria is a nation where its citizens cannot go against those who are in the same religion and ethnic group. Sabotage cannot be an enigma in COIN when locals with sympathy for insurgents are engaged to fight insurgents.

Lack of proper scrutiny of intakes into state security agencies from the axis fraught with terrorism, can create an inroad into erroneous recruitment of terrorist into mainstream security. A professionally and strict integrity test should be conducted on prospective intake into both cadets and recruitment.

Preaching inciting and indoctrinatory laden messages should be censored.

With communities being overrun, abductions, bubby traps/ and summary execution are taking place, ambushes and destruction of military camps with experienced scores of deaths that keep occurring. Therefore, adjudication should be employed. Where insurgents are arrested, they should face prosecution according to extant provision in the National Counter Terrorism Act.

The approaches to the counter insurgency in Nigeria are largely kinetic. That limits community engagement with the state to win hearts and Minds. When

insurgents provide stipends, food items and freely engages in indoctrination and subsequent recruitment, the Nigerian State should not allow gap between it and the people.

Politicisation of COIN results in the experienced backlashes. The established illicit economy in COIN- logistics contracts over-invoicing, ghost soldier payroll, diversion of operational funds, arms and ammunition theft and resale. Erring personnel in the process DDRR and COIN should be sanctioned.

Since insurgency festers where there is availability of funds, the channels that oxygenate insurgents' operation and creating avenue for ex-combatants to return to insurgency operations should be blocked. Therefore, Terrorism financiers must be sanctioned while flow/channels of logistics supply be interrupted.

A more robust hybrid approaches, kinetic and on-kinetic, multi-stakeholders' engagement in prosecuting the war against insurgency in Lake Chad Basin should be a policy and be implemented to the latter.

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